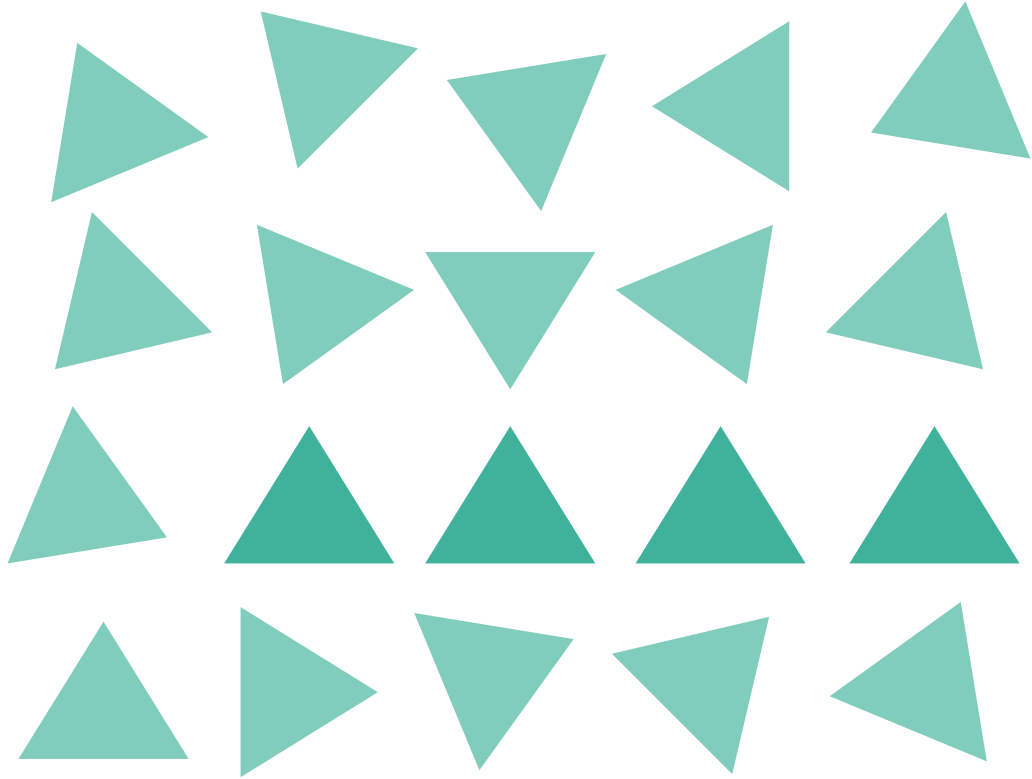




Pattern Problem Solving





As the artist picks his [her] way along, rejecting and accepting as he [she] goes, certain patterns of enquiry emerge.

BRIDGET RILEY

What's it all about?

Pattern language was originated by Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein, three architects who wanted to look at how to generate new building design ideas. The basis of the approach is straightforward: instead of expressing the elements of a problem in writing or verbally, you use symbols and patterns to spark new ideas. The act of drawing is used as a means for letting go of your assumptions and opening up your more intuitive responses.

What's it for?

The purpose of the technique is to free you from the constraints of verbal or written language by taking a problem or issue and mapping it visually using a series of abstract symbols. It forces your mind to look at problems in a whole new way. Once you have produced a series of symbols, you can start to look for any visual patterns that emerge and what they suggest to you about the problem.

Using the tool

The technique involves a number of steps:

- a.** Identify the problem or topic you want to address
- b.** List all the attributes you can think of for your problem or topic
- c.** Now draw a symbol of each attribute on a series of index cards or post-its. Just draw whatever comes to mind and feels appropriate to you
- d.** Spread out all the cards with the symbols face up. Move them around, mix and match, pair some up, focus on one or two in particular. Just allow yourself to play with them intuitively. Don't try to force anything, just move them around. If your ideas dry up, try adding new symbols or combining other techniques like free association

- e. Record your ideas and decide on any actions you want to take

What next?

