



2.1 Brainstorming

This activity introduces basic teamwork skills and ideas and their relevance to a particular topic. The list of ideas is discussed, evaluated, and categorized for use in future assignments at the conclusion of the activity. Brainstorming is useful for generating lists of affirmative and negative arguments for research, or for generating interesting subjects of practice debates.

Time Allotment

10-20 minutes. Shorter brainstorm sessions can be used as warm-ups to activities like impromptu debates or as introductions to research assignments.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- practice working collaboratively with classmates to generate and evaluate ideas.
- be introduced to a variety of issues relevant to the current debate topic.

Materials and Preparation

You will need either a blackboard or a large white sheet of paper and markers to conduct this activity. Paper and markers are preferable because you can save the list generated during the brainstorm for future reference. If you use a chalkboard, designate a student to record the list during or after the activity.

Method

Brainstorming can be used to generate a list of ideas on a variety of debate-related themes. Brainstorm sessions could generate:

- A list of cases that would be topical under the current resolution.
- A list of possible advantages to a particular affirmative case.
- A list of possible disadvantages, critiques, or counterplans that could link to a particular affirmative case.
- A list of generic disadvantages, critiques or counterplans that could be linked to multiple affirmative cases.
- A list of possible sources (magazines, newspapers, etc) for debate research.
- A list of debate topics for impromptu speeches or debates.

Begin by presenting the intention of the brainstorm to the class and making sure that everyone understands the task at hand. Make sure students have the information they need to participate. For example, you are brainstorming negative strategies against a particular affirmative case, you may have a student read the 1AC in front of the class, or pass out a copy of the speech.

Establish a starting time and a time limit for the brainstorming session. Decide in advance whether you will brainstorm for 2 minutes or 10 minutes, according to the breadth of your topic.

Brainstorming as a class: If you decide to conduct brainstorming as a whole class, be prepared to facilitate



A Reminder ...

Establish ground rules for the brainstorm.
Example ground rules might include:

- Students must raise hands and be called upon to speak (For smaller groups, this may not be necessary).
- Any idea, no matter how outlandish, should be written down.
- There should be no criticism, during the brainstorm session – ideas will be sorted and critiqued after the session has concluded.

the discussion so that everyone has an opportunity to speak. You may wish to designate a student to be the “scribe” and write everyone’s ideas on the paper or blackboard.

After the brainstorming session has ended, go back through the list and pick out the most useful ideas that were generated and group similar ideas together.

Brainstorming in small groups: Divide the class into groups of 4-5. Assign a topic for the brainstorm. All groups can work on the same topic, or each group can work on a different topic. Instruct each group to choose a scribe

and give students a specified amount of time to generate ideas. Announce the end of the brainstorming session and give groups a few minutes to select the best ideas from their list. Conclude the activity by asking a representative from each group to present the best ideas their group generated.

Follow-up:

After you have brainstormed a list of arguments and ideas, you can refer to this list for public speaking and research assignments. You might divide up the list and ask students to research negative strategies to cases or ask students to prepare an “issue” briefing to orient the class to the specifics of each argument.