



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.

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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.

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- 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”.

