

An illustration of a white rocket with a yellow ring around its nose, launching from a large planet with a dotted surface. A thick yellow line representing the launch path extends from the planet to the rocket. The background is dark with white stars and dotted lines with yellow arrowheads pointing in various directions.

*just*  
**Start**

Explore the possibilities  
of **entrepreneurship**

**ASU** J.Orin Edson  
Entrepreneurship+  
Innovation Institute

Arizona State University

[entrepreneurship.asu.edu](http://entrepreneurship.asu.edu)

# Welcome

When you hear or see the word “entrepreneur,” what do you think of? People like Elon Musk or Steve Jobs? What about Oprah Winfrey? Do you think of companies like TikTok or Uber? The reality is that entrepreneurs are everywhere — here at ASU, on the J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation team, in your hometown, in your family. I learned about entrepreneurship before I knew the word existed, let alone what the word meant! I was selling t-shirts on weekends for my sister's boyfriend, an entrepreneur, to tourists in SoHo, New York City a decade before I joined a technology startup company. At that startup, in two breathless years, I went through three different roles with the company, which grew from six people to nearly three hundred people, and I worked firsthand on the series A and then series B investments and then worked directly on the initial public offering (IPO).

But not all entrepreneurs and startups follow this kind of typical, venture-backed trajectory. Many entrepreneurs are starting businesses in our neighborhoods, often self-financing, sometimes taking debt-based capital, some without having a storefront or physical space. **Though most people associate entrepreneurship with business, many entrepreneurs start nonprofit or low-profit organizations that provide tremendous non-market value to our society.** And some entrepreneurs are actually intrapreneurs who start up subsidiaries or units for existing, larger organizations.

And some people simply have an entrepreneurial mindset — where others only see problems, they see improvements, ideas and solutions. They are the consummate fixers, always proposing ways to solve or optimize everything from schedules to traffic routes to how to run team meetings. You know the ones — they organize the parties, get group projects to be fun and productive, create new processes for getting more with less (of everything)!

**That's the definition of an entrepreneur — people who create value, who have ideas to fill voids or fix problems, or who offer better ways of doing things.** People who create products, processes and services. At the Edson E+I Institute we support student entrepreneurs, faculty and staff entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs in our communities. This is one resource to help you continue on your entrepreneurial journey, or to get started!



— **Ji Mi Choi**

*Vice President, Knowledge Enterprise*

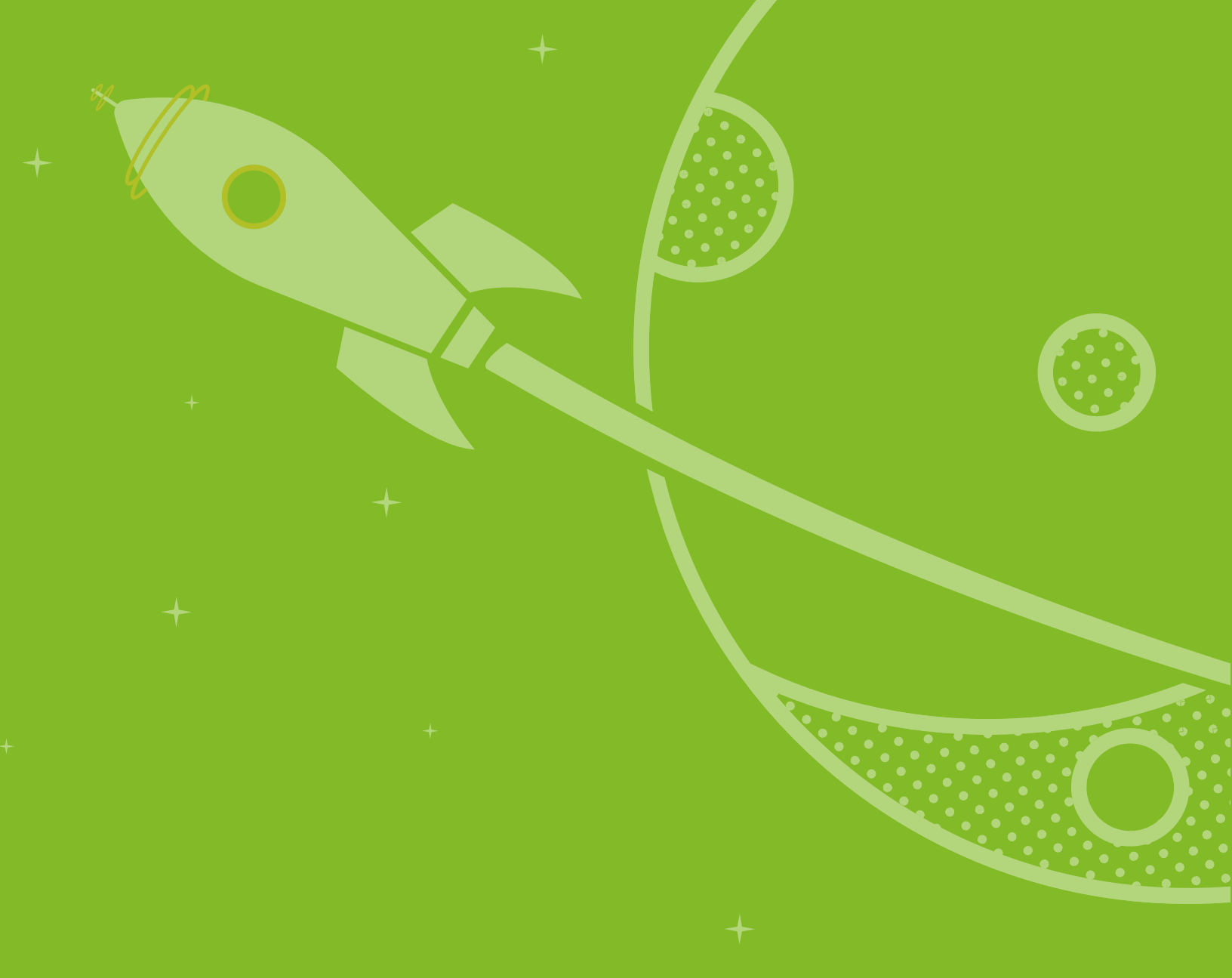
*Founding Executive Director, J. Orin Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute*



For years, the team with the Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute has encouraged students, faculty and other community members to “just start.” Whether you are learning a new skill, trying to hit a new milestone or advancing a particular idea, Just Start is a call to action that can encourage you to move forward.

