

CUMULATIVE BRAINSTORMING

Approx. duration: 30-40 min

Groups of: 4-6

Competencies involved: Listening, Speaking, Writing

Level: all

Required Material:

- Whiteboard and markers or large piece of paper/cardboard
- Laptop (optional)

Brainstorming sessions can contribute to the preparation process of an oral presentation or an essay (reliable online sources, topic ideas, oral communication “dos” and “don’ts”, etc.), but also serve as simple work session starting points (open questions, problem solving, pros and cons, etc.). Overall, they “ [...] contribut[e] to the increase in students’ motivation, confidence, and participation [...] in the ESL classroom“. [1] This specific type of brainstorming activity encourages students to combine prior knowledge about a topic and to build on others’ ideas. [2]



Description

Students are first asked to share ideas in their small group. These ideas should be transferred to a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper in each team. Students then move to the next team’s brainstorming whiteboard or sheet to comment and make suggestions. Once they have given feedback to all the other teams, they can return to their original sheet and analyze the insights they’ve received. The last part of the activity can be a recap session where a member of each team shares their results with the class.

For activities that are not appropriate for cumulative brainstorming, the teacher can instead organize a synchronous virtual collective brainstorming using an online tool such as Miro or Canva.

TEACHER

- Topic choice
- Homework assignment (if applicable)
- Online platform setup (if applicable)
- Team formation
- Assignment explanation including an example

Preparation

STUDENTS

- Preliminary research/work (if applicable)

TEACHER

1. Gives the activity instructions.
2. Times and announces task switches.
3. Walks around the classroom to verify the students’ progress.
4. Proceeds with a collective recap.

Workflow

STUDENTS

1. Assign roles within their team (optional).
2. Write their brainstorming results on paper or on a whiteboard.
3. Visit other teams’ work and add comments or suggestions.
4. Improve their own work thanks to others’ feedback.
5. Share their work with the class.

Evaluation options

TEACHER

- Formative assessment using a simple evaluation grid that has previously been shared with the students

STUDENTS

- Formative assessment of other teams’ work using basic assessment elements from the grid which could be shared verbally

Tips

- Determining roles within each team can make the activity more seamless (notetaker, leader, timekeeper, etc.). [2]
- If whiteboards aren’t available, online tools such as Mural or Canva can be great alternatives.

[1] Unin, N., Bearing, P. (2016). Brainstorming as a way to approach student-centered learning in the ESL classroom. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, volume 224, pages 605-612. ISSN 1877-0428.

[2] Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. (n.d.) *Brainstorming*. Northern Illinois University. <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide/brainstorming.shtml>