Brainstorming: An Essential Tool for Creativity

Steps in Productive Creative Brainstorming to Solve Problems

1. Collect the ideas by following these guidelines (fluency)

- Come up with a lot of ideas: The more ideas you generate, the more you have to choose from.
- Work quickly: Research suggests when we work quickly we are less likely to inhibit our thinking.
- Hitchhike on others' ideas: Listen to what others say and add or connect to their ideas.
- Defer judgment: All ideas at this point are acceptable, even the wildest/weirdest/most outrageous.

2. Categorize the ideas (flexibility)

- For each idea, decide if it is (use up to three categories that fit your situation best):
  - Realistic/Unrealistic
  - Possible/Impossible
  - Effective/Ineffective
  - Timely/Time consuming
  - Affordable/Costly
  - Efficient/Inefficient
  - Safe/Harmful
  - Right/Wrong
  - Defensible/Indefensible

3. Select the best idea (originality/critical reasoning)

- Choose the idea(s) that fall into the most positive categories above (for example possible rather than impossible, safe rather than harmful).

4. Enhance the idea (elaboration)

- Add to your final idea to make it better (if necessary).