

# One-hour Brain Sprint



A simple recipe inspired by the Design Sprint to get the most out of a brainstorming session and to be concise. Created by Sabrina Goerlich.

## Objectives:

- Effectively generate ideas while avoiding the common pitfalls of regular brainstorming sessions.
- Be concise and timebox all of the exercises to ideate faster.
- The brain sprint aligns a group of creatives and avoids discussions.

■ present information
 ■ idea generation
 ■ decision making
 ■ group discussion
 ■ design

TIME	NAME	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFO
09:00 15m	<b>Expert Interviews</b>	The expert interview is an exercise from the Design Sprint where we bring the people with specific knowledge into the room. Usually we have the project manager who has spoken to the client as an "expert", and we suggest to take the design lead in also.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a time limit between 10–15 minutes (depending on the size of the project) and <b>start the interview</b>.</li> <li>• The "experts" then <b>explain the briefing</b> and the <b>background</b>, and the <b>team ask questions</b> for clarification, without discussion as yet.</li> <li>• The <b>facilitator writes the facts</b> on post-its and sticks them to a "briefing box" on the whiteboard. (No need to turn these into HMW ("How Might We?") questions.)</li> </ul>
09:15 5m	<b>User Insights</b>	Note the facts and stick them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The "<b>experts</b>" <b>present</b> any reports they have in order to help the team be more aligned to the user point of view.</li> <li>• <b>Questions from the team</b> are allowed but still <b>no discussion</b>.</li> <li>• The <b>facilitator takes more notes</b> and <b>sticks them into the "briefing box"</b>.</li> </ul>
09:20 15m	<b>Lightning Demos</b>	The lightning demo is an exercise from the Design Sprint, which is like a short research session: inspire the team with product or services that they may use as an inspiration during the brainstorming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone takes post-its to <b>write down</b> the name of the <b>inspiring sites/products</b> and relevant ideas or actions: browse the internet or pull up some examples from experience.</li> <li>• <b>Stick them to the wall</b> to inspire the others. It's advisable to have around 2–3 lightning demos.</li> <li>• Each team member has max. of 3 minutes to <b>present the examples to the team</b>. Just short explanations and again: no comments yet!</li> </ul>
09:35 5m	<b>Notes</b>	Generate an initial round of ideas individually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put on some nice music to level up concentration.</li> <li>• Each participant <b>writes ideas on post-its</b> (one idea per post-it) which are <b>stuck on the wall and read aloud</b> so everybody understands.</li> <li>• Give <b>1 minute to each participant for reading</b>. The facilitator can defer judgements on ideas.</li> <li>• Some rules to consider:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Go for quantity</li> <li>◦ Build on other ideas</li> <li>◦ Defer judgement</li> <li>◦ Encourage wild ideas</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
09:40 5m	<b>Notes, second turn</b>	Now it's time to develop upon other ideas or create new ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants again <b>write their ideas on post-its</b>. In order not to lose the momentum of the group, be strict with the timing.</li> <li>• Each participant <b>presents their ideas in one minute</b>, reading aloud <b>without comments</b>.</li> </ul>
09:45 3m	<b>Vote</b>	Look at all the ideas and get people voting on the most liked ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each team member gets <b>6 sticky dots</b> to vote on the most liked ideas.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Participants can vote on their own ideas and can put all sticker dots to one post-it if they really like it.</li> <li>◦ But still respect the rule: <b>No discussion allowed</b>.</li> <li>◦ If there are 3 or 4 people in the team (usually that's our case) then 3 minutes will be okay. If there are more participants, then you can add one or two minutes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• When voting is finished, the <b>post-its are rearranged in order of popularity</b> like a Christmas tree. The note with the most dots goes on the top. This gives a nice overview of the ideas.</li> </ul>

TIME	NAME	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFO
09:48 12m	<b>Wrap-up -&gt; Execution</b>	<p>By the end of the session, you must decide what to do with the ideas. What's the project? Who will the ideas be presented to?</p> <p>We usually divide up the post-its to all the designers in the group and each of them develops a layout. We use the most voted ideas for that and as many ideas as we need.</p> <p>In other cases, it is also possible to add an extra step: (see Concept Sketching)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a <b>high-five to energize</b> the team! That sounds simple but we found out that this basic gesture has a high impact to the team...</li> </ul>
10:00 10m	<b>Concept Sketching (optional)</b>	<p>This is also an exercise from the design sprint, executed in a very compressed way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, <b>decide how many ideas</b> are needed, <b>choose the appropriate ideas</b> and begin sketching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ For each idea, take a sheet of paper and put on the top a name for the idea to give it a more important aspect.</li> <li>◦ Then rephrase or just <b>copy</b> the idea <b>from the post-it</b>.</li> <li>◦ Add a rectangle below and <b>sketch the idea</b> in a simple and easy way.</li> <li>◦ If preferred, add another colour to <b>decorate</b>, and if necessary, describe in two or three <b>comments</b> what you have drawn.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Now the concept sketchings can be shown to others.</li> </ul>
10:10			

TOTAL LENGTH: 1h 10m

#### MATERIALS

- Post-it notes x 4 in Expert Interviews | User Insights | Lightning Demos | Notes
- Timer (throughout the session) in Expert Interviews
- Music in Notes
- Sticky dots in Vote
- A4 papers in Concept Sketching (optional)
- sharpies in Concept Sketching (optional)

## One-hour Brain Sprint - block details

09:00  
15m

### Expert Interviews

The expert interview is an exercise from the Design Sprint where we bring the people with specific knowledge into the room. Usually we have the project manager who has spoken to the client as an “expert”, and we suggest to take the design lead in also.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Choose a time limit between 10–15 minutes (depending on the size of the project) and **start the interview**.
- The “experts” then **explain** the **briefing** and the **background**, and the **team ask questions** for clarification, without discussion as yet.
- The **facilitator writes the facts** on post-its and sticks them to a “briefing box” on the whiteboard. (No need to turn these into HMW (“How Might We?”) questions.)

