

THE BRAINSTORM ENGINE

Creativity is Intelligence Having Fun

User Manual & Onboarding Guide

Field: Creativity & Ideation · Offline.Ltd

8 CREATIVE SPACES	3 AI MAGIC TOOLS	✓ WORKS OFFLINE	8 SPARK PACKS
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This manual covers every feature of The Brainstorm Engine — an offline-first creative workspace combining free-form idea capture, visual mind mapping, structured creativity techniques, AI-assisted brainstorming, idea refinement, and timed focus sessions. It includes three AI-powered magic tools: The Alchemist (idea breeding), The Oracle (future-self review), and The Echo Chamber (time-travel debate). Load a Spark Pack to transform the workspace for any creative domain instantly.

Version 2.1 · For use with The_Brainstorm_Engine_V2.html

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1 Getting Started

The Brainstorm Engine is a single HTML file. No installation, no account, no internet connection required. Open it in any modern browser and start creating.

System Requirements

BROWSER	VERSION	NOTES
Chrome / Edge	90+	Recommended. Full Ollama support.
Firefox	90+	Full support.
Safari	15+	Full support. Ollama may need CORS config.
Mobile browsers	Recent	Responsive layout. AI features need Ollama on same network.

How to Open

Double-click `The_Brainstorm_Engine_V2.html` to open it in your default browser. Everything runs locally — your data never leaves your machine.

PRO TIP

Email the HTML file to yourself or save it in a cloud drive for cross-device access. Each browser on each device maintains its own separate `localStorage`, so export your session before switching.

The Welcome Screen

When opened for the first time, a welcome modal introduces the eight creative spaces and the three AI magic tools. Click "Ignite the engine" to dismiss it. The modal will not appear again on subsequent visits (stored in `localStorage`).

Ollama (Optional)

AI-powered features (AI Muse, The Alchemist, The Oracle, The Echo Chamber, AI Cluster, AI Expand, AI Assist, AI Spark) require Ollama running locally. Install Ollama, pull a model (the default is `llama3.2`), and run `ollama serve`. The status indicator in the header shows the connection state. All non-AI features work fully without Ollama.

CAUTION

If you open the file via the `file://` protocol, browsers may block Ollama requests due to CORS. Serve the file via HTTP instead: `python3 -m http.server 8080`

2 Interface Overview

The interface consists of a header bar, a tab bar, a scrollable content area, and a footer disclaimer bar. A floating Spark Orb sits in the bottom-right corner.

The Header

The header displays the red backslash (⌘) brand mark, the product title with a gradient finish (spark-to-ember), the tagline *"Creativity is Intelligence Having Fun"*, the Ollama connection status indicator, and a link to Offline.Ltd. The left border glows with the spark accent colour.

The Tab Bar

The tab bar is divided into tool tabs (left) and system tabs (right). Tool tabs highlight with the spark colour when active. System tabs use a steel-grey style.

TAB	SHORTCUT	TYPE
Idea Wall	Ctrl/■ + 1	Tool
Mind Map	Ctrl/■ + 2	Tool
Challenge Lab	Ctrl/■ + 3	Tool
AI Muse	Ctrl/■ + 4	Tool
Refinement	Ctrl/■ + 5	Tool
Focus Timer	Ctrl/■ + 6	Tool
■ Files	—	System
? Help	—	System

The Content Area

Each tab reveals a tool panel with its own inputs, outputs, and controls. Only one panel is visible at a time. The content area scrolls independently of the header and footer.

The Disclaimer Bar

The footer shows "All data stored locally. AI via Ollama on localhost. Nothing leaves your machine." and the current version number.

3 Saving & File Management

All data is saved automatically to your browser's localStorage after every action. No manual save is needed during a session. To transfer data between browsers or devices, use the export and import functions.

Exporting Your Session

Go to the **Files** tab and click **Export Everything**. This downloads a JSON file named `brainstorm-engine-YYYY-MM-DD.json` containing your entire session: ideas, mind map, challenge responses, muse chat, refinement board, timer sessions, active Spark Pack, and all settings. You can also press **Ctrl/⌘ + S** from any tab to export.

Importing a Session

Click **Import Session** on the Files tab and select a previously exported JSON file. The import replaces your current session entirely.

CAUTION

Importing a session **overwrites all current data** in the browser. Export your current work first if you want to keep it.

