# QuickTip - Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

Nominal group technique (NGT) is a structured method for group brainstorming that encourages contributions from everyone. See the Brainstorming article for tips and other variations.

## When to Use Nominal Group Technique

- When some group members are much more vocal than others.
- When some group members think better in silence.
- When there is concern about some members not participating.
- When the group does not easily generate quantities of ideas.
- When all or some group members are new to the team.
- When the issue is controversial or there is heated conflict.

## Nominal Group Technique Procedure

Materials needed: paper and pen or pencil for each individual, flipchart, marking pens, tape.

1. State the subject of the brainstorming. Clarify the statement as needed until everyone understands it.
2. Each team member silently thinks of and writes down as many ideas as possible in a set period of time (5 to 10 minutes).
3. Each member in turn states aloud one idea. Facilitator records it on the flipchart.
   - No discussion is allowed, not even questions for clarification.
   - Ideas given do not need to be from the team member's written list. Indeed, as time goes on, many ideas will not be.
   - A member may "pass" his or her turn, and may then add an idea on a subsequent turn.

   Continue around the group until all members pass or for an agreed-upon length of time.

4. Discuss each idea in turn. Wording may be changed only when the idea's originator agrees. Ideas may be stricken from the list only by unanimous agreement. Discussion may clarify meaning, explain logic or analysis, raise and answer questions, or state agreement or disagreement.
5. Prioritize the ideas using multivoting or list reduction.

## Nominal Group Technique Considerations

- Discussion should be equally balanced among all ideas. The facilitator should not allow discussion to turn into argument. The primary purpose of the discussion is clarification. It is not to resolve differences of opinion.
- Keep all ideas visible. When ideas overflow to additional flipchart pages, post previous pages around the room so all ideas are still visible to everyone.
- See brainstorming for other suggestions to use with this tool.

Excerpted from Nancy R. Tague's *The Quality Toolbox*, Second Edition, ASQ Quality Press, 2004, pages 364–365.

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