

Brainstorming is designed to help you come up with many ideas and suggestions in a short time. It can be used to generate ideas for projects, help you visualize possible problems, and suggest solutions.

To brainstorm....

Relax.

Brainstorming is anything but a rigid and formal exercise. If you are comfortable you will brainstorm much easier, and it will be more enjoyable.

Record.

Select someone to write down the ideas as they develop. (Two people, if the ideas start pouring in.) Ideally on flip chart paper so everyone can see the ideas being generated.

Focus.

Select what you want to brainstorm (new projects, problems and solutions, publicity, etc.)

Blurt.

Have everyone in the group blurt out as many ideas pertaining to the subject as they can. Don't discuss the ideas; that will come later. Don't worry if any of your ideas might be considered silly. Often such suggestions turn out to be extremely useful.

Review.

After you have exhausted your great mental reservoir, review your ideas. Throw out the impractical and the unworkable ideas and discuss the good ones. Can any ideas be combined?

Helpful Hints

Using brainstorming in a group that is unfamiliar with the concept can be difficult. To help break the ice, form a circle and have each person very quickly name something in a category like "the world's worst food." This should get people in the mood to brainstorm.

Specify the brainstorming rules before you begin:

1. Evaluation and criticism is forbidden.
2. All contributions are to be encouraged. Every idea counts, no matter how silly or impossible it may sound to you.
3. Quantity is the goal. Generate as many ideas as possible. Remember – the more ideas generated, the more likely it becomes that you'll get good ones.
4. The combination and improvement of ideas is sought. Combining two or more ideas can generate a better idea.