Resetting All Data

The **Reset** button on the Files tab erases all localStorage data and reloads the page. A confirmation dialog appears first. This action is irreversible unless you have an export.

PRO TIP

Name your exports by project or date so you can maintain multiple brainstorm sessions as separate files. Switching between projects is as easy as importing a different file.

4 Idea Wall

Tab: Idea Wall · Shortcut: Ctrl/⬛ + 1

The Idea Wall is your brain-dump canvas. Capture any idea instantly, colour-code it by category, vote ideas up or down, shuffle for fresh perspectives, and select multiple ideas to feed into The Alchemist, The Oracle, or The Echo Chamber.

Inputs

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
Capture an Idea	Text input. Type an idea and press Enter or click + ADD.
Colour Pills	Five colour categories: Spark (bold), Iris (wild), Mint (feasible), Rose (human), Steel (note). Click to set the colour for your next idea.
Selection Circles	Click the circle on any idea card to select it. Select 2+ ideas to enable Alchemist, Oracle, and Echo Chamber.

Actions

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Sort by Votes	Reorders all idea cards by vote count, highest first.
Shuffle	Randomises the order of all cards to spark fresh associations.
AI Cluster ✦	Groups ideas into 2–5 thematic clusters using AI. Requires Ollama and 3+ ideas.
Vote ▲ / ▼	Hover over a card to reveal vote arrows. Click to upvote or downvote.
Edit	Click an idea's text to edit it inline via a prompt dialog.
Delete ×	Hover to reveal the delete button in the top-right corner.

Idea Card Colours

COLOUR	TAG	PURPOSE
Spark (gold)	BOLD	Default. Strong, confident ideas.
Iris (purple)	WILD	Creative, unconventional ideas.
Mint (green)	FEASIBLE	Practical, implementable ideas.
Rose (pink)	HUMAN	People-centred, emotional ideas.
Steel (grey)	NOTE	Context, constraints, observations.
Alchemy (gold glow)	OFFSPRING	Auto-assigned to Alchemist-bred ideas.

5 Mind Map

Tab: Mind Map · Shortcut: Ctrl/⌘ + 2

A visual concept mapping tool. The first node becomes the central concept (highlighted in spark-to-ember gradient). Subsequent nodes orbit around it. Drag to reposition. Click one node then another to toggle connections.

Inputs

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
Add a concept...	Text input. Type a concept and press Enter or click ADD.

Actions

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
ADD	Adds a new node to the canvas. First node is central; others are related.
AI Expand ✦	AI suggests 3–5 related concepts and adds them to the map. Requires Ollama.
CLEAR	Removes all nodes and edges from the map. Asks for confirmation.
Drag a node	Click and hold to reposition any node on the canvas.
Click two nodes	Click one node, then another, to create or remove a connection between them.
Delete ✕	Hover over a node to reveal the delete button.

PRO TIP

Start with a broad central concept, then let AI Expand suggest related ideas. Manually connect the most interesting relationships to see patterns emerge.

6 Challenge Lab

Tab: Challenge Lab · Shortcut: Ctrl/⌘ + 3

Define a problem, then attack it from every angle using proven creativity techniques. Works entirely without AI. AI Assist supercharges it. Spark Packs can add custom techniques.

Inputs

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
The Challenge	Textarea. Define your problem statement: "How might we...", "What if...", etc.
Technique	Dropdown selector. Choose a structured creativity technique to guide your brainstorm.
Your Response	Textarea. Write your brainstorm response using the selected technique.

Built-in Techniques

TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION
Reverse Brainstorm	How to make it WORSE? Flip each failure into a solution.
SCAMPER	Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to use, Eliminate, Reverse.
Six Thinking Hats	Facts, Feelings, Caution, Benefits, Creativity, Process.
Random Entry	Force-connect a random word to your challenge.
Worst Possible Idea	Find the most terrible solution, then flip it.
Future Headlines	Imagine success. Write the headlines. Work backwards.
Persona Lens	How would a random persona approach this problem?

Actions

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Save Response	Saves your written response to the Response Log with technique and date.
AI Assist ♦	AI generates a creative response using the selected technique. Requires Ollama.
Clear Log	Erases all saved responses from the log.

7 AI Muse

Tab: AI Muse · Shortcut: Ctrl/⌘ + 4 · Requires Ollama

Your conversational brainstorming partner. The Muse automatically includes context from your Idea Wall, Mind Map, and Challenge Lab so its suggestions are grounded in your actual work. Spark Packs customise the Muse's personality.

