Brainwrite

What

Brainstorming (group sessions) has three siblings which you should get to know: **Braindumping (individual sessions)**, **Brainwriting (a mix of individual and group sessions)** and **Brainwalking (another mix of individual and group sessions)**.

Should Your Team Brainstorm as a Group or as Individuals?

Best practice:

Switching between the two modes of individual and collective ideation sessions can be seamless—and highly productive. Alex Osborn's 1950s classic *Applied Imagination* gave advice that is still relevant: Creativity comes from a blend of individual and collective ideation.

It's often a good idea to do individual ideation sessions like braindumping, brainwriting and brainwalking before *and* after brainstorming group sessions. We recommend that you mix the methods: Brainstorming, Brainwriting, Brainwalking, and Braindumping.

[Continued on next page]

What

Brainwriting is a technique where participants write ideas onto cards and then pass their idea cards on to the next person, moving those cards around the group in a circle as participants build on the ideas of others. Participants perform this technique in complete silence—and they are forced to build on, instead of criticise, other participants' ideas. The cycle can be repeated multiple times and can be applied to chunks of the problem being addressed, depending on the need.

Why

The beauty of brainwriting is that it levels the playing field immediately, and it removes many of the obstacles of group brainstorming. With traditional verbal brainstorming, the number of ideas which can be expressed at once is limited, and the time it takes to get through a number of ideas is much longer, which results in many participants forgetting or becoming confused while others shout out ideas. This is especially so for those who are shy or introverted or who may be at a disadvantage due to being less senior or unfamiliar with the specialisations being discussed.

Brainwriting is an excellent starting point for ideation sessions, and can serve as a means to maximise the initial braindump, or as a way to refocus if other ideation methods go haywire. Before the chaos of group ideation muddles people's thinking, help them get their initial thoughts out in the open with an introductory brainwriting session and use the results later to build on further with other techniques.

Best practice: How

• If you are the facilitator, you'll brief ideation participants upfront on the problem statement, goals and important user insights from previous research and findings.

• Encourage participants to jot down ideas on their idea cards for 3-5 minutes before passing on their ideas when you make the call.

[Continued from previous page]

- Ideally, participants pass on idea cards 3-10 times depending on the problem statement and goals.

- This all happens silently and without any interference or communication.

- Encourage participants to push themselves for more ideas at least a couple of times, in the few minutes they have, in order to maximize the output and variation.

- You should stoke the session with encouragement and provide questions or statements which push participants to think outside of their comfort zones.

- The cycle can be repeated multiple times and can be applied to chunks of the problem being addressed, depending on the need.

- After ending the cycle, each participant will briefly verbally present the thoughts on the idea card he/she ends up with by the end of the cycle to the rest of the team—in order to spark new streams of thinking or combinations of ideas. If you were the facilitator, you would often be taking notes on a white board.

- When all team members have presented their idea cards, you can select the best ideas which you can continue to build and elaborate on in other ideation sessions. There are various methods you can use such as "Post-it Voting", "Four Categories", "Bingo Selection"and "Now Wow How Matrix".

Use our idea card template!

On the next page, you'll find an empty idea card template that you can print out to use in your brainwriting sessions. Have a fruitful session—and more importantly, have fun while brainwriting!

Brainwriting idea card

Problem statement / goals / user insights

Write your ideas here! Build on the ideas written down in the space below.

Do you want to learn more?

Learn how to use this template to your best advantage in our online course **Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide**. Sign up for it today and learn how to apply the Design Thinking process to *your* project if you haven't already started the course.

Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide

▬▭▭ Beginner course

The world's leading companies, such as Apple, Google and Samsung, are already using the design thinking approach—because they know it's the way forward when it comes to innovation and product success. Through **Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide**, you will deep dive into the five phases of this paradigm-shifting approach to problem-solving—empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. By receiving detailed guidance on problem-solving activities ranging from ideation techniques—such as brainstorming and using analogies—to ways of gathering feedback from your prototypes, you'll be able to download the other templates involved and effectively use them in your work. Get ready to unpack, explore, and master design thinking—using it to set yourself apart and unlock the next stage of your professional life.
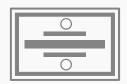
Learn more about this course >

How to advance your career with our online courses

Take online courses by industry experts.

Lessons are self-paced so you'll never be late for class or miss a deadline.

Get a Course Certificate.

Your answers are graded by experts, not machines. Get an industry-recognized Course Certificate to prove your skills.

Advance your career.

Use your new skills in your existing job or to get a new job in UX design. Get help from our community.

See all our courses >

About the Interaction Design Foundation

INTERACTION DESIGN
FOUNDATION

With over 66,000 alumni, the Interaction Design Foundation is the biggest design school globally. Industry leaders such as IBM and Adobe train their teams with our courses, and universities such as MIT and the University of Cambridge include our courses in their curricula. Our online courses are taught by industry experts and cover the entire spectrum of UX design from beginner to advanced. We give you industry-recognized course certificates to advance your career. Since 2002, we've put together the world's biggest and most authoritative library of open-source UX Design literature created by such noted authors as Don Norman and Clayton Christensen.