

**IDEATION**

# ***Brain- storming Rules***

These seven rules will make your brainstorming session focused, effective and fun. Introduce them at the start of every brainstorm, even if they merely serve as a reminder for experience participants.

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**Defer judgement.** There are no bad ideas at this point. There will be plenty of time to narrow them down later.

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**Encourage wild ideas.** Even if an idea doesn't seem realistic, it may spark a great idea for someone else.

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**Build on the ideas of others.**

Think "and" rather than "but."

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**Stay focused on topic.** To get more out of your session, keep your brainstorm question in sight.

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**One conversation at a time.** All ideas need to be heard, so that they may be built upon.

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**Be visual.** Draw your ideas, as opposed to just writing them down. Stick figures and simple sketches can say more than many words.

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**Go for quantity.** Set an outrageous goal—then surpass it. The best way to find one good idea is to come up with lots of ideas.

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**IDEATION**

⌚ 45-60 min

✋ Hands-On

👤 6-10 People

**DIFFICULTY****THIS GETS YOU**

A lot of fresh, new ideas.

**KEEP IN MIND**

Brainstorming is a fast and dynamic activity. Have your team stand up and encourage people to speak up and keep it short: only take a few seconds to explain an idea.

## Facilitate Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a great activity to generate fresh thoughts and new energy. Create a safe and positive atmosphere for your brainstorm so the team can come up with all kinds of wild ideas.

**Select a facilitator**

Decide on a person to lead the group through the activity. Familiarize yourself with brainstorming protocol.

**Present your topic**

Briefly introduce the challenge you are working on. Share some of the exciting stories from your Discovery phase.

**Introduce the rules of brainstorming**

Explain each rule and its purpose to set the right tone for the activity. You can find an overview of brainstorming rules in the beginning of this section.

**Equip everyone for participation**

Gather your team near a wall or flipchart. Give everyone a Post-it Pad and a marker. Encourage people to draw and be visual. Remind them to write in large letters and to note only one idea per Post-it.

**Start with a warm-up**

Choose a fun, easy or even unrelated activity to get people in the right mood:

- » Warm-up brainstorm: how might we find a needle in a haystack?
- » Never could we ever: brainstorm things you could never do at your school.
- » Get visual: ask everyone to draw his or her neighbor in a minute. Share.

**Move one by one**

Post the question you are brainstorming about on the wall so everyone can see it. Ask participants to take a few minutes and write down their first ideas before starting as a group. Then facilitate the brainstorm and capture each individual idea.




**Keep the energy high**

Provide encouragement or alternative topics if the flow of ideas slows down. Switch to a new brainstorm question every fifteen to twenty minutes. Throw out some wild ideas yourself. Remind your team of the rules if needed. Set a goal for how many ideas you want to generate in total.



This team invited people outside the project to help them get unstuck and expand their design possibilities.



-  10-20 min
-  Hands-On
-  6-10 People

**DIFFICULTY**  
 ★★☆☆☆☆

**THIS GETS YOU**  
 A selection of ideas that the whole team is excited about taking forward.

**KEEP IN MIND**  
 Trust your gut feeling as long as there is excitement about an idea, it will be a good basis to work from.

## Select Promising Ideas




It is the passion and energy of a team that makes the development of an idea successful. To get a sense of which brainstorming ideas generate excitement, let everyone on the team vote on their favorites while they are still fresh in their minds.

**Cluster the ideas**  
 Spend a few minutes immediately after a brainstorming session grouping together similar ideas.

**Vote for favorite ideas**  
 Ask the brainstorm participants to each select an idea that is their personal favorite, the one they want to work on, or the one they believe is most promising. Give everyone a limited number of choices. Let people decide in silence first, so that they are not

swayed by others' opinions. Vote directly on the brainstorm Post-its, either using sticky dots or simply drawing a dot.

**Discuss the results**  
 Count the votes and determine the most popular ideas. As a team, take the most promising ideas and decide which ones to develop further. Be realistic about the number you can pursue—aim for three ideas to start with.

-  15-25 min
-  Hands-On
-  2-8 People

**DIFFICULTY**  
 ★★☆☆☆☆

**THIS GETS YOU**  
 A first, tangible expression of your idea.

**KEEP IN MIND**  
 Seeing an idea come to life, even in a very basic form, injects enthusiasm and energy into a team's work. It is an opportunity to experiment and have fun while learning about your idea.