We can all be entrepreneurial thinkers who solve problems in ways that create value for others. But sometimes, getting started can feel intimidating. The good news is that it gets easier the more you do it. This Just Start guidebook is filled with activities to help you reflect on your ideas and set specific goals. We hope this introduction helps you work through ideas and map out what it means to you to Just Start.

We encourage you to work through the activities offered at a pace and style that works best for you. For example, you can write directly on these pages, use a separate notebook or type up notes on your own device. Now, let’s begin your journey!



# Entrepreneurial mindset

Whatever your current and future goals are, you can benefit from thinking with an entrepreneurial mindset. This way of thinking encourages curiosity, makes connections and creates value for others by doing new or different things. Reflect on times you have thought in an entrepreneurial way by identifying a problem and working to do something new or different.

## Times I have been entrepreneurial

**What was the problem?**

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**How did I do something new or different?**

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**What value was added?**

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## List activity — ideas you'd like to start

Now that you have identified ways you have used an entrepreneurial mindset in the past, let's identify areas where you could use it in the future. Sometimes, to get things started, it is helpful to write them down. Jot down a few things you would like to start but have not yet. These can be personal or professional goals, big or small, easy or challenging.

### Starter list

**What you'd like to start**

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**Why you haven't started (or finished) yet**

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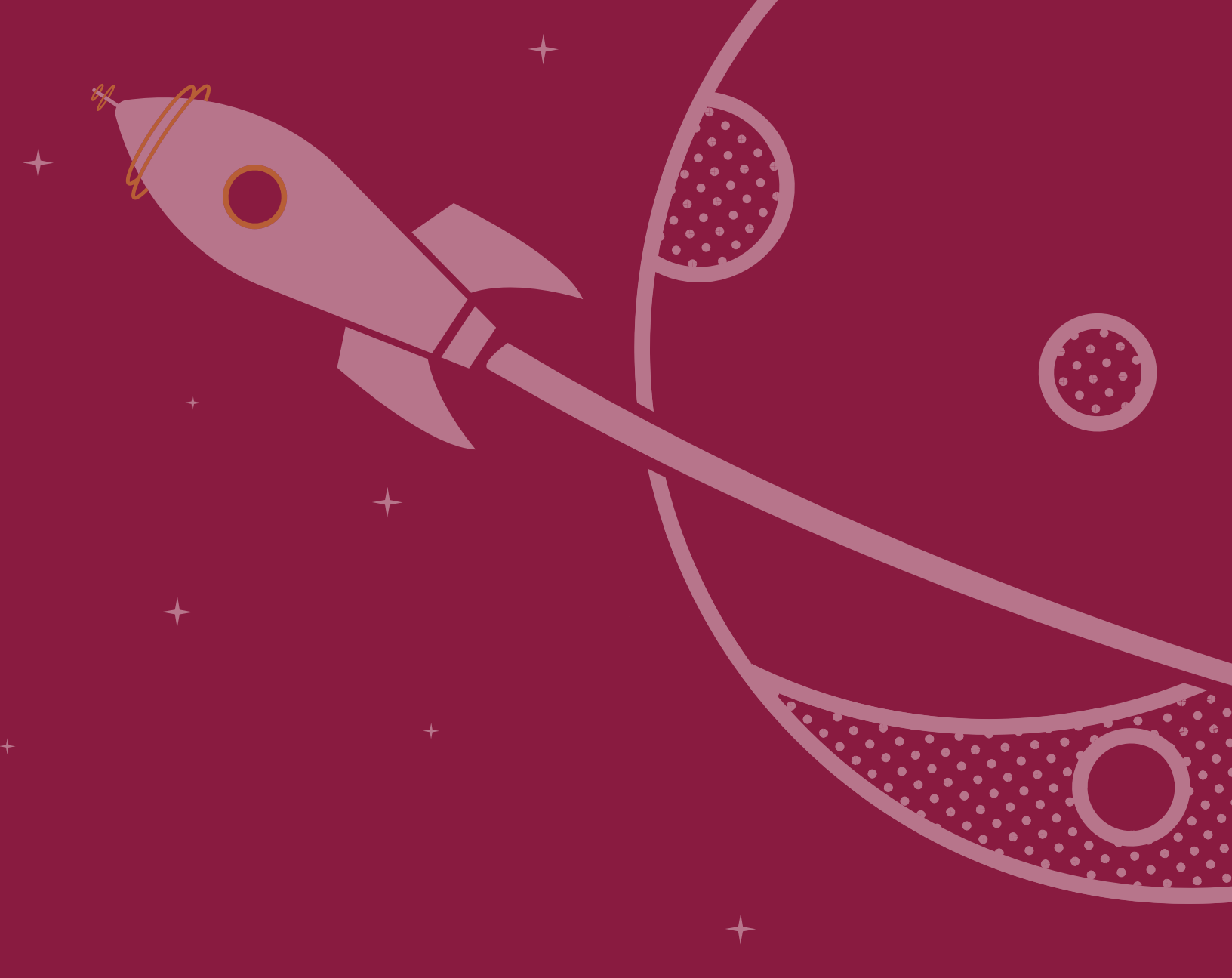
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**What is a small action you could take to make things happen (now or later)?**

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# Problem spotting

Everyone has things — big or small — that bug them. Here, we encourage you to notice things you find inconveniencing or annoying in your everyday life. While this may feel simple, identifying things that are bothersome can be a helpful starting point for how to improve things.

Take a bit of time to write down as many things as you can that bug you. We call this process creating a “bug list.” As you do this, focus on what could be better in your everyday life. Examples could be how hard it is to find a parking spot, having a disorganized closet — especially for pairs of shoes — or dealing with extreme weather.

## My bug list


Next, select one of the things you wrote down to focus on. You will think through a solution to this problem by developing a concept map. A concept map is a way to visualize information. It helps you think about the big picture and smaller details. As you focus on mapping the concept, think about causes — why does this happen? — and potential opportunities that could be possible solutions.

### Tips

If you are having a hard time deciding what to focus on, try to pick something that you think probably bugs other people too.

### While you are mapping, consider these factors:

- Why does this bug you? Does it bug other people?
- Is this a problem? Why?
- Are there current solutions to this problem? If so, what are they?
- Do the current solutions, if any, work well? Why or why not?
- What could be done differently?
- How would you solve this problem?

