Brainstorming Guide

Originally created by Prof. Jaime Ruiz

• Brainstorming as an activity to broadly explore the solution space, possible designs

• The time to think outside the box
  – Cliché, but ...  
  – Think Ideo again: Good ideas come from bad ideas.

• Repeatedly used during Contextual Design at this stage
Preparation for a Brainstorm

• Start with crisp problem definition
  – “We want to solve X”
  – Phrase in terms of problem, not technology
• List what already works well in current system
• Go over your data
• Get inspiration from other fields/areas
  – Go to periodical section of library and read lots of different magazines
• Bring a bunch of weird, unique stuff in
  – Doesn’t have to have any clear relation to your problem – See IDEO Tech Box on the next page
IDEO Tech Box
Brainstorming Logistics

• Use big pads of paper or Post-Its to put up ideas or write on a big white board
• One person writes down ideas
• Number your ideas
• Sketch, diagram, model the idea
  – A sketch can communicate the idea better
  – Also suggests new ideas
Rules of Engagement

• Talk should be lively, but make sure people get their full idea out

• “Yes, and...”
  – No “No but’s”
  – Build on others’ ideas

• Everything is valid
  – No evaluation
  – No feasibility assessments

• Your opinion matters
  – No “half-assing”
    • “Well, this is probably a bad idea, but ...”
Tips

• Consider solutions that don’t use system’s current technology

• Imitate, steal, cross-pollinate, remix
  – Take ideas from other domains and fit them into your problem domain
  – Be on the lookout for how something might apply to your problem

• Transition to different themes when ideas start to slow down for one theme

• Give yourself a target number of ideas to hit
  – Motivates to push even further