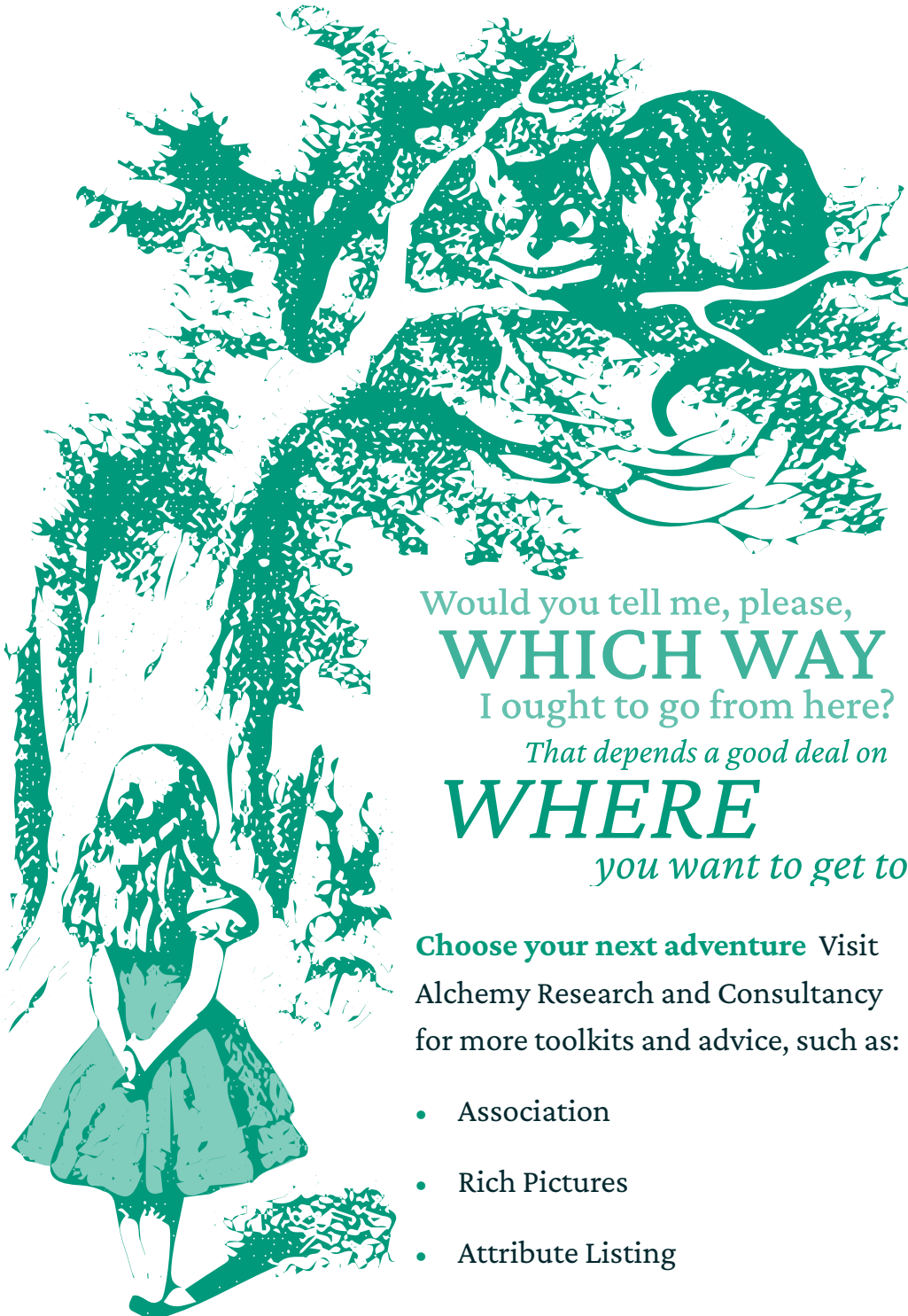
Think about a problem that has been irritating you for a while. Use pattern language to map out the elements of the problem. What new observations emerge? In what way were you able to look at the problem differently?

Quick tips

- Don't be put off by having to draw. It really doesn't matter whether you can draw or not
- Don't worry if the symbols don't make sense to anyone else. The technique is for your benefit, not theirs!
- Don't spend too much time thinking about the symbols. Try and draw them quickly and intuitively
- Be as open to inspiration as you can be. Don't worry about where the ideas come from as long as they come



Alchemy was founded to help people navigate change.
We are passionate about organisational learning and
supporting people to understand change in action.



Would you tell me, please,
WHICH WAY
I ought to go from here?

That depends a good deal on

WHERE
you want to get to.

Choose your next adventure Visit
Alchemy Research and Consultancy
for more toolkits and advice, such as:

- Association
- Rich Pictures
- Attribute Listing