

Classic Group Brainstorming Step-by-Step



KEY LEARNINGS: CLASSIC GROUP BRAINSTORMING STEP-BY-STEP

1. Define the Problem or Goal Clearly

- Start with a clear, specific problem statement.
- The question should be open-ended to encourage creativity.
- Example: A bank brainstorming session might focus on, "How can we reduce wait times for customers in our branches?"

2. Gather the Right Team and Set the Environment

- Include people from different roles for diverse perspectives.
- Ideal group size: 5-8 participants (but can vary).
- Choose a comfortable, informal space (virtual or physical).
- Icebreakers, snacks, or caffeine help loosen up the group.

3. Review the Ground Rules

- No idea is bad—deferring judgment fosters creativity.
- Encourage wild ideas—even unrealistic ideas can spark breakthroughs.
- One person speaks at a time—ensures everyone gets heard.
- Aim for quantity, not quality—refinement happens later.

4. Set a Time Limit

- Typical brainstorming sessions last 15-30 minutes.
- A timer creates urgency and keeps energy levels high.
- Example: "Let's see how many ideas we can generate in 20 minutes!"

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5. Brainstorm! (Idea Generation Phase)

- Ideas should be captured visibly (whiteboard, sticky notes, shared document, etc.).
- Examples of brainstorming for bank wait-time reduction:
 - "Hire a part-time teller for peak hours."
 - "Offer free coffee in line."
 - "Create an express window for simple transactions."
 - "Use a ticket system so customers can sit while waiting."
 - "Have a greeter at the entrance to answer quick questions."
- If ideas slow down, encourage out-of-the-box thinking:
 - "Give me an idea that would surprise our customers."
 - "What would be a completely radical approach?"

6. Keep the Tone Energetic and Inclusive

- The facilitator should maintain an upbeat, encouraging tone.
- Use phrases like "Great! What else?" or "Love that idea!"
- Ensure everyone participates—invite quieter members to share.
- If criticism starts, gently steer back to ideation mode:
 - "Remember, we're not judging ideas yet—we'll refine them later!"

7. Wrap Up the Session

- When the timer runs out or ideas slow down, thank participants.
- Communicate next steps—will ideas be reviewed later? Will there be another session?
- Example wrap-up:
 - "We generated 25 ideas today! Great job! We'll meet tomorrow to evaluate them and pick the best ones."
 - If time allows, do a quick ranking or voting on the most promising ideas.

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Key Takeaways

- A structured brainstorming process ensures creativity flows without chaos.
- Separating idea generation (divergent thinking) from evaluation (convergent thinking) leads to better results.
- Proper facilitation and a positive, judgment-free environment encourage maximum participation and idea diversity.