

"Yes, but...", "Yes, and..."

With thanks to Matthew Reidsma: this method is inspired by his [Inward UX workshop](#) at UXLibs III.

What it is

This technique involves asking participants to pair up and discuss an idea, with one person making suggestions and the other responding initially with "Yes, but..." and then later with "Yes, and..." The principle is that the ideas generated under 'Yes, and...' and those under 'Yes, but...' will be different, providing a range that might not come out in unstructured conversation. Also, the method encourages participants to think about how encouraging or discouraging they are of others' ideas; "Yes, and..." is likely to create a more positive atmosphere and make someone think about the strengths and additional benefits of their ideas, while "Yes, but..." has a role in helping people to identify and problematise any weaknesses.



Things you need

- Participants working in pairs (this technique can be sized up to any size of group, within reason)
- A stopwatch (a watch or smartphone is fine)
- A way to record the ideas generated, e.g. a notepad, tablet or laptop
- Optional - a third person to act as recorder for each pair



How to do it

1. Start by getting your participants into pairs or threes, depending on numbers and whether you want to have a recorder in each group. Either ask people to partner up themselves or assign numbers and encourage those with the same number to find one another.

2. Introduce the method:

"In each [pair/group], I'd like one of you to start by suggesting an idea. The other person, please interject from time to time with the words "Yes, but..." and write down a brief summary of your partner's suggestions. After two minutes, I will call time."

3. Start the stopwatch, let 2 minutes elapse and call out "Stop!"

4. Continue with the method:

"Now, we're going to start again. Ideas person, please suggest your idea afresh. Other person, this time please say 'Yes, and...' every now and then, again writing down the gist of what your partner is saying. After two more minutes, I'll call time again."

5. Start the stopwatch, let 2 minutes elapse and call out "Stop!"

6. Repeat Steps 2 - 5, swapping the participants around in the pairs so the person who hasn't suggested their ideas yet gets the opportunity.

7. Finally, ask participants to spend five minutes discussing the similarities and differences between the ideas they came up with while their partner was interjecting "Yes, but..." and those from the "Yes, and..." phase.

8. (Optional) Open up discussion to the whole group, inviting people to reflect on the activity and share any ideas they particularly like.

