

Working with Groups:

Idea Writing

Idea writing is a little different than other techniques. Rather than being used during a face-to-face group meeting, this tool encourages communication over a longer period of time and/or at a distance. It can be thought of as having a group conversation via the written word.

Idea writing allows the group to comment on ideas generated by a facilitator as well as by other participants. It is a way to not only develop ideas but work toward identifying the details behind the ideas.

1. First identify a question or an idea that everyone understands. Start the conversation with some comments that are important in moving the discussion forward. One way to do this might be to set up the question and space for a response in a table. Another way to do this would be to just list the statement or question and leave space for people to respond.
2. Email is a great tool to use to implement idea writing. Documents can be easily sent “reply all” to further the conversation. Once the project gets started most of the work comes from the participants, not the facilitator. A wiki or blog can be used for idea writing in a similar way.

As an example, “What are some of the key things we want to have happen in this project so the process and the end results are the best they can be?”

Source: *Working with Groups: Generating Ideas, Making Decisions, and Enhancing Communication*, by Phyllis I. Schoenholz and Cheryl A. Burkhart-Kriesel, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, EC478, 2008, The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture. Adapted with permission.