



IDEATION

BRAINWRITING

Brainwriting is a tool for generating ideas and solutions to a problem. You ask participants to write down their ideas about a particular question or problem on sheets of paper for a few minutes; then, you have each participant pass their ideas on to someone else, who reads the ideas and adds new ideas. After a few minutes, you ask the participants to pass their papers to others, and the process repeats. After 10 to 15 minutes, you collect the sheets and post them for immediate discussion.



FORMAT
Workshop



TIMEFRAME
1 hour



GROUP SIZE
1-50



FACILITATION LEVEL
Beginner



REQUIRED MATERIALS
Paper, Post-its

STEPS



1

Seat group members at a table, with a sheet of paper in front of each person. At the top of the page, ask them to write down the problem that everyone is trying to solve. (Note: they should not write their names.) Appoint someone to be moderator, and time each round.

2

Give the group three minutes to write down three ideas for how to solve the problem. They should not edit the ideas, or try to perfect them. Allow them to write in "free form." Do not permit any discussion.

3

After three minutes, move on to round two. Gather in the papers, shuffle them, and then pass them out. You may need to sort out cases where someone gets back a paper they have already written on. Ask everyone to generate three more ideas on the new paper he or she has just received. They can build on the first three ideas that are already written, or think of three new solutions.

4

The moderator decides how many rounds there are.

5

When all rounds are finished, collect the papers, and write all of the ideas on a whiteboard for everyone to see. Then begin discussing which ideas would work best for solving the current problem.

Benefits

- Because there's no discussion during the initial idea-generating rounds, you can produce many ideas in a very short amount of time.
- All group members – even the quiet and shy people – have an equal chance of offering their ideas for consideration.
- Everything is anonymous – you don't know who wrote which ideas – so there's more freedom to be truly creative. Participants are empowered to suggest solutions that they otherwise might have thought were too unusual, or would not be well received.
- Exchanging papers still allows group members to evaluate and build on other people's ideas, but in a much more concentrated, creative way.

Tips

- Brainwriting is particularly useful with a group of people who are somewhat reticent and would be unlikely to offer many ideas in an open group session such as Brainstorming.
- It is also useful when everyone has different problems that they want to solve.
- It also works well with large groups - there is no real limit to the group size.

Sources

1. MindTools