



Idea Generation Techniques

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Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a rapid-fire method of generating ideas. It can be done in Teams or with the whole Troop. The scouts write down their ideas on one or more large sheets, or else they say their ideas and these are written down by Team Leaders or Scouters. It is important that this is done quickly and a momentum built up to encourage lots of ideas. Quantity is required – we don't need to worry about quality. All ideas are equally valid – both sensible and wacky (so long as they are in line with the Scout Promise and Law). All ideas are written down as presented – there is no need to develop or change them at this stage.

A few rules are required for effective brainstorming –

1. There is no such thing as a bad idea
2. All ideas are accepted without question
3. No criticism of ideas is permitted

Brainstorming Relay

Place sheets of paper or a sheet of paper on a table or floor. Teams are lined up at the end of the den/hall and invited to run up individually and write down suggestions on the paper. The paper can be visited as many times as the scouts like until they run out of ideas. Scouts will often spot an idea on the sheet of paper which will prompt another idea and so they may need to re-visit the sheet a number of times.

3 Cards

Each scout in the Team takes three blank cards and writes one idea on each. The three cards are then passed to the next scout in the Team, who writes another idea on each card, triggered by the idea already provided. This is continued until all of the cards have been passed around each scout in the Team. With eight people in a Team, this would give 144 ideas.

Post-It Brainstorming

This is a version of brainstorming. Each scout is given either a pad of Post-it Notes or a set number - maybe six or seven. Using a thick marker, they write one idea on each Post-it. When time is up, each person announces their ideas to the whole team, and posts their Post-its on a large sheet of paper. A facilitator from outside the Team (e.g. a Scouter or another Team Leader) then groups the ideas together and names the groupings. The facilitator then asks the whole Team if they want to add any more ideas or suggest new groupings.

Brainwriting

This can be done in Teams or with the whole Troop. One large sheet of paper for each scout is put around the wall or around the floor. Each scout writes down ideas silently on a sheet of paper. After three minutes each scout moves around to the next piece of paper. Using the ideas already written down as stepping stones, they write down new ideas. The process is repeated until each member of the Team has written ideas on each sheet, or for as long as necessary if the whole Troop is involved.

Catalogues

A catalogue, trade directory or Yellow Pages is used to spark off ideas. Titles of books, films, comics, etc. can be used in a similar way. These ideas may act as stepping stones to further ideas, or trigger new approaches.

Art Gallery

Each scout makes a drawing or picture. (Alternatively, the picture could be made by the whole Team). Everyone wanders around looking at the pictures and thinking of ideas that the pictures suggest. These must not be criticisms of the pictures. Younger scouts might call out their ideas which can be recorded by Scouters on the blank sheets of paper. Older scouts can write down their ideas themselves. Put the pictures on the wall to create an art gallery with a blank sheet of paper beneath each one.

Clay Modelling

Scouts are given modelling clay and asked to make models of ideas.

Collage

The purpose is to create a visual representation of what the scouts would like. Each scout is asked to bring down old comics or magazines that they have finished reading. Each team is given a pair of scissors, a stick of glue and a large sheet of paper or roll of wallpaper. The scouts flip through the comics, looking for images or messages that they like or that remind them of things that they would like to do. They cut these out and glue them to the sheet of paper. When the collage is complete, the Team talks about it and comes up with ideas suggested by the pictures. The younger scouts might call out their ideas which can be recorded by Scouters. Older scouts can write down their ideas themselves.

Wild Ideas

Scouts come up with ideas on the basis that anything goes and there are no limitations (so long as it's in line with the Scout Promise and Law). The Each idea should start with: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if ..."

Mix 'N' Match

Mix 'N' Match combines different characters, places and styles in different ways to suggest ideas. Cards are written for characters, places and styles. There should be three times as many of each category of cards as there are people taking part i.e. if there are 8 people in the Team there will be 24 of each of characters, places and styles. The cards may be themed or random e.g. the characters might be cartoon characters, sportspeople, heroes, etc. or random; places might be from Space, fictional places from books, geographic features, etc. or random; styles might be nationalities, emotions, dancing, etc. or random. The cards are turned upside down and the scouts select one card at random from each category e.g. Darth Vader in 100 Acre Wood in Mexican style. These could be used directly as wacky themes or activities or they could be used to prompt ideas and start a discussion on ideas. The method can be expanded further. 'When' could also be added either in place of, or in addition to the other areas - this could be centuries, a decades, eras, fictional times from books, etc. or random.

Spanner in the Works

This can be used with any other idea generating method. When things get bogged down and the ideas are not flowing, this can help to encourage more creative thinking. A trigger phrase might be: "We should stop thinking about new ideas and hire a fire eater".