

## Brainstorming

### Description

This technique guides a group in an interactive exchange of ideas, deferring judgment until the end of the session. It is a good way to quickly generate many diverse ideas. This technique is particularly effective when participants feel "free" to offer their ideas without fear of criticism.

### Application

Used as a means of generating ideas and encouraging participation and creative thinking by all group members. When all members participate, project "buy-in" is automatic.

### Guidelines

- Encourage active participation of all group members.
- Develop a high-energy, enthusiastic climate.
- Do not criticize or compliment ideas as they are presented.
- Encourage creative thinking, including out of the box ideas.
- Build and expand on the ideas of others.
- Avoid stopping when the ideas slow down; try to generate as long a list as possible within the allotted time.

### Method

A brainstorming session may be structured (each group member presents an idea in turn) or unstructured (the facilitator accepts random inputs from the group). Structured brainstorming ensures participation by all group members. Unstructured brainstorming may be dominated by one or more group members.

To conduct a brainstorming session:

1. Review the guidelines for brainstorming.
2. Clearly state the question and the time limit (15-60 minutes).
3. Members take turns calling out ideas. (For structured brainstorming, this is done in order. Members pass when an idea does not come to mind quickly, but may contribute on the next round).
4. Record each idea exactly as presented on a flipchart/board/post-it note, visible to all group members.
5. After all ideas have been presented, discuss the ideas to ensure that all members have the same understanding of each idea. Eliminate duplications or out of context suggestions.

Adapted from the Naval Safety Center Online Content