## My concept map

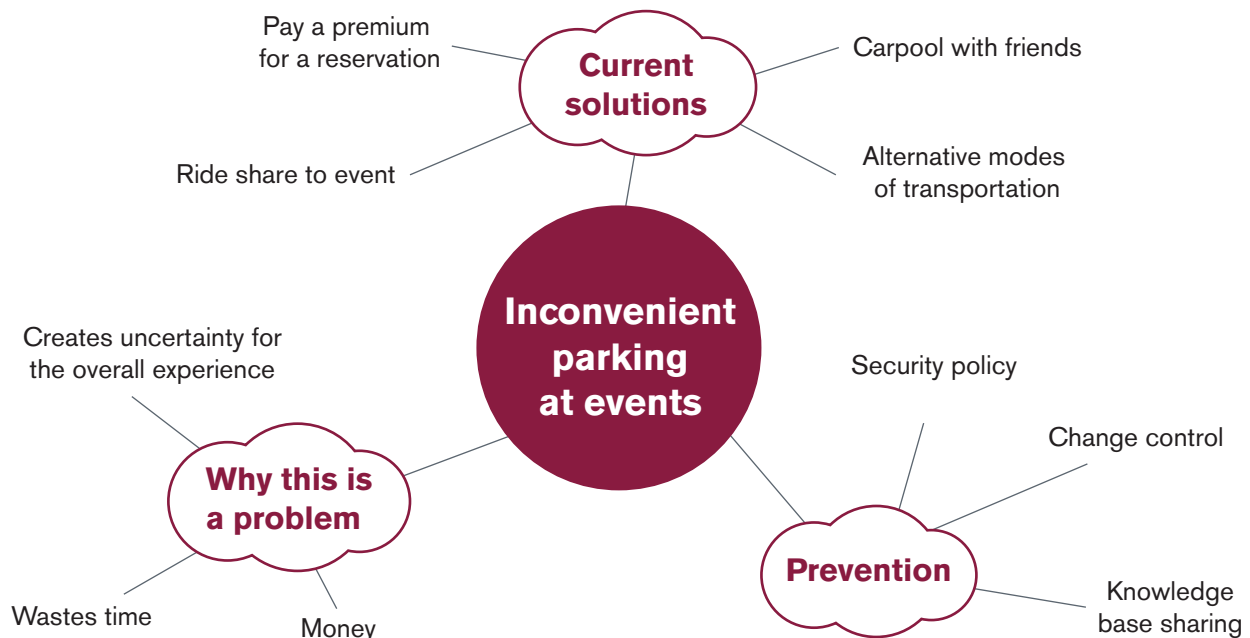
This mapping exercise helps to organize and understand information. By working through a concept map, you can sort your thoughts and more easily share them with others. In many ways, a concept map is an outline that illustrates connections or relationships between ideas. This is a creative process, so we encourage you to approach your concept map in whatever way works best for you to structure your idea.

### A few suggestions:

- Begin with the main concept or idea. Put it at the center of your map. Everything else will connect back to this main idea.
- Add associated ideas around the main concept by using lines or arrows.
- Don't be afraid to use color. Highlighting key thoughts or using color to code specific ideas is encouraged, especially at the end of your mapping process.
- If relationships exist between concepts you have mapped, find ways to visualize that connection.
- Before you finish, look at your map. Is anything important missing? Does your map make sense to you?

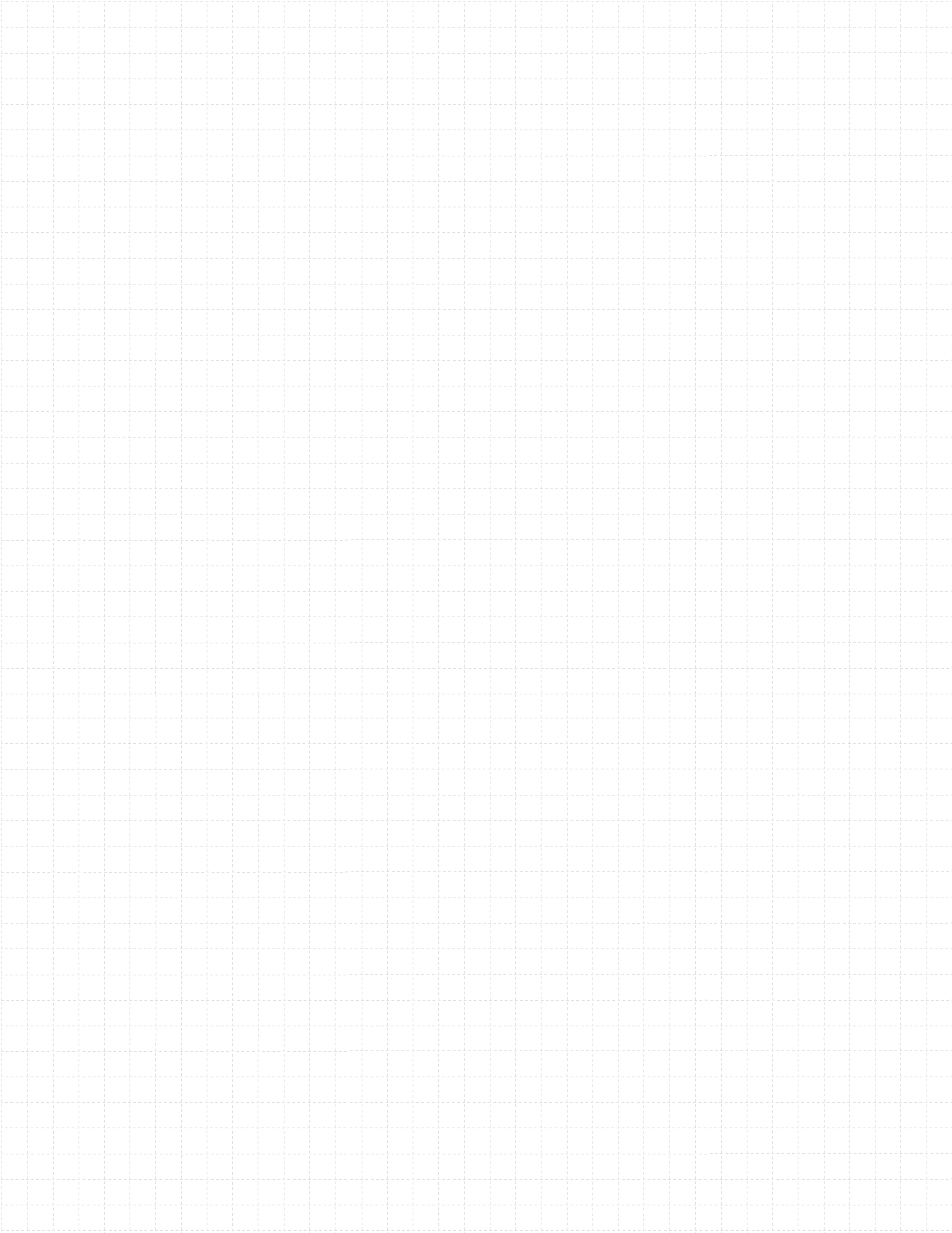
## Problem/bug list concept map

Example of concept map:





