

What it means to be creative? The “Four C” model

A specific understanding and categorization by J. C. Kaufman and R. A. Beghetto

Big-C



	mini-c	little-c	Pro-c	Big-C
What it means?	Novel and personally meaningful interpretation of experiences, actions, events, creative insights.	Production of something novel and useful. It requires domain-specific skills, personal factors (such as tolerance for ambiguity, risk-taking, self-discipline) and specialized talent. It can be reached after repeated attempts and encouragements.	Remarkable creative accomplishments, the capability of working on problems, projects and ideas that affect the respective field/domain as a whole. It is a result of a developmental and effortful progression.	Clear-cut, eminent creative contributions that have lasted for a long time (even centuries).
How frequent is it?	Most people experience it, at least early in life.	Lots of people experience it during their studies, work or hobbies.	It can be reached by many after at least 10 years of learning, experimenting, exploring in a certain domain.	Reserved for the elite few, typically a posthumous distinction.
Examples	Kids playing with their early creativity as they discover new things; surprising or just interesting insights expressed by young children in their daily activities of learning and playing.	Enjoying creativity in everyday life and creative expression. E.g. writing a good essay, a poem, making home-made ice-cream, starting a video blog, playing a new song on a guitar, acting in a local production.	Achievements of scientists, artists, actors, craftsmen, etc. with domain-specific achievements (published articles, performed plays, exhibited works) that are not necessarily ground-breaking but push their domains ahead.	Albert Einstein, Mozart, etc.; winners of the Nobel prize, “legends” of their domain of activity, people who have entries in the Encyclopaedia Britannica longer than maybe 100 sentences.
How to get to next level?	Starting from mini-c, little-c can be reached after repeated attempts and encouragements.	Most people might stop at this level. However, if a person stumbles upon the domain that she or he feels an initial pull of passion, with years of acquired expertise and advanced schooling, the s/he may move to Pro-c. For this s/he usually undergoes a formal apprenticeship/academic institution OR years of “tinkering”/experimenting.	After years, the Pro-c creator may achieve a lasting Big-C, or history will make the final judgement as to whether he or she has entered the pantheon of Big-C.	
What can teachers/mentors do to bring kids to the next level?	Teachers should support creative ideation and nurture creativity. Kids should also be encouraged by parents, mentors to help creativity grow. Best way to foster creativity-nurturing environment is: encouraging curiosity and exploration, letting children make decisions, and respecting children’s opinions. This will lead to increased later creative potential.	Teachers should identify (even rate) creative talents and offer subsequent placement and support. At this level teachers have a complex role, as trainers in various academic institutions, as mentors, as older, more experienced colleagues.	Do we know what Mozart’s or Einstein’s teachers did different? Big-C means: “the disciple has surpassed the master.”	

EVERY DAY
creativity

