

1.8 Brainstorming

Explore many potential solutions to a problem.

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Sometimes you encounter a tough problem, and you're unsure how to make progress. You could be faced with a goal you don't know how to reach or seeking an innovative approach to a conundrum you've approached previously. Brainstorming can open your mind to other aspects of the problem at hand, helping you look at the problem in a novel way and come up with an original way to tackle it.

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- Brainstorming can be a valuable way to access solutions that are unavailable in normal modes of thinking.
- Generates a large number of potential solutions rapidly, possibly uncovering better alternatives to other methods.

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- It can be hard to resist self-censorship, which will limit the benefit of this technique.

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Brainstorming is simple. All you need is a goal you wish to reach or a problem you are trying to solve, along with a way of recording your inspirations (usually a notebook or digital equivalent). With the goal or problem in mind, simply write down all the ideas that come to your mind, even those that appear silly or impossible.

It's important to let even implausible notions flow because this opens your mind to creative solutions, inviting you to keep brainstorming until you hit something that works. If you censor yourself from proposing a particular solution, a part of your brain will continue to ruminate on it. By writing down even possibilities that are obviously irrelevant, you free up your mind to process other ideas in rapid succession. Stay with the process for a set period of time or until you have written down a predetermined number of potential solutions (for example, ten minutes or twelve ideas). Even thoughts that initially appear ridiculous may contain a spark of inspiration that can be later adapted into a practical solution.

You can brainstorm alone or in a group. In a group, the same principle applies: At this stage, it's essential not to critique or criticize other people's contributions. Simply write them down. To be effective, brainstorming must be a safe space where people are encouraged to bring even crazy ideas to the table in pursuit of truly creative insights.

After you've completed the brainstorming process, look again at your list and start to consider which solutions might work, perhaps with some modifications. You may wish to vote on ideas and concentrate on those the group believes have more merit, narrowing your options until you reach something you can act upon.

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1. Better Brainstorming: <https://hbr.org/2018/03/better-brainstorming>
 2. 29 Brainstorming Techniques for Creativity:
<https://asana.com/resources/brainstorming-techniques>
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