**Draw your own problem/bug list map:**



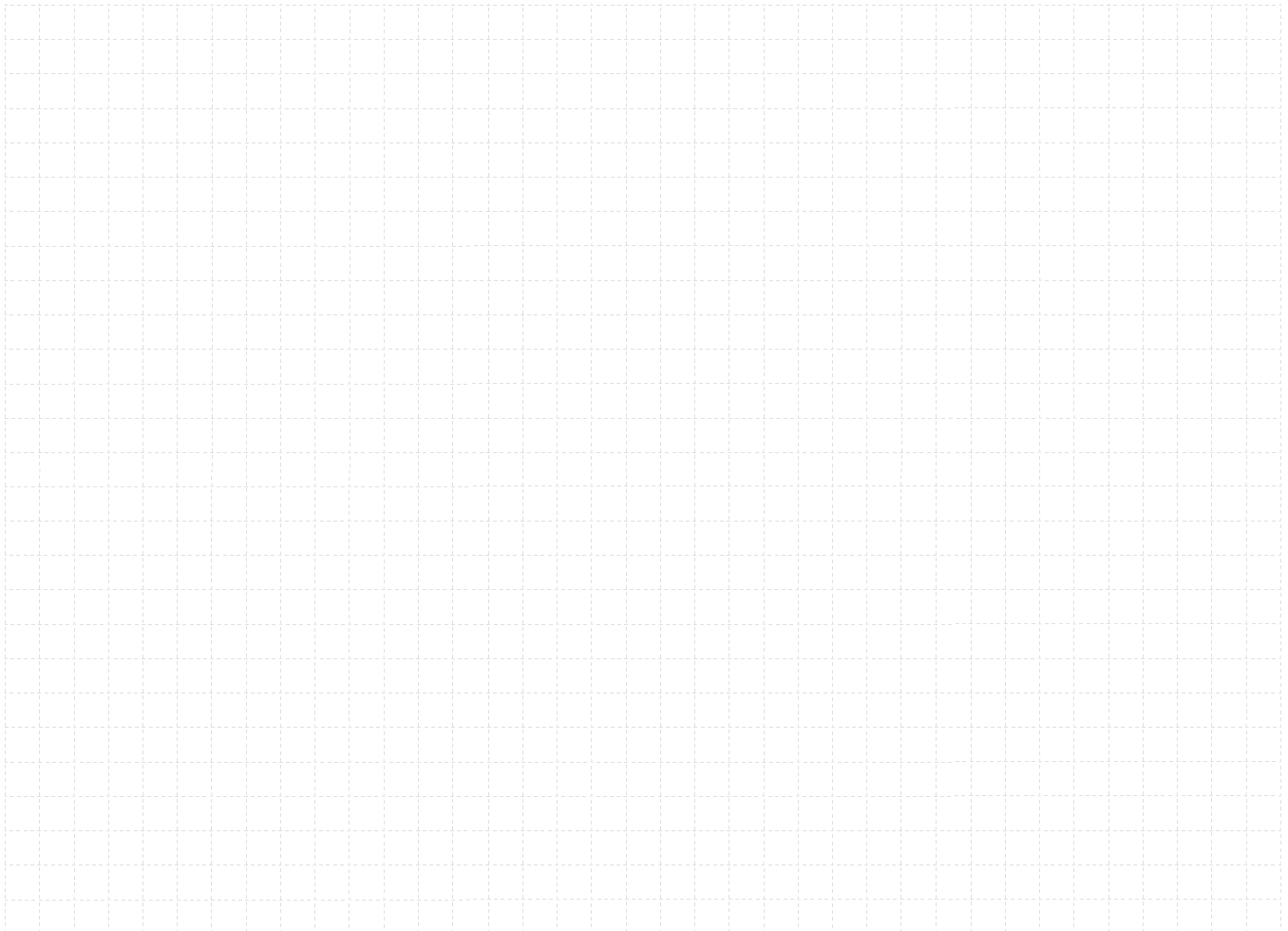
## Self concept map

While we started this activity with a focus on a particular idea, a concept map can be used in many different ways. For this next exercise, use the concept map process for your own life goals.

### A few suggestions:

- Put yourself at the center.
- Think about categories within your life that are important to you. Examples of categories could include: Education, Social, Health and Work.
- Subcategories for Social could be 1) Family and 2) Friends with other goals or topics nested within each category.
- You can use the concept map to organize thoughts on how your life currently looks, or to create a vision with goals that support what you hope your future looks like.

### Draw your own concept map:



## I get by with a little help from my mentors...

Having encouraging relationships is helpful when trying to achieve any goal. You have probably heard of the concept of a mentor, an important person who can support you by sharing past experience, advice or just a different perspective. Mentorship can be formal or informal. In this activity, we encourage you to consider current relationships that are helpful to you or brainstorm relationships that could become more helpful to you after strengthening the connection. What expertise or skills do these people offer that can be valuable to you in achieving your goals? How do you stay connected?

<b>Person</b>	<b>How they can support or help you</b>	<b>How you stay connected</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

### Looking for a mentor?

Check out the ASU Venture Devils program to learn more about ASU resources that include dedicated mentorship to support you as you develop your ideas.

**[tinyurl.com/VentureDevils](http://tinyurl.com/VentureDevils)**

Just like a company might have a Board of Advisors, it's helpful as individuals to have more than one mentor relationship. Look back at your list and think about how this group might serve as an informal personal Board of Advisors. Is there anything missing? How could you make new relationships to add to this current list? Beyond building in-person relationships, think about other ways you might learn from someone else's expertise, whether it's following certain public individuals online, listening to podcasts or reading particular books.

# Establish your milestones

Use this space to write down the goals, milestones or accomplishments that you hope to achieve one week from now, three months from now, six months from now and one year from now. While the future is not always certain and goals may change, creating time-bound goals helps to set a vision and encourages you to take action.

