

THREE-BRAIN WARM-UP

A very effective and very popular warm-up where participants have fun failing.



Duration	The first time, about 6 to 8 minutes; after that, about 3 minutes
Physical requirements	Space for everyone to stand
Energy level	Extremely high
Researchers/Facilitators	1
Participants	Groups of 4 (or 3; see “Method notes”)
Expected output	Very awake participants, laughter, and a sense of fun through failure

This warm-up exists in many forms and under different names.⁰¹ It is especially intense, and can be used to make a powerful start to the day, to clearly punctuate the process, or to shake people out of a rut.

Step-by-step guide

- 1 The basic form is a group of four people. The subject starts in the middle, and the warm-up proceeds as follows:
 - The person standing behind the subject’s left shoulder (Color Canvas) asks simple visual questions, immediately repeating each question until the subject answers correctly. (“What color is the sun? The sun? The sun? The sky? The sky?”)
 - The person standing behind the subject’s right shoulder (Math Professor) asks very simple math questions, immediately repeating each question until the subject

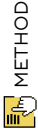
⁰¹ The Global Service Jam’s warm-up playlist on YouTube includes videos explaining this warm-up and showing it in action. See <http://bit.do/JamWarmups>.

answers correctly. (“Two plus two? Two plus two? Half of six? Half of six? Half of six?”)

- The person standing in front of the subject (Puppet Master) makes very slow, precise movements mostly with their hands, waiting for the subject to copy each pose precisely before moving on.
- 2** The three people all demand the subject’s attention at the same time. The subject answers all the questions and mirrors the movements simultaneously.
 - 3** When the subject is warm (eyes bright, face full of life, usually after about 30 seconds), change positions so everyone gets a new job. Always change all teams at the same time, so everyone can start and finish each round at the same time, sharing the experience and building the dramatic arc.
 - 4** At the end, debrief the warm-up (see “Method notes.”) ►



- A** The three-brain warm-up, a very powerful warm-up with physical, cognitive, and spatial elements.



Method notes

- If the group is not divisible by 4, make some groups of 3 (subject, Math Professor, Color Canvas) and have the subject look at another group's Puppet Master for the movements. Or, have one person who gives all the movements, and many groups of 3 (subject, Math Professor, Color Canvas) who do the other tasks.
- The basic rule for the two questioners is “never stop talking.” Remind them that it's OK to re-use questions and that “you need your answer NOW!”
- The basic rule for the Puppet Master is “be very slow, and very precise.”
- Some thoughts on debriefing: at first, we initially struggle to talk and use our hands at the same time (most participants will often “forget” the hands). But we soon get into the flow, and the result is very invigorating. In design too, we will do best if we enrich our accustomed verbal channel by using our hands and bodies. Also, this activity is basically impossible – everyone fails, from the CEO to the newest intern – but they still get a benefit from the exercise. And because everybody fails, nobody gets embarrassed. As designers, we will all fail together, and by failing we will move forward. ◀