Layout

The AI Muse tab uses a chat layout with a main message area on the left and a sidebar on the right. The sidebar contains the model selector, context toggles, and quick prompt buttons.

Sidebar Controls

CONTROL	DESCRIPTION
Model	Text input for the Ollama model name (default: llama3.2).
Context: Idea Wall	Checkbox. Include Idea Wall contents in the AI context.
Context: Mind Map	Checkbox. Include Mind Map nodes in the AI context.
Context: Challenge	Checkbox. Include the challenge statement in the AI context.
Quick Prompts	Pre-built prompts: Combine concepts, Devil's advocate, Blind spots, 10x it.
Pack Prompts	Additional quick prompts injected by active Spark Pack.

PRO TIP

Toggle context sources on and off to focus the Muse on specific parts of your session. Disabling all context turns the Muse into a general brainstorming partner.

8 Refinement Board

Tab: Refinement · Shortcut: Ctrl/⌘ + 5

A three-column Kanban board for moving ideas from raw captures to polished concepts. Drag cards between columns to track their development.

Columns

COLUMN	PURPOSE
Raw Sparks	Unfiltered ideas fresh from brainstorming. Starting point.
Developing	Ideas being explored, refined, or combined. Work in progress.
Polished	Fully formed ideas ready for action or presentation.

Actions

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
+ ADD	Add a new item directly to the Raw Sparks column.
Pull Top Ideas	Pulls the top 5 most-voted ideas from the Idea Wall into Raw Sparks.
Drag between columns	Drag any card from one column to another to change its stage.
Click a card	Edit the title and add notes via prompt dialogs.
Delete ×	Hover to reveal the delete button on any card.

9 Focus Timer

Tab: Focus Timer · Shortcut: Ctrl/■ + 6

Timed brainstorm sessions. Constraints breed creativity. Set a duration, write a prompt to guide your session, then let the timer push you to capture ideas without self-editing. Session captures auto-save to the Idea Wall.

Inputs

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
Duration	Dropdown: 2 min (Lightning), 5 min (Sprint), 10 min (Deep dive), 15 min (Extended), 25 min (Pomodoro).
Session Prompt	Optional text input describing what you're brainstorming.
Session Capture	Textarea for free-flowing writing during the timed session.

Actions

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Start / Pause / Resume	Toggles the countdown timer. Display glows spark colour while running.
Reset	Stops the timer and resets to the selected duration.
Save to Idea Wall	Saves the Session Capture text as a new idea on the Idea Wall (prefixed with ■).

PRO TIP

The 5-minute Sprint is the sweet spot for most brainstorms. Short enough to maintain intensity, long enough to get past surface-level ideas. Don't edit — just flow.

10 The Alchemist

Accessed via Idea Wall selection bar · Requires Ollama

The Alchemist breeds ideas together. Select 2 or more ideas on the Idea Wall (click their selection circles), then click **Alchemize**. The AI generates 5 offspring, each representing a different creative combination:

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
HYBRID	A balanced combination of the parent ideas.
DOMINANT	One parent's trait dominates the offspring.
MUTATION	A wild random twist is added to the mix.
OPPOSITE	The core assumption of the parents is inverted.
BOLDx10	A 10x bolder, more ambitious version of the combination.

Each offspring can be saved directly to the Idea Wall (tagged as OFFSPRING with alchemy colour). Offspring show their lineage so you can trace the creative evolution.

The Spark Orb also offers an **Alchemize** button that picks two random ideas from your Wall and breeds them automatically.

11 The Oracle

Accessed via Idea Wall selection bar · Requires Ollama

The Oracle role-plays as your future self, 18 months from now, looking back with perfect hindsight. Select one or more ideas, then click **■ Oracle**. The AI responds with five sections:

SECTION	WHAT IT REVEALS
Future Headline	A newspaper headline about how your ideas turned out.
The Win	Which idea (or combination) became the biggest success, and why.
The Blind Spot	What you were completely missing that seems obvious in hindsight.
The Surprise	An unexpected second-order effect nobody predicted.
The Sleeper	Which dismissed idea turned out to be quietly brilliant.

The Oracle automatically includes context from your full brainstorm session (Idea Wall, Mind Map, Challenge) to ground its hindsight in your actual work.