As you work through this process, reflect on your relationships with role models. After setting each milestone, list someone who might be able to support you in this process, whether they are someone you know personally, or a public figure whose work inspires you.

## Milestone 1

**What do you want to have accomplished 1 week from now?**

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**Who can help you achieve this?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Milestone 2

**What do you want to have accomplished 3 months from now?**

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**Who can help you achieve this?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Milestone 3

**What do you want to have accomplished 6 months from now?**

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**Who can help you achieve this?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Milestone 4

**What do you want to have accomplished 1 year from now?**

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**Who can help you achieve this?** \_\_\_\_\_

As you work through your milestones, shade in the timeline to keep track of your progress.

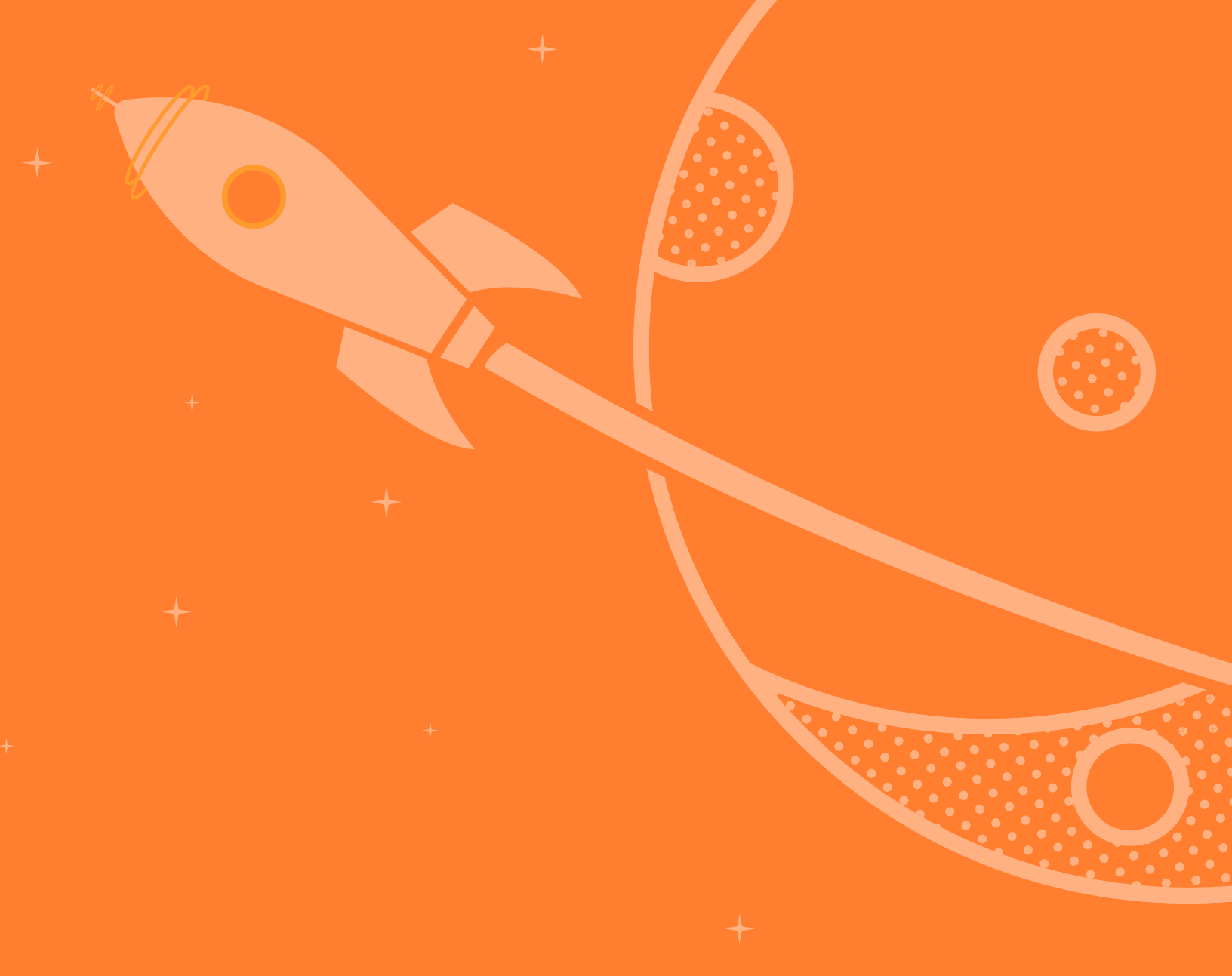


### **Tips for managing your time and staying on track:**

- Consider when you do your best work and prioritize your time accordingly. If you think more clearly in the morning, attend to brainy activities in the morning. If you need to move your body before you start thinking, choose to be active in the morning and do mental tasks later in the day.
- Divide larger projects into smaller tasks that you can do over a reasonable number of days.
- Keep a log of how much time it takes you to do various tasks. This will help you learn how much time you need to schedule for these tasks in the future.
- Set boundaries. Don't overload yourself with projects or tasks. This will help you focus your attention on each project through completion.
- Strengthen your resilience: Develop supportive, trusting relationships with people you can share your feelings, hopes and dreams with.

Get more tips about managing time, increasing your focus, reducing stress and more through ASU's Live Well Community.

**[wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness](https://wellness.asu.edu/explore-wellness)**



# Customer discovery activity

Customer discovery is a process of asking others, especially those who could be a future customer for your idea, to give feedback within the process. Any time you are creating an idea or working through a project, your own point of view influences how you approach consider and understand other perspectives and helps to test any assumptions you might be making.

We have outlined a few steps that help with the customer discovery process:

**First, write down your idea.**

**Next, define what problem you are trying to solve.**

**Finally, how does your idea solve this problem?**

An example of something that you may already be familiar with:



### Idea

A pet door — also known as a doggy door — is a small opening within someone’s home that allows animals to enter and exit independently.



### Problem

Animals are not capable of opening/closing doors in the same way that humans are; as a pet owner, it is helpful for me if my animal can go outside on their own while I attend to other tasks, rather than always needing me to be home to let them out. It isn’t safe or secure to leave my whole door open, so an alternative option is needed.



### Solution

The pet door is small enough that it feels different than leaving a full door open and even has options to be temporarily closed and secured if the pet owner wants to do so.

**Bonus!** It often includes a flexible flap that offers further protection, including from weather. My dog or cat can be trained to push the flap and walk through the space, which is low enough to the ground that they can do so without anyone’s help.

