



Skills
Creativity,
communication,
analysis

MAKE UP YOUR OWN MAXIM

"Whether you think that you can, or that you can't, you are usually right." - Henry Ford



A maxim, like the one above, is a saying that carries a lot of meaning with few words. They tend to describe a philosophy or observation that is not immediately obvious. *Edison's Concrete Piano* has a maxim for each chapter, many of which were made up. Here are a few examples:

- Innovation is near-sighted.*
- Genius is not synonymous with perfection.*
- Occasionally, what seems impossible really is impossible.*

You can make up your own maxim by following these steps.

1. Think of three observations or generalizations you have made about the world around you. To do this, ask yourself what you have noticed about teenagers, pets, teachers, parents, school, television, video games, people, societies, countries, or some other aspect of life. It can be anything...

2. A maxim is a generalization. One way to convert an observation into a maxim is to take something specific and make it general. For example, Leonardo da Vinci tried to understand everything, and he failed. This specific observation can be turned into a general statement: *the more you try, the more you fail*. A maxim states some sort of wisdom or truth about life. The specific observation that wasps are attracted to fruit can be turned into a metaphor that makes a point about people: *the sweeter the fruit, the more wasps it attracts*, which suggests that good in people can attract others who are looking to take advantage. Note that a maxim does not necessarily hold true at all times! A maxim states something that is abstract, rather than a concrete statement of a fact that comes from the senses. For example, the concrete observation that teachers are all older than the age of 20 could be used to make up the abstract maxim: *It takes an adult to deal with teenagers*.

Not all observational statements are readily converted into maxims. I could not think of a maxim from the observation that "most house pets have four legs" (maybe you can). If you have trouble making up a maxim from your observations, don't despair, just write *some more observations and try again*. *Writing maxims is like riding a bike; you might fail on the first try, but with practise anyone can do it.*

MAXIM: _____