#### INSTRUCTIONS

##### Notes:

*Why we don't use the HMWs (How Might We questions)?*

Often we get a briefing from the client with lots of facts and tasks. There is no need to turn these into HMW questions. And we want to keep everything from the briefing, even if this means having a broader starting point.

#### MATERIALS

- Post-it notes
- Timer (throughout the session)

09:15  
5m

### User Insights

Note the facts and stick them.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The “**experts**” **present** any reports they have in order to help the team be more aligned to the user point of view.
- **Questions from the team** are allowed but still **no discussion**.
- The **facilitator takes more notes** and **sticks them into the “briefing box”**.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Typical items the experts may present: a user research project, or research the expert did before the sprint, interview with a UX-researcher or anything else that gives some user insights to the team)

#### MATERIALS

- Post-it notes

09:20  
15m

### Lightning Demos

The lightning demo is an exercise from the Design Sprint, which is like a short research session: inspire the team with product or services that they may use as an inspiration during the brainstorming.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Everyone takes post-its to **write down** the name of the **inspiring sites/products** and relevant ideas or actions: browse the internet or pull up some examples from experience.
- **Stick them to the wall** to inspire the others. It's advisable to have around 2–3 lightning demos.
- Each team member has max. of 3 minutes to **present the examples to the team**. Just short explanations and again: no comments yet!

#### INSTRUCTIONS

##### Sabrina's thoughts about the lightning demos:

*“Be confident with your experiences and your previous projects. They can be very valuable. Don't be too stressed in front of the computer, trying to get the best out of the internet. I also like the very short timeframe of 10 Minutes. In this case everybody in my team is complaining and telling me that this is too short, but guess what? It always works.”*

#### MATERIALS

- Post-it notes

09:35  
5m

### Notes

Generate an initial round of ideas individually.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### MATERIALS

- Put on some nice music to level up concentration.
- Each participant **writes ideas on post-its** (one idea per post-it) which are **stuck on the wall and read aloud** so everybody understands.
- Give **1 minute to each participant for reading**. The facilitator can defer judgements on ideas.
- Some rules to consider:
  - Go for quantity
  - Build on other ideas
  - Defer judgement
  - Encourage wild ideas

- Music
- Post-it notes

09:40  
5m

## Notes, second turn

Now it's time to develop upon other ideas or create new ones.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Participants again **write their ideas on post-its**. In order not to lose the momentum of the group, be strict with the timing.
- Each participant **presents their ideas in one minute**, reading aloud **without comments**.

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Sabrina's tip for the note & vote:

*"Be creative with the note and vote ideation part. In our team we need ideas, very often. Sometimes daily. Most of these ideas we use for ongoing projects, so we shorten the first part to a 5 Minute thing and start directly with the notes. It's incredible how many ideas your team can produce in a short timeframe!"*

09:45  
3m

## Vote

Look at all the ideas and get people voting on the most liked ideas.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Each team member gets **6 sticky dots** to vote on the most liked ideas.
  - Participants can vote on their own ideas and can put all sticker dots to one post-it if they really like it.
  - But still respect the rule: **No discussion allowed**.
  - If there are 3 or 4 people in the team (usually that's our case) then 3 minutes will be okay. If there are more participants, then you can add one or two minutes.
- When voting is finished, the **post-its are rearranged in order of popularity** like a Christmas tree. The note with the most dots goes on the top. This gives a nice overview of the ideas.
- Make a **high-five to energize** the team! That sounds simple but we found out that this basic gesture has a high impact to the team...

### MATERIALS

- Sticky dots

09:48  
12m

## Wrap-up -> Execution

By the end of the session, you must decide what to do with the ideas. What's the project? Who will the ideas be presented to?

We usually divide up the post-its to all the designers in the group and each of them develops a layout. We use the most voted ideas for that and as many ideas as we need.

In other cases, it is also possible to add an extra step: (see Concept Sketching)

10:00  
10m

## Concept Sketching (optional)

This is also an exercise from the design sprint, executed in a very compressed way.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- First, **decide how many ideas** are needed, **choose the appropriate ideas** and begin sketching:
  - For each idea, take a sheet of paper and put on the top a name for the idea to give it a more important aspect.
  - Then rephrase or just **copy** the idea **from the post-it**.
  - Add a rectangle below and **sketch the idea** in a simple and easy way.
  - If preferred, add another colour to **decorate**, and if necessary, describe in two or three **comments** what you have drawn.

### MATERIALS

- A4 papers
- sharpies

- Now the concept sketchings can be shown to others.
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