

In squiggly careers, we're spending more time starting from scratch.

A blank piece of paper can feel daunting but it's also an opportunity to experiment and explore possibilities.

Developing your starting-from-scratch skills will increase your learning agility (*your ability to succeed in first-time situations*) and your confidence in setting a new direction for a task, project or role.

### Benefits of starting from scratch

- Creates new ideas and ways of thinking
- Generates growth
- Boosts your confidence in dealing with new challenges.

## Coach yourself questions

1. What's the problem I'm trying to solve?



2. What do I already know?



3. What could I do first?



## Ideas for action

### 1. Use the MVP (minimum viable product) approach

This approach will provide you with the pace you need to get started whilst minimising risk at the same time.

Prototype and create something that is good enough:

- Get started and then let it go to let it grow
- Get feedback from the people that matter (*clients / customers / colleagues*)
- Decide if you need to swerve (*change direction*), speed up (*if it's gone well*), slow down (*more questions than answers*) or stop (*if it didn't work*).

### 2. Do some scratch-stacking

Borrowed brilliance from habit-stacking, starting from scratch doesn't always need to feel like you're doing something dramatically different.

Instead you could:

- Ask yourself: *What meetings or moments in my week could benefit from a new approach?*
- This should be something you do regularly (*creating presentations / process maps / writing copy*)
- 'Stack' on something new (*working with someone else / trying out new tech, a new tool or approach*).

### 3. Explore smart-copying

This isn't a 'cut and paste' approach to copying.

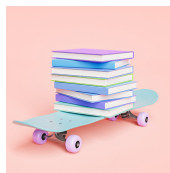
Smart-copying means generating new ideas that you can adapt when starting from scratch.

- Start by looking at what someone else / another company is doing really well in your area of interest
- Then ask yourself: *How could that be useful or relevant for me in my world and in the work that I'm doing?*
- Reflect on what you would do differently as a result.

## Recommended resources



**Steal like an Artist**  
Author Austin Kleon on how you can boost creativity when starting from scratch.



**How to become an agile learner**  
HBR article on how improving this skill can help you succeed in new situations.



Helen and Sarah share ideas for action to help you increase your learning agility on episode [#367](#) of Squiggly Careers.