

# Brainstorming

Is your group stumped for new ideas? Do you do the same activities the same old way year after year? Do the leaders and just a few others seem to do all the talking? Brainstorming may be just the technique to rejuvenate your organization and get everyone excited and involved.

The purpose of this method is to get out as many ideas as possible - the more you have to choose from, the better your final choice will be! You can use brainstorming for almost anything: program ideas, themes, slogans, publicity, group goals, and problem solving.

## Set the Stage

1. Set a time limit - 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the size of your group and the complexity of the issue.
2. The best group size is 3-15. If you have more, break into two or more groups and brainstorm simultaneously.
3. The question or issue must be one about which all participants can speak. Focus on only one issue at a time.
4. Record all responses on a blackboard or flipchart so everyone can see them. Don't record the name of the person suggesting. Record only key words and phrases, not word for word.

## Follow the Rules

1. Do not discuss ideas.
2. Do not criticize, praise or judge.
3. Be spontaneous - no hand-raising, just call out.
4. Repetitions are OK.
5. Quantity counts.
6. Build on each other's ideas - "hitch-hiking" or "piggy-backing" is encouraged.
7. Enjoy the silences - often the best ideas come out of them.
8. It is OK to be outrageous, even silly.

## Use the Ideas

1. If several groups brainstormed, put the lists on the wall and let everyone read each other's work.
2. Group ideas into related categories for review.
3. Decide which ideas are most promising and which can be eliminated; this can be done by putting pluses and minuses by items.
4. Rank the most promising.
5. Select those with the greatest potential and high-ranking priority for either implementation or refinement by committee or the group.
6. Follow-up. If the ideas are to be implemented successfully by the group or by committee, ask for updates on a regular basis.
7. Review and evaluate your ideas as they are being implemented. Make any changes deemed necessary by the group.
8. Be sure to utilize the ideas generated. It is extremely demoralizing for a group to invest its time, energy and creativity and have the idea disappear. Seeing your ideas come to fruition, however, is extremely rewarding.