

Table A.4 Techniques to enhance Divergent Thinking

Blue Sky Thinking	Imagine (dream) the perfect solution without regard for barriers or opposition
Distortion and negation	Select part of a problem, brainstorm on ways in which it can be distorted (made bigger, smaller, reversed). An alternative is negation in which key elements of the problem are denied, followed by the question (amongst others) ‘what would happen if this did not exist?’
Assumption busting	What are the underlying assumptions of a proposed solution and try to bust them
Word association	Come to intuitive associations (immediate response, making connections without logical thought) to key words related to the problem
Analogies or Metaphors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct Analogy: what are similarities and differences between, for example, the problem and a tree? ■ Superhero Analogy: what would Spider-Man/George Bush do about my problem? ■ Personal analogy: can I identify myself with the problematic situation or person?
Mind Mapping	Draw the problem in the centre of a sheet of paper; draw trunks around this problem that represent connected ideas (main and subsidiary ideas) and try to draw connections between these ideas;
Visualization	In addition to mind mapping there are a large number of other visualisation techniques: concept visualization; data visualization; compound visualization; strategy visualization [www.skillsheets.com for more links]
Brainwriting	Write all your ideas on a specific problem on post-its; post them on the table or a board; brainwriting is found to be more effective in creating ideas than brainstorming because it evades negative group interactions (Paulus and Yang, 2000).
Bisociation	Combine two ideas or thoughts to develop something new (follows often after brainwriting or mind mapping)
Six thinking hats	Forcing yourself to switch from one thinking approach to another: neutral (white), emotional (red), logical (black), happy (yellow), creative (green), synthesis (blue) (cf. De Bono, 1992)
Write a storyline	What would the ‘story’ of your research project look like?
Invent a title	Can you come up with a catchy (working) title that not only will attract the attention of the audience when you finish the research, but will also keep you motivated (because you have not yet started the research).
Find alternative images on the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advertisement text/images ■ Cartoons ■ Pictures
Get subjective statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Read biographies of some of the key players (how did they perceive the problem) ■ Look at the website of the players to see how they portray the issue (both in pictures and in text) ■ Ask for transcripts of speeches at the Public Affairs department
Organise an exploratory seminar or a lecture	Invite the person(s) who you were not able to get a personal interview with; preferably ask for some ‘out of the box’ thinking.