## Sketch to Think

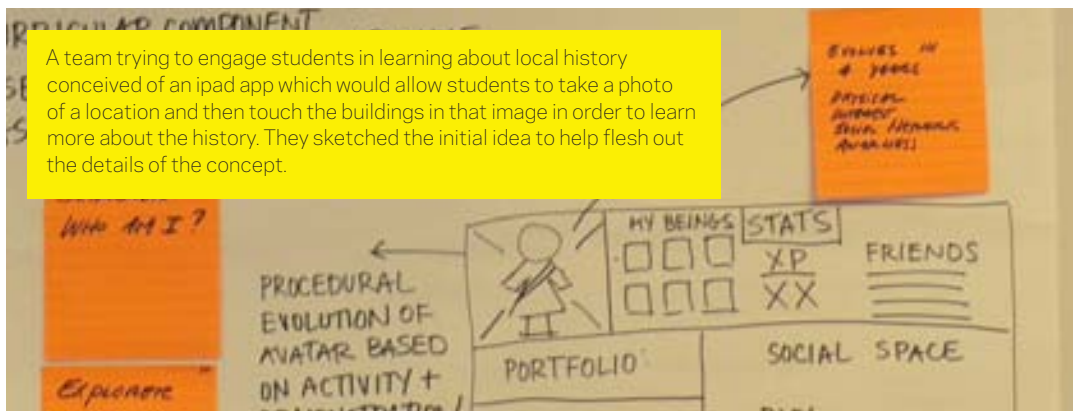
Sketching even a simple representation of an idea makes you think through a lot of details. Brainstorm ways to bring your concept to life early to figure out how you might take an idea further.

**Pick an idea**  
 Right after your brainstorming session, form several groups of two to four people and pick ideas to sketch in more detail.

**Expand the idea**  
 Now that you have chosen an idea to sketch in more detail, spend a few minutes brainstorming simple ways to bring the concept to life. Create a simple expression of your idea. Keep it simple and only

focus on the most important aspects of your idea. Make sure you're still brainstorming and expanding on the idea, rather than being critical and limiting your possibilities.

**Share back**  
 Present your ideas to each other. Ask the other group members for feedback about their favorite parts of your sketch as well as aspects where they see room for improvement.

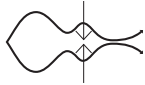




## IDEATION

## Phase-Step

## 3-2



# Refine Ideas

Do a Reality Check  
Describe Your Idea

**WORKSHEET**

Worksheet 3-2 is available on pages 56-59 of the Designer's Workbook to help you refine ideas with your team.



 25-40 min

 Reflective

 2-4 People

**DIFFICULTY**

★★★★☆

**THIS GETS YOU**

A first step toward bringing your idea to life.

**KEEP IN MIND**

A reality check might seem discouraging, as you may have to let go of some ideas. Focus on the possibility of actually building an idea in the long term to keep up your collective energy.

## Do a Reality Check

So far, you have (hopefully) been developing your idea without giving much thought to the constraints you may face while attempting to realize it. It makes sense to now do a reality check: look at what's most important about your idea and find ways to evolve and develop it further.

**Find out what your idea really is about**

As a team, examine what's at the core of your idea: what gets you excited about it? What is the most important value for your audience? What is the real need that this is addressing? For example, if your idea is creating a teachers' lounge with large couches, the real value is in allowing teachers to unwind.

**List constraints**

Make a list of all the challenges and barriers you are facing with your idea. What are you missing? Who would oppose the idea? What will be most difficult to overcome? Put the list up on the wall so it is visible to the team. Remember, constraints are helpful for design... don't feel too daunted by this list!

**Brainstorm new solutions**

First, start from the list you created in step one of this method, describing the core values of your idea. Think up additional possibilities that might satisfy

the needs your idea responds to. Consider facilitating a quick brainstorm to come up with more ideas. For example: how might we create spaces for teachers to unwind between classes?

Then revisit your list of constraints. Brainstorm how you might address some of these challenges. For example: how might we raise money to acquire furniture for our common space?

**Evolve your idea**

Discuss how you can change your concept based on your new ideas. How can you address the need differently? How can you work around the constraints you are facing?

**Archive ideas**

Let go of ideas that feel too difficult to create, or that you are not excited about. Keep your Post-its and notes so you can revisit them later.

**IDEATION**

15-25 min

Hands-On

2-3 People

**DIFFICULTY**

★☆☆☆☆

**THIS GETS YOU**

A description of your idea that summarizes all of its important aspects.

**KEEP IN MIND**

While you may find yourself creating an extensive collection of thoughts or questions in the first place, your concept description will become stronger as you simplify it to a concise summary.

## Describe Your Idea

Once an idea has started to evolve, you may find it helpful to capture your thoughts in a more structured format. Create a concept description. Consider it a repository for thoughts and questions rather than a finished piece.

**Capture your thoughts**

With your team, use a large sheet of paper to summarize your idea. Use the following structure to describe its most important aspects:

- » Choose a title for your idea
- » Summarize your idea in a single sentence
- » Describe how your idea would work
- » Name the people it involves, both to build as well as to use it

» Explain the needs and opportunities identified through field research

» Illustrate the value and benefit for each person involved

» List questions and challenges

**Evolve your summary**

Change and adjust your concept description continuously as you prototype and iterate your idea. Keep it in a place that is visible to all team members.



Before building their prototype, the team took some time to think through a few details around their concept. Having written out the specific items necessary to build out experience of the concept, the team was able to divide and conquer while prototyping.