



Roles



Facilitator

1. Set up the session
2. Guide the session and keep it on topic
3. Assign homework to the participants
4. Form a well-defined problem statement to focus on



Participants

1. Do the homework (explained below)
2. Attend the session

Before You Brainstorm



Do Some Homework

Participants can look at other products, older projects, other industries, etc. and bring photos and physical samples into the session to spark ideas



Get Up To Speed

At a minimum, all participants should be up to speed on the project as to not play catch-up during the session.

Tips For Brainstorming



4 Person Teams

are ideal for brainstorming and generate more ideas than any other sized group



Interdisciplinary Teams

are great. When appropriate, bring in an end user, someone from another department, anyone with a different POV.



Use the 2 Pizza Rule

If 2 pizzas isn't enough to feed everyone in the room, there are too many people present.



1 Hour

is the optimal length for a brainstorming session.

Brainstorming Dos and Don'ts



First explain the problem statement

A brainstorming session should be focused on a well-defined problem statement.



Get Visual

Good brainstorming sessions are highly visual. You can use the following tools:

- Sketching
 - Mind mapping
 - Diagrams
 - Stick figures
 - Crude prototyping using:
clay, foam core, duct tape
- Show and Tell with examples:
- Competitive products
 - Physical samples
 - Elegant solutions from other fields
 - Promising technologies
 - Physical objects, videos, and photos work well
 - Ideas you already had in your head



Number your ideas

- This helps the facilitator bring the group back to previous ideas
- It can also help set a goal e.g. 50 ideas in an hour



Build and jump

- When the energy of a session begins to die down a facilitator can encourage a push by introducing a new variation on a previous idea
- Build on existing ideas or jump to a previous idea



Write down the flow of ideas

- Should be done on a medium visible to the whole group
- Don't take notes, just capture the ideas so the group can see the progression
- Facilitators should take note of which ideas are worth building on or jump back to



Don't critique or debate ideas or discourage silly ideas

- Go for quantity, encourage wild ideas, silly ideas can keep things fun



No need to go around in a circle taking turns

- Brainstorming doesn't need to be democratic



Don't write everything down

- You don't have to take minutes, just note the idea