Un-useless Workshop

Break UX rules and reimagine how we engage with digital media through bodily, physical interaction.
In this workshop, participants explore their potential and build something inspiringly «un-useless».

Workshop guide and facilitation manual

Version: January 2026

Overview

The «Un-useless Workshop» is a format for designers and curious makers who want to think digital interaction through the body again. The focus is not the perfect solution, but a single, unexpected interaction that is built with simple means and tested immediately.

The format combines three stances: «Chindogu» as an intentionally imperfect, anarchic tool, «Bricolage» as working with what is available, and «Tinkering» as learning through playful building.

This document is written so you can run the workshop without additional materials.

Goals and learning outcomes

By the end of the workshop, participants have:

- designed, built, and tested at least one unconventional human computer interaction
- tested and reinterpreted materials and everyday objects as interaction building blocks
- learned to prototype quickly with limited means, without perfection pressure
- experienced how sharing and learning from others increases idea diversity
- created documentation of their interaction, photo, short video, name, purpose

Core principles

- One interaction, one task
- Imperfect is allowed
- No programming
- Mouse as constraint
- Together, not alone

Practicalities

Recommendations

- Duration: 2 workshop blocks of 3 hours, ideally with 7 days in between
- Group size: 4 to 12 participants
- Roles: 1 facilitator, optional 1 assistant
- Prior knowledge: none

Equipment per participant

- 1 PC mouse, wired or wireless with dongle
- 1 smartphone
- 1 adapter to connect the mouse to the smartphone, depending on the device: USB-C, Lightning, USB-A
- 2 sheets of paper, 1 pen
- 1 small «support object» at the seat, for example a small duck

Materials and tools

- Cardboard, paper, wood scraps, fabric, hook and loop fastener, string, tape, rubber bands
- Clips, cable ties, screws, nuts
- Packaging, bottles, cups, sponges, brushes
- Hot glue gun, craft knife, scissors, pliers, screwdriver, cordless drill
- Safety briefing and protective table covers

Room setup

- Large table island, materials visible in the middle
- Tool table separate from the material table
- Projector or large screen for short inputs
- Water and a small snack

Day 1 schedule

Duration: 3 hours

Goal for the day

- Test the mouse on a smartphone
- Open the mouse and understand its parts
- Prototype and document a first «un-useless» interaction

Timeline

Time	Content
00:00 to 00:10	Welcome, context, plan
00:10 to 00:25	Icebreaker e.g. «What kind of tomato are you today?»
00:25 to 00:45	Short input: chindogu, bricolage, tinkering, why «un-useless»
00:45 to 01:10	Exercise 1: Crazy 8 idea warm-up
01:10 to 01:30	Try the mouse on the smartphone
01:30 to 01:50	Open the mouse, explore components

01:50 to 02:40	Build: first interaction as a prototype
02:40 to 03:00	Showcase, photo and video, wrap-up

Exercise 1: Crazy 8

- Choose an object
- Roll a topic
- 8 minutes: 8 mini sketches
- Share in small groups or only highlights

Build rules

- The mouse must be used.
- The body is involved.
- Interaction with digital media.
- Exactly one task.
- No programming.
- Fun is allowed.

Between sessions

Until the second session, participants pay attention to interesting bodily interactions in everyday life and note at least three observations.

Day 2 schedule

Duration: 3 hours

Goal for the day

- Create on interaction
- Document the prototype

Timeline

Time	Content
00:00 to 00:10	Welcome, focus on making
00:10 to 00:20	Icebreaker with a new object
00:20 to 00:30	Short review: what worked well, what remained open
00:30 to 00:50	Exercise 2: two objects, 5 minutes, 3 ideas, then swap
00:50 to 02:50	Build: new interactions, coaching, exchange
02:50 to 03:00	Showcase, documentation, closing round

Exercise 2: Object rotation

- Choose two objects
- 5 minutes: 3 ideas, draw a topic for each idea
- Swap objects, again 5 minutes: 3 ideas
- Share highlights

Closing round

- What do you take with you?
- What helped?
- What could be improved?

Appendix

A. Chindogu rules

- A chindogu is basically useless.
- A chindogu really exists.
- A chindogu carries an anarchic spirit.
- Chindogu are tools for everyday life.
- A chindogu is not intended for sale.
- A chindogu does not arise only from a whim.
- Chindogu is not propaganda, but innocent.
- Chindogu is never taboo.
- A chindogu must not be patented.
- A chindogu is prejudice-free.

B. Topic list

1. Fitness
2. Food
3. Gaze
4. Posture
5. Safety
6. Relaxation
7. Automation
8. Clothing
9. Physical closeness
10. Love
11. Emotions
12. Comfort
13. Order
14. Cleaning
15. Time saving
16. Make-up

17. Mobility
18. Work
19. Animals
20. Feel

C. SCAMPER cheat sheet

- Substitute
- Combine
- Adjust, adapt
- Modify
- Put to other use
- Eliminate
- Reverse

D. Documentation template

Field	Notes
Name of the interaction	…
What task?	… (maximum one sentence)
Bodily action	… (e.g., twist, press, pull, roll)
Digital action	… (e.g., scroll, select, start)
Materials and parts	…
Bricolage moment	… (what was reinterpreted?)

Short theory orientation

Chindogu are almost «useless» inventions that solve an everyday problem. They provide a solution that only appears useless at second glance. Their origins can be traced back to Japan in the 1990s, with Kenji Kawakami.

Bricolage, from the French word for DIY making, is the method of «you might still need this». It draws on materials and tools that are already available and reassigns their meaning from project to project. In bricolage, no two people will make the same thing from the same materials.

Tinkering is about working and learning through the process. It is a valuable approach that engages with a problem in a playful, exploratory, and iterative way. In tinkering, you repeatedly respond to what you encounter. Ideas are tried out and adjustments are made continuously.