

FACILITATION TECHNIQUE	Brainstorm Rules
CORE PURPOSE / FOCUS	#ideation #idea generation #brainstorming #vision #liberating structures
PHASE	#action #opening
SKILL / CONTENT	#creativity #innovation
TIME FRAME IN MINUTES	#>60
GROUP SIZE IN PERSONS	#6-15 #16-30 #<30
FACILITATION LEVEL	Beginner
COMFORT ZONE	Safe

Introduction

We've all been in brainstorm sessions that went nowhere. Here, the goal isn't a perfect idea, it's lots of ideas, collaboration, and openness to wild solutions. The last thing you want in a brainstorm is someone who, instead of coming up with ideas, only talks about why the ones already mentioned won't work. Not only does that kill creativity, but it shifts the group's mindset from a generative one to a critical one. The only way to get to good ideas is to have lots to choose from.

Necessary tools (what you need)

The most important ingredient of a successful online brainstorm is having the right tools: online whiteboard tools that allow everyone to collaborate in real-time, file sharing tools to give everyone on the team access, and communication tools to easily share links and details.

Steps

1. Define the problem. The first step should be to determine a problem question that the brainstorming session will address. ...
2. Lay out the context and definitions so there is the same understanding of the key terminology and topics connected to the problem or question which is in the focus of the brainstorming session. Share any contextual knowledge ahead of time

3. It can be helpful to share knowledge about the problem itself or the brainstorming technique that you plan to use. For the project or problem to be solved, let everyone know what your objectives are, what challenges the team is facing, any relevant history, and how the project fits into your team's overall goals. For the brainstorming session itself, tell everyone why you selected that particular technique and what you hope to accomplish during the meeting.
4. Set the agenda
5. Invite the right people. When sharing an agenda or etiquette in an email invite prior to the workshop, you might include the brainstorming rules so people come to the workshop prepared.
6. Holding the session keep the basic rules as follows:
 - Defer judgement. You never know where a good idea is going to come from. The key is make everyone feel like they can say the idea on their mind and allow others to build on it.
 - Encourage wild ideas. Wild ideas can often give rise to creative leaps. In thinking about ideas that are wacky or out there we tend to think about what we really want without the constraints of technology or materials.
 - Build on the ideas of others. Being positive and building on the ideas of others take some skill. In conversation, we try to use "and" instead of "but."
 - Stay focused on the topic. Try to keep the discussion on target, otherwise you can diverge beyond the scope of what you're trying to design for.
 - One conversation at a time. Your team is far more likely to build on an idea and make a creative leap if everyone is paying full attention to whoever is sharing a new idea.
 - Be visual. In live brainstorms we write down on Post-its and then put them on a wall. Nothing gets an idea across faster than drawing it. Doesn't matter if you're not Rembrandt!
 - Go for quantity. Aim for as many new ideas as possible. In a good session, up to 100 ideas are generated in 60 minutes. Crank the ideas out quickly and build on the best ones.

Tips & Tricks

- While you can simply deliver these rules verbally at the start of a session, it's useful to have them present and easy to refer to throughout. Add them to your online whiteboard or in your shared Google Doc. You can even send the rules as a part of the invitation mail.
- Use collaboration tools like an online whiteboard to brainstorm online. It's the perfect digital space to ideate in real-time, take notes, add post-it-notes, vote on ideas, and follow up after your brainstorm. In addition, you may need tools to share specific files with the group like Google Docs, Google Drive, or DropBox. It can also be useful to keep communication avenues like Slack open during your brainstorm if you want to share links.
- Start by using a template to create a visual space for brainstorming on your online whiteboard. Write the instructions for the technique you're using, and practice features that may be new to you (like using the Timer and setting up participant

voting). The idea is to make it easy for your group to get started. [Try this online brainstorming starter kit https://miro.com/miroverse/category/ideation-and-brainstorming/brainstorming-starter-guide](https://miro.com/miroverse/category/ideation-and-brainstorming/brainstorming-starter-guide) – an easy-to-use template by UX Designer Jen Goertzen. It will help you get set up in seconds so the prep work doesn't take too much time.

- **4 common mistakes to avoid** when brainstorming online: If you're a brainstorming rookie, read these common errors most newbies make so you can be sure to avoid them in your session:
 1. Not giving out pre-work: Some facilitators balk at the idea of pre-work. They think it's too much of a hassle for participants. But even a little pre-work will save you so much time in the future and lead to a better, more efficient brainstorm. When you send out the agenda, ask participants to block off some time to think about the problem you wish to solve, come up with a few preliminary talking points, and come prepared to ideate.
 2. Failing to set the stage: Participants will be eager to dive right into a session. But take a moment to set ground rules. Explain the [brainstorming technique](#) that you'll use during the session. Give everyone a few minutes to "brain dump," a 10-minute exercise that involves writing down ideas in silence. That way, even participants who don't always love speaking up, or who find it difficult to concentrate when everyone is speaking, will get a chance to come up with some thoughts.
 3. Encouraging participants to look for approval: At some point during the brainstorm, participants will look to each other for approval. It's only natural. It's vital, however, that you shut it down as quickly as you can. If the brainstorm becomes a minefield of judgment, people will stop sharing their best, most unusual ideas
 4. Allowing someone to dominate the conversation: Sometimes, you might encounter a participant who is eager to have the first and last word. Allowing someone to dominate the conversation makes the other participants feel like they can't share freely. Try giving this person a task like taking notes to redirect their attention.

Source

<http://www.designkit.org/methods/28>