The idea jar: many ideas first

40 minutes · Ages 6 to 8 · Ideation · Free to print and share

Goal

Students generate many ideas without judging them, then choose and grow one.

Vocabulary

- brainstorm
- idea
- combine
- choose

Materials

- Slips of paper
- A jar or box
- Timer

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Hold up a spoon. In two minutes, how many other things could it be? Count the ideas together.

Activity

1. Rule for today: in the first round, every idea counts and nobody judges.
2. Give a prompt: "Invent a machine that fixes an annoying problem." Students write one idea per slip for five minutes. Aim for lots.
3. Put the slips in the jar. Pull two at random and combine them into one bigger idea as a class.
4. Each student picks one idea and grows it with three questions: Who uses it? How does it work? What could go wrong?
5. Pairs share and answer each other with "Yes, and...".

Talk about it

- Why do we make lots of ideas before choosing?
- How did combining two ideas change them?
- How does it feel when someone says "yes, and" to your idea?

Check for understanding

Students draw and label their chosen invention.

No devices?

The whole lesson is unplugged.

Going further

Keep the idea jar in the classroom for free time. Read our guide on nurturing kids' ideas.

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