While it is uncertain who created the first pet door, this idea has been improved upon for decades and provides homeowners an approachable solution to what can be a common problem. Likely, the inventor either had an animal — directly experiencing the problem — or observed others. Hopefully, the inventor talked to multiple individuals along the way to identify a solution that could meet the needs of the primary problem — an animal didn’t have a way to go outside independently. It also helps to limit the secondary concerns for keeping the house secure from intruders, such as bugs, weather or any other unwanted guests.

While your dog or cat might not be able to give direct feedback for an idea like the pet door, it would be valuable to talk with pet owners when first thinking through the idea, and then later to even observe how animals interact with the prototype.

Some questions you might ask as part of a customer discovery process:

- Tell me about how you currently \_\_\_\_\_  
[example: take care of your dog throughout the day]
- Is there anything you don't like about that process?
- If you can improve your experience as a \_\_\_\_\_, what would be helpful?  
[pet owner who is not always home]
- What is the hardest part about \_\_\_\_\_? [being responsible for an animal]
- What advice would you give for someone who is thinking about \_\_\_\_\_? [adopting a pet]
- What tools do you currently use to help yourself as a \_\_\_\_\_? [pet owner]
- If you had a magic wand and could make one thing different about your situation, what would you change?

Work through this free Training and Development Resources module to gain critical insights into how your product or service brings value to your customer – [tinyurl.com/TDRCustomerDiscovery](https://tinyurl.com/TDRCustomerDiscovery)

### Tips

- Focus the conversation. Share what topic you want to discuss at the beginning and ask specific questions.
- Ask about things like routines, feelings and opinions. This conversation should go beyond whether someone would buy or use something. Try to get unexpected insights!
- Think intentionally about who can provide unique perspectives. Is there anyone you have not talked to that might be good to engage in conversation? Try to look in unexpected places.
- Make a goal of how many customer discovery conversations you want to have. While you will not have enough hours in the day to talk to everyone, it is great to have multiple conversations and talk with people outside of your immediate circle. Talking to multiple people can help you identify key themes and shared experiences or opinions that can direct where you go next.



