




# OPEN YOUR SENSES

Explore the design environment with your senses: vision, hearing, touch and smell.

 **Participants**  
**Group**

 **Design skill**  
**Think in all directions**

 **Prior design experience**  
**None**

 **Duration**  
**15 - 45 minutes**

 **Design step**  
**Generating ideas**

## Description

Participants explore the target groups' environment with their senses. They (re)discover the environment by looking, hearing, feeling, smelling and maybe even tasting. They perform different assignments in groups of three or four.

They look at shapes, materials, odours and colours. They touch materials feeling how hard or soft they are. They listen to sounds and the lack of sounds. They describe and draw their experiences and discoveries. They can also take photos.



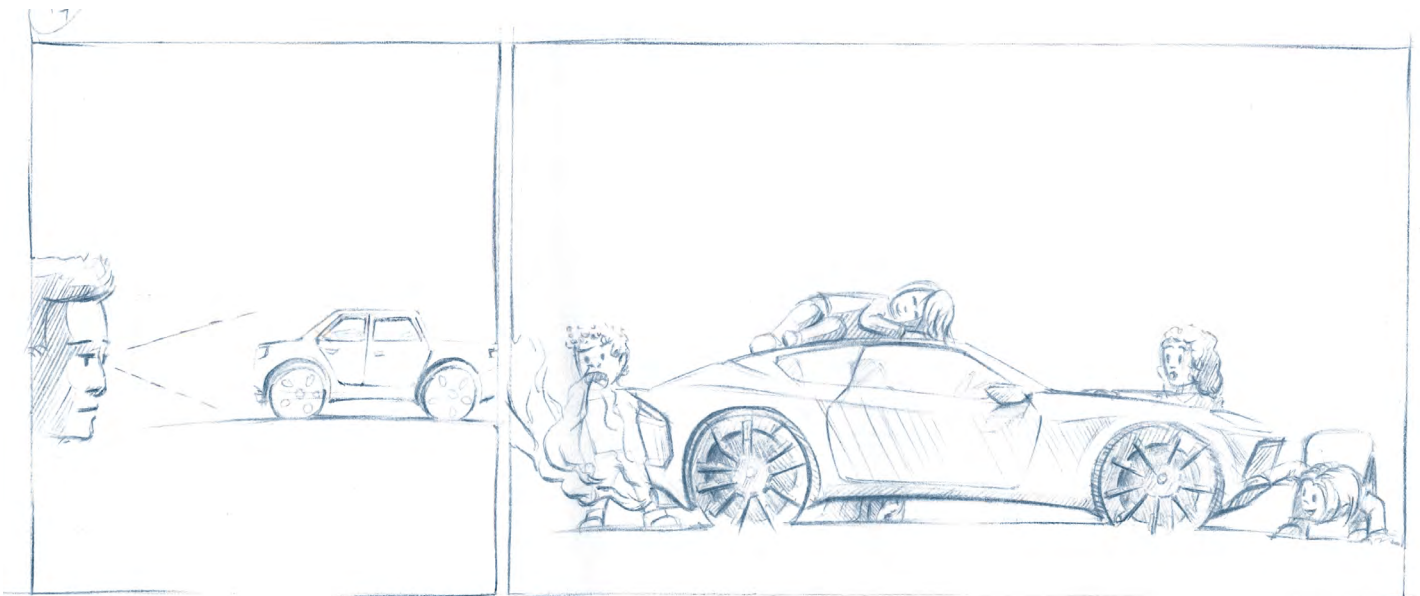
The participants also explore the environment in their own ways. Once all of the assignments have been completed, the participants review what they have collected. They highlight what inspires them. Using this information they come up with design ideas and write them down on individual idea cards.

## Effect

The environment of use for a design project is an important element of a design process. Being physically present at that location and experiencing it in various ways, lets participants properly (re)discover that environment. They get unexpected, nuanced and detailed images of the environment that they would not realise otherwise. This stimulates their curiosity and informs their creative thinking.

