Brainstorming

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CS 247
Forty circles

Sixty seconds. How far can you get?
“Math is easy. Design is hard.”

Jeffrey Veen, VP of Product Design, Adobe
Cardinal rules of brainstorming

- Go for quantity
- Defer judgment
- Enforce a time limit
- Riff and build on others’ ideas
Roles in brainstorming

• Facilitator
  • Not the manager or leader!
  • Keeps the conversation flowing

• Recorder
  • Gets everything up on the whiteboard (or sketchbook)

• Participant
How Might We?

(Revisited)
“How might we...?” questions

- Turn large needs into actionable charges
  - e.g., “How might we make CS 247 studios feel more like trusted, safe spaces?”
- A useful way to ground a brainstorm
The Goldilocks of How Might We

A good “How Might We…” question is:

- Not so broad that it is inapproachable
  How might we help people organize all their digital media?

- Not so narrow that it suggests a solution
  How might we help people retrieve their favorite digital media with just a click?

- In a happy middle ground:
  How might we help weekend extreme sports enthusiasts organize their digital media?
Brainstorming strategies
One tactic: Powers of Ten

- When you’re considering a question, scale it up and scale it down
- Ice skating as a deliberate controlled vulnerability…
  - Could 1000 people at once engage in a controlled vulnerability activity? Could someone do it alone?
  - Could we do this in extreme heat environments?
Design space axes

- Pull out high-level dimensions along which your observations or ideas vary, then look for holes.

Diagram:
- **Invulnerable**
  - laser tag
  - paintball
  - watching an action movie

- **Vulnerable**
  - ice skating
  - trust fall

- **Group**
- **Solo**
Warm-up time

- Your goal: loosen people up so that they aren’t self-conscious about sharing ideas with the group
- Reinforce practices of volume, riffing, and fluidity
- Improv games work quite well
Let's play cards

from Liz Gerber @ Northwestern
(Founder of Design for America and Stanford Alum)
Remember…

- Defer judgment
- Go for volume
- Keep the conversation flowing
- Roles:
  - Facilitator
  - Recorder
  - Participant