



Worst Idea First

A 20-minute reverse brainstorm for groups of 3–4

Don't ask how it succeeds — ask how it fails, badly. Then flip every answer. The worst ideas are the easiest to say and the sharpest to act on.

**Which risk is everyone in your
project
quietly certain about —
and nobody has said out loud?**

The flip

- Round one: “How do we make this absolutely FLOP?” Five minutes, quantity over sense.
- Each group presents its single most catastrophic idea — proudly.
- Round two, the flip: for each worst idea, “how do we prevent exactly this?” Six minutes.

Pick a real target — say it out loud

- One project, product or event the group actually cares about.
- “This year’s customer conference.” “The new onboarding flow.”
- Real targets make the flip land. Toy targets make it theater.

Why the worst ideas work better

- The game rewards saying the awkward thing — so it gets said.
- A “make the invite boring” idea flips into “rewrite the subject line” — specificity for free.
- Laughter is the audible sound of safety rising. Notice the curve.

Three ways it fails, three rescues

- Worst ideas arrive boring → demand specifics: nobody shows up BECAUSE of what? Design that.
- A group flips too early, skipping the fun → hold them: “stay in the disaster a moment longer.”
- Someone’s worst idea is a real complaint → honor it: “most valuable card in the room. Flip it first, we talk after.”

Three questions after the flip

- 1. Which worst idea was easiest to say out loud — and why that one?**
- 2. What did you think of but NOT say? One word is enough.**
- 3. Which flipped action goes on a real list, with a real owner, before we leave?**

The measure

- Before groups form: six rows about what you say — and swallow — in real meetings.
- After the debrief: the same six rows about this game.
- The gap between thought and said is the safety meter. That is what this measures.

Name the failure before it names you.

The disguised complaint is the gift.

A five-minute worst round is a risk register, pre-written.

One habit to install

- Where do your risks only get named AFTER they happen? Post-mortems are the expensive version.
- Schedule the next worst-idea round: which project, what date.

Pick a real target · engineer the flop · flip every line

The awkward things, said inside a game that rewards saying them —
then flipped into owners and dates.

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