

Brainstorming

Method	Brainstorming
Introduction	
<p>Brainstorming is a method that supports creative thinking and problem solving by gathering a list of ideas spontaneously contributed by a group of people. Those involved meet and agree to use their imagination, knowledge and experience to generate new ideas and solutions for problems.</p> <p>The two most important principles of brainstorming are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferred Judgment: in the first phase of generating ideas, participants have to agree to postpone judgment—all ideas are good! • Quantity Breeds Quality: this means that the more ideas that are generated during the first phase of brainstorming, the better the chance of producing effective results and solutions. 	
Aim	To solve problems in a group setting
Target group:	This method can be applied in a wide variety of disciplines including social sciences, teacher training, business training, health service courses, etc.
Intended learning outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced ability to think creatively • Improved critical thinking and decision making • Better problem solving skills • Improved ability to communicate and participate in group-work 	
Description	
<p>As the facilitator, you should first explain the basic rules of brainstorming and introduce the usual two phases that make up a brainstorming session, namely the first, creative phase and then the second critical phase.</p> <p>In the first phase, students are presented with the topic/problem to be solved. They should come up all the solutions they can think of which are written down on a board, a big sheet of paper or on post-its.</p> <p>In the second critical phase, they carry out a critical appraisal of the ideas generated. This can be done in different ways, e.g. they can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross out all the ideas nobody accepts • group the ideas into categories • make a mind map of the ideas • list the ideas (prioritise them) in discussion or by voting <p>The way of working with the ideas gathered depends on the structure of the problem and the aim of the lesson.</p>	

During this exercise, you as facilitator should provide the task or problem, help to stimulate students input, take care of time-keeping and make sure the rules are respected	
Preparation	The teaching staff member needs to prepare the task/problem that will be the subject of the brainstorm.
Required resources and equipment	Blackboard, white board, pen and paper or post-its
Success factors	The success or otherwise of this method depends largely on good time and space coordination and a willingness on the part of everyone involved to stick to the rules.
Advantages	The brainstorming method enhances students' ability to think creatively, improves their critical thinking and decision making, leads to better problem solving skills and ability to communicate and participate in group-work
Disadvantages	Students can be blocked in the first round by the most active ones. The facilitator has to ensure there are effective ground rules in place to ensure everyone is involved.
Additional information	You can use digital tools to support the brainstorming method. AnswerGarden is a good example, it is an easy to use, free tool that enables people to give feedback as well as gathering and prioritizing ideas. It can be used in the classroom with students' smartphones.