

Brainwriting

30 minutes

Strategy

Intermediate

Silent brainstorming that actually works. Everyone writes ideas, then builds on others' ideas through rotation - no talking, no interruptions, no loud voices...

H HOW TO RUN

1 Setup

3 min

- State the brainstorming challenge clearly. Not "how do we improve onboarding?" but "what are all the ways we could help new users complete their first project?" Create columns or sections - one per participant. Physical setup: large sheets with drawn columns. Digital: whiteboard tool with clearly labeled areas. Each person starts at their own column.

2 Round 1: Initial Ideas

3 min

- Set a timer for 3 minutes. Everyone silently writes their initial ideas in their column. Aim for 3-5 ideas minimum. No discussion, no peeking at others' work. Just write. Ideas should be complete enough that someone else can understand and build on them - not just "gamification" but "award badges for completing first 3 projects."

3 Rotation Rounds

- When time's up, everyone moves to the next column (clockwise works). Now you have 3 minutes to read what's there and either build on existing ideas or add new ones sparked by what you see. "Build on" means take an idea and extend it, refine it, or connect it to something else. Continue rotating until everyone has contributed to every column (usually 4-5 rounds for a typical group).

4 Review and Cluster

7 min

- Stop rotating. Everyone walks around and reads all columns silently. Then together, identify patterns. Which ideas appeared in multiple columns? Which ideas generated the most building-upon? Which started rough but got refined through iteration? Group similar ideas together without talking yet - just physically move items into clusters.

O OBJECTIVES

- > Generate ideas without groupthink or loud-voice bias
- > Ensure equal participation regardless of personality type or seniority
- > Build systematically on others' ideas instead of just adding new ones
- > Create a visible record of idea evolution and connections

M MATERIALS

- Large sheets of paper or flip chart pages (one per person)
- Thick markers (one per person, all the same color to show it's collaborative)
- Timer with audible alert
- Digital alternative: Miro/Mural with column template and sticky notes
- Wall space to post all sheets for final review

P PARTICIPANTS

4-8

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- The silence is non-negotiable.
- The moment people start talking, you lose the equal participation and idea building.
- Redirect immediately: "Save that thought for the discussion phase - keep writing." Watch for people trying to point at things or make faces to communicate.
- Shut it down gently but firmly.

KEY TIP

*Enforcing Silence**