

Brainstorming Checklist

PREPARE

Define the challenge

- Topics should be broad enough for surprises
- But narrow enough for focused ideation
- Prepare 5-min context-setting opener

Invite participants

- Diversity is essential
- Ideal group size: 5-8
- Include experienced brainstormers

Determine location

- Offsite: less distractions
- Onsite: easier to find participants

Prepare the space

- Quiet space with few distractions
- Large vertical surface to hold Post-its
- Surface easily visible to all
- Comfortable seating for long sessions
- Standing room for short sessions

Prepare materials

- Post-it notes: light colors, 3"x3" or 3"x5"
- Felt-tip markers: e.g., Sharpie "Fine Point"
- Inspirational props: e.g., products, lego

Prepare participants

- Not necessary if topic is familiar
- If necessary, send brief one day ahead
- Brief leadership to mitigate conflicts

FACILITATE

Set the stage

- Give a 5-min brief to set the context
- Review process: Post-its, whiteboard, etc.
- Remind the group of brainstorming rules:

LISTEN
DEFER JUDGMENT
BUILD ON IDEAS OF OTHERS
ENCOURAGE WILD IDEAS
ONE IDEA AT A TIME
BE PRECISE AND CONCISE
BE VISUAL
GO FOR QUANTITY

Group dynamics

- Stay focused on the topic
- Keep ideas flowing
- Prepare to pivot if an idea grabs the group
- Switch topics when flow slows down

Deal with extremes

- Encourage quiet participants to speak
- Manage dominant participants

Capture and document

- Photograph all boards
- Collect all post-its and sketches

Extend the session

- Provide channels for adding ideas later

FOLLOW UP

Invite participants for synthesis

- Include someone from the session
- Ideal group size: 2-4

Prepare the session

- Print all photos of boards
- Spread Post-its on large surface
- Have empty space for rearranging

Work the data

- Cluster, group, look for patterns
- Define categories and attributes
- Iterate, re-cluster, re-categorize
- Arrange items along a scale
- Identify key themes

Next steps

- Select ideas for prototyping and testing
- Decide if you need another session
- Share conclusions with original participants

