

Novel Ideas Only

This is a fast way of eliciting the knowledge or intuitions that reside in a group about a specific topic. Participants work in teams of four brainstorming responses to a prompt that the teacher has posed. On individual papers, each group member writes down the given heading and prompt, and numbers the page from 1 to 8, as in the example:

Novel Ideas Only

The Immune System

We think that learning about the Immune System will be about:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

In this example, the teacher would explain that students will have three minutes together to brainstorm the possible content of this topic. As each idea is offered, a second student echoes the idea and all group members add it to their individual lists. It is important that all lists in a group be the same. Students who know more English help those who know less English. It is better for a team to have only one or two items that are written in the best possible way that all can agree on than to have one student write five items while others have fewer or none.

When three minutes have passed, the teacher asks all students to draw a line under the last item in the group's list. Then all the teams stand, grouping themselves so that each team is distinct from the others. The teacher calls on one student from a group to read the team's ideas. The student starts by reading the prompt, "We think that learning about the Immune System will be about ...", and then adds whatever ideas the team has agreed on.

The rest of the class must pay attention because after the first group has presented all of their ideas, the teacher asks them to sit down and calls on a student from another team to add that team's "novel ideas only." Ideas that have already been presented cannot be repeated.

As teams complete their turns and sit down, each seated student must begin recording novel ideas from other groups below the line that marks the end of his or her team's ideas. The lists for all team members should be identical above the line, but after the line they will vary.

Whenever a team is standing and their last novel idea is covered by another team, at that moment, not waiting to be called on by the teacher, they take their seats and are free to begin adding novel ideas to their papers. Only one team, the last one standing, will not be able to add ideas below the line.

When all ideas have been given, the teacher assigns a number to each team. Students write their team number in the right margin of their paper, providing the teacher with a quick way to sort team papers and check that everybody in a group has followed instructions.

Scaffolding: bridging, schema building

