Keep solutions simple, do not over-complicate designs. Limit detail by thumbnail sketching, producing generalised potential solutions. Add more detail, at a later date.

Study existing products that may provide innovative solutions, to aspects of the design. Study products that inspire you, looking for elements that could provide you with a new design route.

Work as a team, collaborating on possible solutions. Share out aspects of the design and meet regularly to discuss developments. Bounce ideas of each other and listen to suggestions.

Do not be scared of producing radical designs, that are very different to those that already exist. Do not limit yourself to a conventional approach. Use your imagination.

Think ‘out of the box’. This is not easy, but design from an unusual starting point. Study existing designs, that have broken new ground, for potential inspiration.

Involve your client, potential customers and focus groups. Feedback on designs usually leads to improvements. A client may initiate a new design route, for you to follow.

Take each statement from your specification and develop separate solutions for each one. Then, try to blend the solutions, to form a single design.

Refer back to the mood board, prepared when discussing the project with the client, at the start of the project / task. This may help you to refocus on the task and to think of fresh ideas.

Look at the range of technology (electronics etc....) available, that could be applied to a design solution. For example, modern programmable circuits, that are flexible and can be modified.

Spend time studying the work of successful designers, such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Eileen Gray and many more. These people were innovators in the field of design.

Design with the starting point being the property of a material (e.g. the flexibility of flexi-ply). Include smart materials. Work with the properties of a material to ‘formulate’ a design.

Design and develop your ideas, by using the iterative design process, using sketching, model making, CAD and all the design tools available, as and when you feel it is right.

Be prepared to put your pencil down. Rest or have a break. When ready, start designing again.

For detail, information and advice on designing and the NEA, go to: http://www.technologystudent.com/despro_fish/nea1.html

For detail, information and advice on iterative design, go to: http://www.technologystudent.com/despro_fish/iterative1.html

Design fixation confines a designer to limited creativity. It is a regressive cycle, that is sometimes difficult to escape. However, there are strategies that can be employed, that will help a designer regain creativity.