

SEASONS OF FINDING YOUR VOICE - DEVELOPING A UNIQUE STYLE

Article: <https://99u.adobe.com/articles/51575/the-4-phases-of-developing-your-creative-voice>

You must be willing to embrace a season of incompetence in order to move to the next level and continue developing your voice.

DISCOVERY PHASE *(That initial moment of intrigue, when a seed is planted in your mind about what is possible, is what I call Discovery Phase. It's when you suddenly become fascinated with an idea or a new direction for your work, but you don't yet have a clear path forward. In this phase, it's important to identify the small, obtainable skills that could become the building blocks of growth.)*

- **A few questions that you might ask during Discovery Phase:**
 - What new ideas or skills are obsessing me right now?
 - Where is my curiosity leading me next?
 - Who are the handful "best in class" practitioners of this particular skill or craft, and what can I learn from them?

EMULATION PHASE *(No one wishes their way to mastery. If you want to develop a unique, resonant voice, you must, of course, do the work to hone your skills of expression. Many artists have honed their unique voice through a strategic regimen of emulation. By mimicking the work of their influences, they were able to build a basic platform of skills necessary to eventually branch out and explore new territory.)*

- **A few questions that are common in Emulation Phase include:**
 - Which "mentor works" of my heroes should I immerse myself in, and emulate, in order to build my skills?
 - Which daily, repeatable practices should I engage in as I continue to close the gap between my taste and my skills? Maybe this is a daily writing regimen, creating spec work, or practicing a skill.

DIVERGENCE PHASE *(At some point, Emulation becomes ineffective and unbearable. Once you've achieved a sufficient level of mastery over the basic skills of your craft, you must choose to take those building blocks and make something uniquely yours.)*

- **Common questions during Divergence Phase include:**
 - Where am I stuck emulating, and how can I take a strategic risk with my work?
 - How do I need to push myself out of the comfort zone so I can add unique value?
 - What new opportunities do I see, and need to uniquely pursue with my work?

CRISIS PHASE *(Once you become known for something, it's tempting to begin to protect the thing you're known for. It's easy to get stuck and fail to pay attention to your intuition, or to no longer seek new inspiration.)*

- **Some questions you might ask during Crisis Phase include:**
 - What is the next frontier of growth for me, in order to continue pursuing mastery of my craft?
 - Where am I protecting my reputation, when I should be striving for growth?
 - What is inspiring me right now, and how might I begin to incorporate it into my work through emulation?