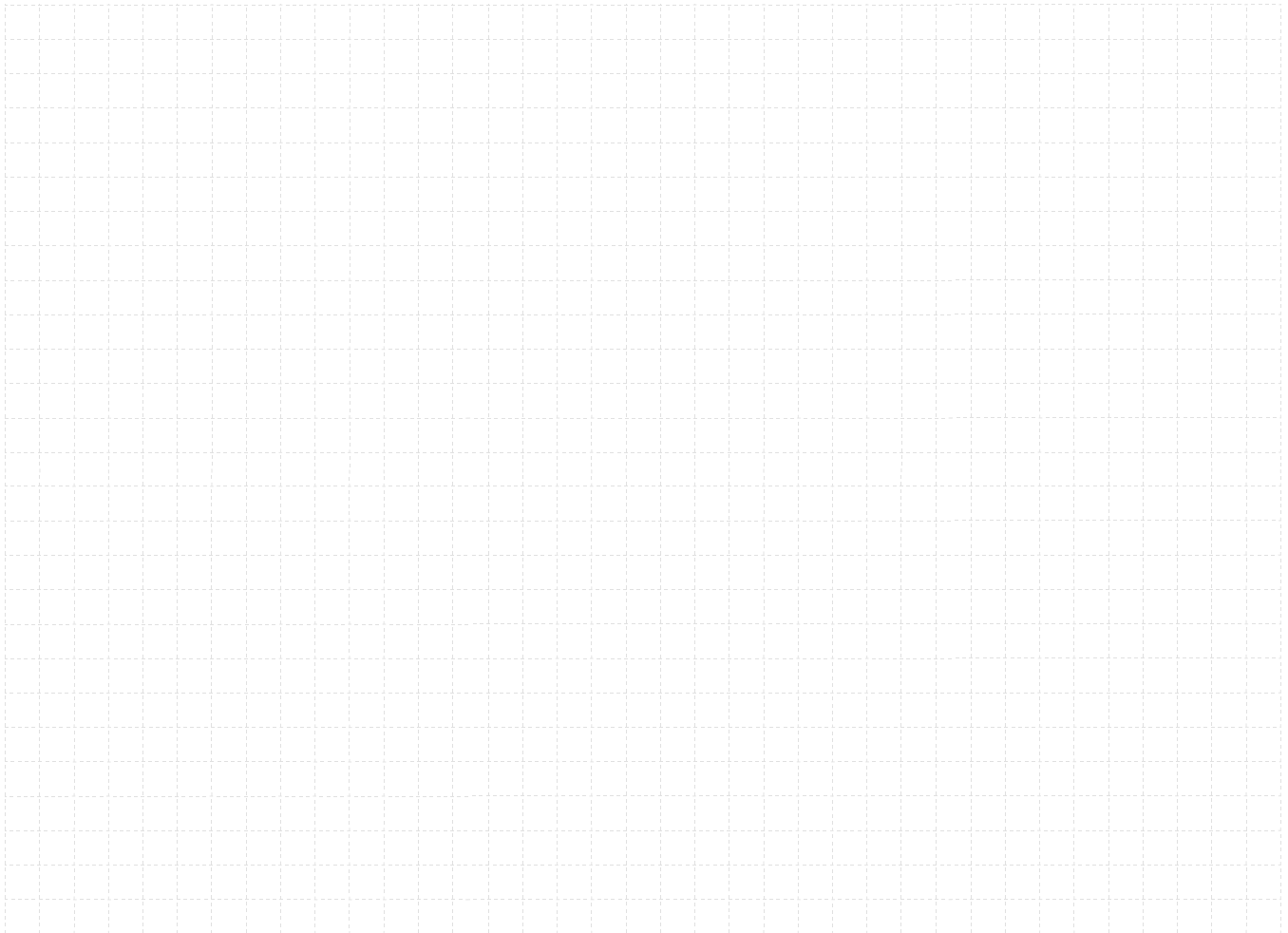
## Prototyping/drawing activity

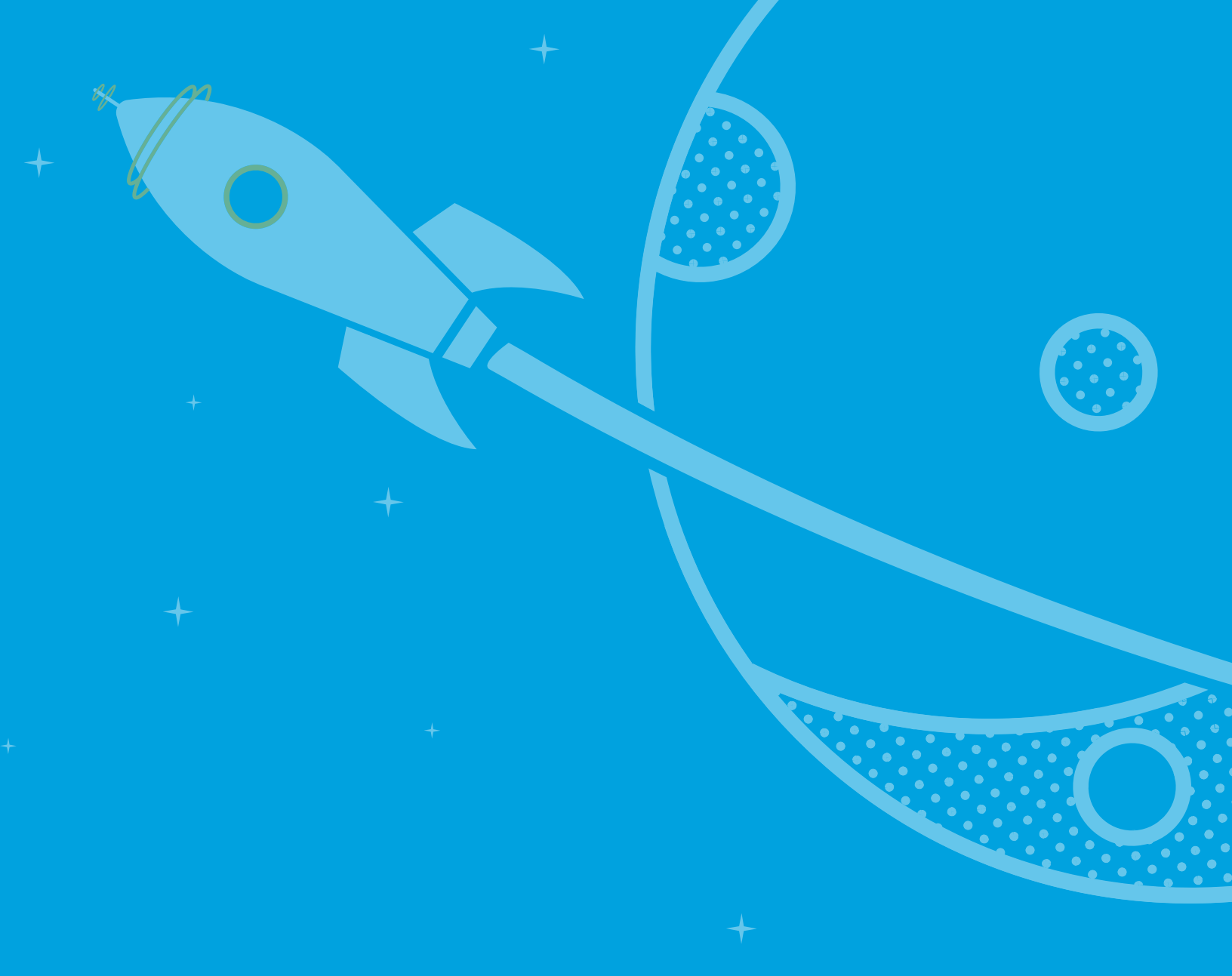
A prototype is a model or sketch that helps you envision and test out your ideas. Often, a prototype is a first attempt at designing something. Like any first draft, it does not have to be perfect and rather helps you to visualize what you are trying to create. You can prototype an actual product idea or service, or you can prototype an experience. Today, sketch out an experience that you would want to create and try to depict how it would look, feel or be. An example could be to draw a prototype of a volunteer experience. If a goal is to volunteer more in the community, what would that look like?

### Tips

Stick figures and words are fine. Drawing is a process that encourages thinking in different ways, so try as much as you can to sketch and draw and not only write.

### Draw it out here!





# Showcase your strengths

Whatever role you take in life — whether as a founder, employee or any sort of teammate — it is important to know your strengths and be able to communicate your talents to others. We often focus on selling a particular idea or product, and it can be easy to underestimate how often people are just betting on you and the belief that you will do something great. Overcome imposter syndrome, the belief that we are pretending to do more than we actually can, by bragging a little and embracing your strengths.

**Something I am really good at is**

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**People often compliment my ability to**

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**I've intentionally tried to get better at**

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**I make a good teammate/co-founder because**

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**A problem I am confident I can help solve is**

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**After reflecting on these questions, think about your elevator pitch for yourself.**

- If you had one minute to explain the value you regularly add as an individual, what would you say?
- What are simple ways to communicate to a stranger some of your strengths and talents?
- While you don't have to brag, it is important to reflect positively about yourself and your abilities.

## Developing your pitch

At some point, you'll want to share your idea with others. While there are many informal ways to do so, there are also times you might want to pitch your idea more formally. Next, we share some best practices around developing both a pitch and a possible slide deck to go with a more formal presentation.

Things to note:

- Tell a story.
- Be focused and keep your pitch simple.
- Make every pitch a visual journey.
- Make an impression early (i.e., cover slide - on both pitch decks and informal pitches)
- Leave time for questions.

## Write it out

Consider these prompts when drafting your five-minute pitch. If some of the suggested steps use unfamiliar language — like traction or competitive advantage — we encourage you to look them up to gain a better understanding of each topic before beginning your answer.

Each answer should take about one minute, or roughly 150 words.

- 1. Briefly introduce your idea, then share the problem or opportunity as described by actual users or consumers within a specific business, home or institutional setting. Why should someone care?**

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- 2. Describe or demonstrate your solution with a focus on how the product or service works in three steps or less. What impact will your solution have?**

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**3. What similar solutions or status quo behaviors currently exist? Why will customers or users choose your solution over other options? Is your solution protected or protectable via a patent, trademark, etc.? Regardless, what is your secret sauce? Describe the competitive landscape and your competitive advantage.**

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**4. Describe your current or planned business model. Who pays for your solution, and how much, how often and where do these transactions occur? In other words, describe your first sale, or a typical sale. Remember: even nonprofits have a business model.**

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**5. Introduce your team and key mentors with a focus on their extraordinary accomplishments or unique subject matter expert skills. Why is your team uniquely qualified to bring this product or service to market? What does your team need to reach the next milestone (e.g., money, strategic introductions)? If you need money, how much? What will it be spent to accomplish, and by when?**

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For detailed guidance and videos on pitching, check out these resources:

[tinyurl.com/examplepitchdeck](https://tinyurl.com/examplepitchdeck)  
[tinyurl.com/5minpitch](https://tinyurl.com/5minpitch)

# Business Model Canvas

The Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a tool provided by Strategyzer that helps you work through the details of your idea and think about how the parts fit together.

