



# PICTURE BRAINSTORM

Ambiguous and random images provide inspiration when coming up with ideas.



**Participants**  
**Individual**



**Design skill**  
**Think in all directions**



**Prior design experience**  
**None**



**Duration**  
**10 – 30 minutes**



**Design step**  
**Generating ideas**

## Description

Once the participants have put their first ideas on paper, each participant or team receives a set of varied images. This happens when participants get stuck with coming up with ideas. This applies works for participants who have difficulty getting started, and for participants who linger at one idea for a long time.

The pictures give the participants new inspiration, reminding them of something random. Variation in pictures gives them a new direction of thinking. Randomly offering images helps participants to come up with new ideas. Ambiguous images trigger personal memories and experiences more easily.

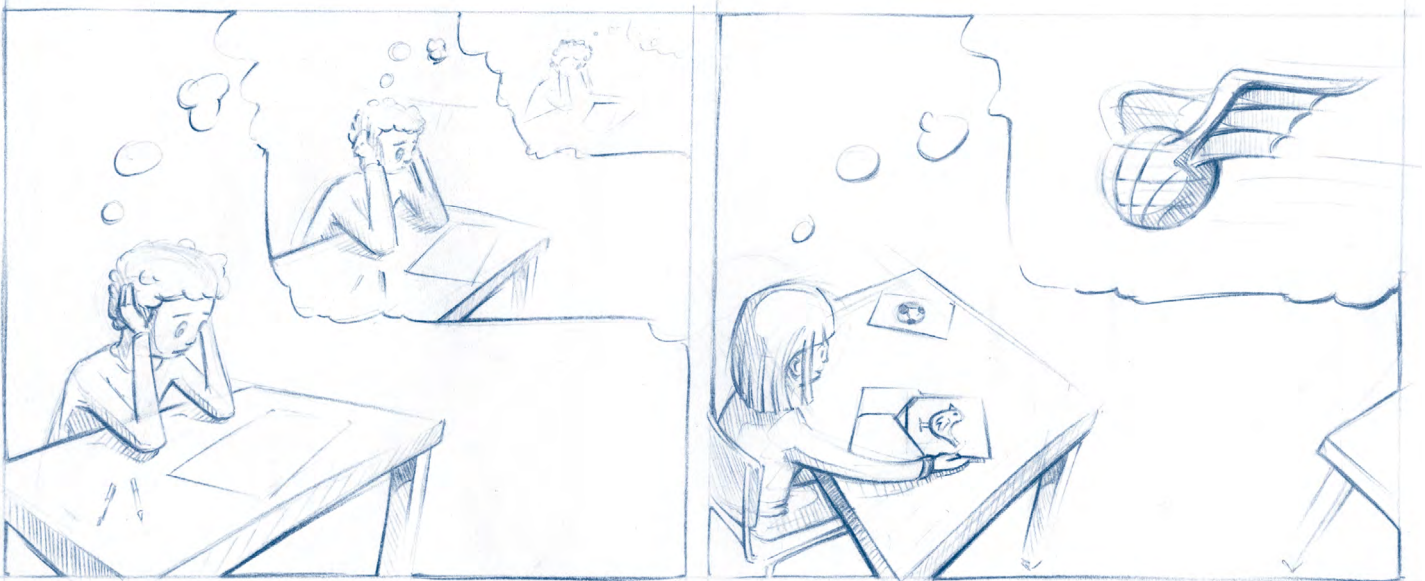


## Effect

A larger variety in images increases the chance of good ideas. The Pictures brainstorm stimulates lots of different idea directions. Participants often come up with unique and surprising ideas through these associations.

*Without the Picture brainstorm*

*With the Picture brainstorm*



## Example

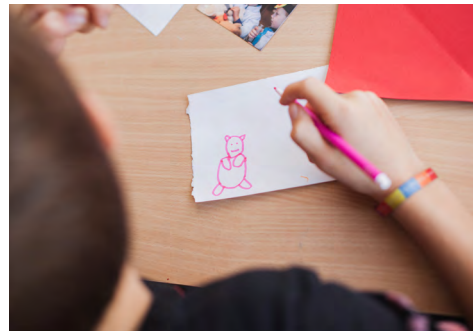
Year 4 primary school students were asked to think of a new game for interactive playground equipment. Creating innovative game ideas was difficult for them. Most solutions were variations of existing games with minor adjustments.

To improve the quality of ideas, the facilitating designer used the Picture brainstorm activity. When Max saw the picture of a guitar, he was inspired to create a game where players form an orchestra or band and can earn points. Yasmin was inspired by a picture of a bear and created a zoo game. Through this technique lots of innovative ideas were created.

## Step by step

- 1 Choose 24 different images with varying content, from the Picture brainstorm worksheet or compile your own set. The images are not related to the design problem but are used to inspire different associations.

- 2 Print the images, cut them out and put them in envelopes. Give an envelope to each design team.
- 3 Decide how you want the participants to work in advance. E.g. Do you let them brainstorm individually or in a group?
- 4 Introduce the Picture brainstorm and explain how it can help the participants create new and surprising ideas.



- 5 Give them the pictures, but only after the participants have started putting initial ideas down on paper.
- 6 Ask the participants to pull out one picture at a time from the envelope, and to come up with at least one new idea for each picture. This will force them to think beyond their existing ideas and trigger the flow of their imagination.

## Tips

You should try another nice tool!



- ▶ Discuss a number of ideas in class and let participants tell everyone how the pictures inspired their new idea. The added value of the tool will become clear.
- ▶ Vary the Picture brainstorm with the tool Words brainstorm or combine both tools. Words inspire language-oriented thinkers, images inspire visual thinkers.

## Materials

- ▶ A set of 24 loose images in an envelope for each design team, selected from the worksheet 'Picture brainstorm' or your own selection



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