*Without the Open your senses*

*With the Open your senses*



## Example

Year group 7 pupils thought about the design question: 'How can year 3 pupils both play outside and learn to count?' With 8 different assignment cards, the design teams went to explore the school playground.

They carried out the assignments and wrote their answers on a large sheet. Then they sat down in a quiet place to come up with new ideas. The ideas they came up with were calculations using pavement tiles, calculations with the sand from the sandpit and calculations with the climbing frame.

The year 3 teacher was pleasantly surprised and let her students play outside even more!

## Step by step

- 1 Create assignment cards based on the 'Open your senses' worksheet (and possibly add cards for tasting, or for free play and exploration) which the participants can use to explore the environment of the design project.
- 2 Create a stack of varied assignment cards for each design team. Arrange a different order per stack so that each team always works on a different assignment. Put a staple or string through the piles.
- 3 Prepare an A4 sheet and clipboard and empty idea cards.
- 4 Take the teams into the design environment.



- 5 Give the participants the following instructions:
  - ▶ Work in design teams.
  - ▶ One of the participants reads an assignment out loud at a location of your choice.
  - ▶ The other participants answer the assignment.
  - ▶ Write down the answers, or record them in another way.
  - ▶ Write or draw ideas for the design problem on the separate idea cards.
  - ▶ Another participant reads the next assignment, in a new place. Follow the same steps for this assignment.
  - ▶ Repeat the procedure until all assignments have been completed.

- 6 Afterwards have the participants look at the answers again. Let them highlight the things that they find inspiring.
- 7 Then give them time to come up with solutions to the design problem.

## Tips

- ▶ Allow participants to spend some extra time in the design area. For example, letting them play freely or looking around in silence. This promotes creativity.
- ▶ Get inspiration from example questions from another design project (in Dutch): visit [www.eurekianen.nl](http://www.eurekianen.nl).

## Materials

- ▶ A bundled set of assignment cards (A6 format) per design team
- ▶ A4 sheet with writing board
- ▶ Empty idea card sheets (A5 format) to write or draw ideas

## References

This tool was developed by designer Madeline Hageman and teacher Marloes Nieuweboer from Eurekianen - an initiative focused on design learning, see [www.eurekianen.nl](http://www.eurekianen.nl).



### LOOKING ASSIGNMENT

WHICH SHAPES DO YOU SEE IN THIS AREA?  
WRITE DOWN 4 ANSWERS.



### LOOKING ASSIGNMENT

WHICH MATERIALS ARE PRESENT IN THIS AREA?  
TAKE PICTURES OF A MAXIMUM OF 3 MATERIALS FROM UP CLOSE.



### FEELING ASSIGNMENT

DESCRIBE WHAT THE MATERIALS YOU CAN TOUCH IN THIS AREA FEEL LIKE.  
IN A FEW WORDS



### SMELLING ASSIGNMENT

WHICH SCENTS DO YOU SMELL IN THIS AREA?

TELL EACH OTHER WHICH SCENTS YOU SMELL.



### LISTENING ASSIGNMENT

WHAT SOUNDS WOULD YOU HEAR IF NOBODY WAS IN THIS AREA?  
THINK OF A SOUND AND TELL IT TO EACH OTHER.



### SMELLING ASSIGNMENT

WHAT SMELLS DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT SMELL IN THIS AREA BUT CAN'T RIGHT NOW?

THINK OF A SMELL AND TELL IT TO EACH OTHER.



### LOOKING ASSIGNMENT

WHICH COLOURS DO YOU SEE IN THIS AREA?  
WRITE DOWN 4 ANSWERS.



### LISTENING ASSIGNMENT

LISTEN CAREFULLY. WHICH SOUNDS DO YOU HEAR IN THIS AREA?

WRITE DOWN 4 ANSWERS.