While there are a series of free, online guides that provide further explanations of ways to use the BMC, we encourage you to work through the Training and Development Resource (TDR) module “How does my idea fit into a business model canvas?” to better understand the nine components of your potential venture idea.

While business is in the title, the BMC applies to any social or nonprofit ideas, as well. You can access the free “How does my idea fit into a business model canvas?” at [tinyurl.com/TDRBMC](http://tinyurl.com/TDRBMC)

## The Business Model Canvas

Designed for:

Designed by:

Date:

Version:

<p><b>Key Partners</b> </p> <p>Who are our Key Partners? Who are our Key Suppliers? Which Key Resources are we acquiring from partners? Which Key Activities do partners perform?</p> <p><b>REASONS FOR PARTNERSHIP</b> Operations and economy Reduction of risk and uncertainty Acquisition of particular resources and activities</p>	<p><b>Key Activities</b> </p> <p>What Key Activities do our Value Propositions require? Our Distribution Channels? Customer Relationships? Revenue Streams?</p> <p><b>CATEGORIES</b> Production Problem Solving Performance</p>	<p><b>Value Propositions</b> </p> <p>What value do we deliver to the customer? Which one of our customer's problems are we helping to solve? What bundles of products and services are we offering to each Customer Segment? Which customer needs are we satisfying?</p> <p><b>EXAMPLES</b> Newness Performance Customization "Getting the job done" Design Brand/Status Price Cost Reduction Risk Reduction Accessibility Convenience/Usability</p>	<p><b>Customer Relationships</b> </p> <p>What type of relationship does each of our Customer Segments expect us to establish and maintain with them? Which ones have we established? How are they integrated with the rest of our business model? How costly are they?</p> <p><b>EXAMPLES</b> Personal assistance Dedicated Personal Assistance Self-Service Automated Services Communities Co-creation</p>	<p><b>Customer Segments</b> </p> <p>For whom are we creating value? Who are our most important customers?</p> <p><b>Mass Market</b> <b>Niche Market</b> <b>Segmented</b> <b>Diversified</b> <b>Multi-sided Platform</b></p>
<p><b>Key Resources</b> </p> <p>What Key Resources do our Value Propositions require? Our Distribution Channels? Customer Relationships? Revenue Streams?</p> <p><b>TYPES OF RESOURCES</b> Physical Intellectual (brand, patents, copyrights, data) Human Financial</p>	<p><b>Channels</b> </p> <p>Through which Channels do our Customer Segments want to be reached? How are we reaching them now? How are our Channels integrated? Which ones work best? Which ones are most cost-efficient? How are we integrating them with customer routines?</p> <p><b>CHANNEL FRAMES</b> 1. Awareness How do we help customers evaluate our company's products and services? 2. Evaluation How do we help customers evaluate our organization's Value Proposition? 3. Purchase How do we help customers to purchase specific products and services? 4. Delivery How do we deliver a Value Proposition to customers? 5. After sales How do we provide post-purchase customer support?</p>		<p><b>Cost Structure</b> </p> <p>What are the most important costs inherent in our business model? Which Key Resources are most expensive? Which Key Activities are most expensive?</p> <p><b>BY YOUR BUSINESS MODEL</b> Cost Drivers (depend on cost structure, low price value proposition, maximum automation, extensive outsourcing) Value Drivers (depend on value creation, premium value proposition)</p> <p><b>FIXED COST CHARACTERISTICS</b> Fixed Costs (salaries, rents, utilities) Variable Costs Economies of scale Economies of scope</p>	<p><b>Revenue Streams</b> </p> <p>For what value are our customers really willing to pay? For what do they currently pay? How are they currently paying? How would they prefer to pay? How much does each Revenue Stream contribute to overall revenues?</p> <p><b>TYPES</b> Asset Sale Usage Fee Subscription Fees Licensing/Franchising/Licensing Advertising</p> <p><b>FIXED PRICES</b> Lump Price Product Feature dependent Customer segment Volume dependent</p> <p><b>DYNAMIC PRICES</b> Usage-based (usage-based) Risk Management Revenue-based</p>

DESIGNED BY: Business Model Foundry AG  
The masters of Business Model Generation and Strategyzer

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**Strategyzer**  
strategyzer.com

**Download a full-size page version of the Business Model Canvas:**  
<https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas>

## What next?

Congratulations! You've worked through a variety of reflective activities. We hope this guidebook was a helpful starting point. We encourage you to keep going and get more engaged with additional Arizona State University resources that will help bring your ideas to life. Here are some possible next steps in your entrepreneurial journey:

### Connect with an Entrepreneurship Catalyst

Entrepreneurship Catalysts are current ASU students who can help you identify opportunities, navigate resources and further develop your idea through one-on-one conversations. Find a time to connect by visiting [tinyurl.com/ECatalyst](https://tinyurl.com/ECatalyst)

### Apply to be an ASU Venture Devil

The ASU Venture Devils program supports students, faculty, and community members in turning their ideas into reality. Venture Devils provides access to funding opportunities, mentoring from experienced entrepreneurs, venture development training, and co-working spaces. To learn more or apply, visit: [tinyurl.com/VentureDevils](https://tinyurl.com/VentureDevils)

### Connect with Changemaker Central

Changemaker Central is ASU's on-campus hub for launching an idea. Student change agents are available to inspire, catalyze and help you drive social change. For more information about Changemaker Central and its signature programs, visit [changemaker.asu.edu](https://changemaker.asu.edu)

### Continue Learning

An **Entrepreneurial Approach** is foundational to entrepreneurship. Check out the Foundations of Entrepreneurship collection under the Training and Development Resources to explore further: [tinyurl.com/TDRApproach](https://tinyurl.com/TDRApproach)

### Connect with us

 [entrepreneurship.asu.edu](https://entrepreneurship.asu.edu)

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 [entrepreneurship@asu.edu](mailto:entrepreneurship@asu.edu)

 **Edson Entrepreneurship + Innovation Institute**



Find the **entrepreneur** in you

**Edson E+I** is a unit of the ASU Knowledge Enterprise.