

# SCAMPER Away! (Big Brainstorming)

**\*\* explanations and downloadable graphic organizers.\*\***

Are you often wondering how to get your students to broaden their responses and thinking? Well, if your answer is yes, try SCAMPER. The strategy is very open-ended, so it is easily differentiated by both the teacher and participants. Based on the work of Alex Osborn, the "father of brainstorming", Robert Eberle developed SCAMPER. It is an acronym for key verbs that help open up new ways of thinking and problem solving.

**S** = Substitute, **C** = Combine, **A** = Adapt,  
**M** = modify, magnify, minify, **P** = Put to other uses,  
**E** = Eliminate, **R** = Reverse, rearrange

**As students participate in brainstorming activities, remember to reinforce the simple rules that make the process most effective:**

**Look for quantity first.** Lots of ideas means deeper thoughts and broader connections from which to choose. Quality decisions come later after all the brainstorming is done. Students love to jump in and pick one of their first ideas and this is not always the strongest, most effective or challenging.

**Piggy-back (hitch-hike) on, or combine with other's ideas.** Sometimes you want to start out with students writing their own brainstorm list. If a group is involved with an activity however, it helps expand the thought process if people work as a group initially, or a few minutes after individuals have started a list. Allowing some independent time does give the less verbal child a chance to think first.

**Make no judgments or criticism of ideas.** Just get lots of ideas out there. You can always weed out the silly, bad, weird ones later. Students also love to discuss each idea of theirs, or worse yet, spend time criticizing other's ideas. This is counterproductive to getting a lot of ideas. You may have to do some extra emphasis on this part!

## SCAMPER:

>> relates to any subject or situation and may be used large/small group or individual work.

>> exercises creative and critical thinking skills as one follows through on ideas. helps define current ideas or products.

>> encourages finding a wide variety of options that may open up new opportunities.

>> results in both practical and impractical ideas for the current situation, but the currently unusable thoughts may bring about new products.

## Included in the Scamper\_Tips\_Trio...

a free mini-poster of the SCAMPER verbs, explanations and questions that one might ask as you problem solve; a visual SCAMPER example - using a door as the original (you may use this to promote discussion and understanding of the SCAMPER process as you teach the class about SCAMPER), and a blank SCAMPER graphic organizer to help students begin the process. As they use SCAMPER in other situations, ie: to think about a character's actions or an invention, other written or visual materials will be more appropriate.

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