12 The Echo Chamber

Accessed via Idea Wall selection bar · Requires Ollama


A time-travel debate between three versions of yourself. Select one or more ideas, then click **■ Echo Chamber**. Three voices argue for 3 rounds (9 turns):

VOICE	PERSPECTIVE	STYLE
■■ Past Self	10 minutes ago, first-blush excitement	Enthusiastic, slightly naive, sometimes cringey in hindsight
■ Present Self	Current reasoning, real doubts	Thoughtful, balanced, the mediator
■ Future Self	18-month hindsight	Warm, wise, slightly wry, occasionally goosebump-inducing

After the initial debate, you can **reply as Present Self** to continue the conversation. Past and Future selves respond to your input. You can also **Re-roll** for a fresh debate. Any voice's best line can be saved directly to the Idea Wall.









The three AI tools form a complete creative system: The Alchemist creates new ideas (synthesis), The Oracle gives wisdom from the future (hindsight), and The Echo Chamber lets you argue with yourself across time (self-dialogue).

13 Spark Packs


Accessed via  Files tab

Spark Packs are themed workspace templates that instantly transform the Brainstorm Engine for a specific creative domain. Each pack includes starter ideas, custom Challenge Lab techniques, AI Muse quick prompts, and a system prompt that shapes the AI's personality.

Built-in Packs

PACK	DOMAIN	CUSTOM TECHNIQUES
 Startup Founder	Product, strategy, experiments	Lean Canvas Lens, 10x Test
 Creative Writer	World-building, plot, character	Hero's Journey Beats, What-If Chain
 Educator	Lessons, curriculum, engagement	Bloom's Taxonomy Climb, Backwards Design
 Designer	UX/UI, visual thinking, critique	Crazy 3s, 5 Whys of UX
 Architect / Spatial	Built environments, placemaking	Site Forces Diagram, Section-First Design
 Game Designer	Mechanics, player psychology	MDA Framework, Core Loop Dissection
 Coach / Facilitator	Growth, reframing, questions	Clean Language Questions, Three Chairs
 Music Producer	Sound design, arrangement	Subtractive Arrangement, Reference Triangle

Using Packs

Load Pack activates the pack's system prompt, techniques, and quick prompts. **Load + Add Ideas** also seeds the Idea Wall with the pack's starter ideas. **Deactivate** removes the pack's customisations but keeps any ideas already on the Wall. You can also import community packs as JSON files via  **Import Pack**.

14 Spark Orb

The floating red orb in the bottom-right corner of the screen. Displays the backslash brand mark and animates with a gentle floating motion. Click it to open the Spark Panel — a popup with creative fuel on demand.

Spark Types

BUTTON	WHAT IT GENERATES
Prompt	A random creative prompt from a curated list (e.g. “What if money was no object?”).
Constraint	A random creative constraint (e.g. “Must fit in a shoebox”).
Mashup	Two random unrelated concepts to force-connect (e.g. Library + Skateboard).
■■ Alchemize	Picks 2 random ideas from the Wall and breeds them via The Alchemist.
AI ✦	AI generates a surprising creative prompt based on your current ideas. Requires Ollama.

PRO TIP

Use the Spark Orb when you feel stuck. The random prompts, constraints, and mashups are designed to break creative blocks by forcing unexpected connections.

15 Keyboard Shortcuts

Ctrl/■ + 1	Switch to Idea Wall
Ctrl/■ + 2	Switch to Mind Map
Ctrl/■ + 3	Switch to Challenge Lab
Ctrl/■ + 4	Switch to AI Muse
Ctrl/■ + 5	Switch to Refinement Board
Ctrl/■ + 6	Switch to Focus Timer
Ctrl/■ + S	Export everything (download JSON)
Esc	Close welcome modal or Spark Panel
Enter	Submit input in most text fields

16 Troubleshooting

Ollama Shows “Offline”

Ensure Ollama is running (`ollama serve`). Click the status indicator to re-check. If using `file://` protocol, switch to HTTP serving.

“CORS Blocked” Banner Appears

You’re opening the file directly from your filesystem. Serve it via HTTP: `python3 -m http.server 8080`, then visit `http://localhost:8080`.

Data Missing After Browser Update

Some browser updates clear `localStorage`. Always export your session regularly. Re-import from your last export file.

“Storage Full” Toast

`localStorage` has a ~5 MB limit per origin. Export and clear old data, or delete unused Muse chat history.

AI Responses Are Slow or Low Quality

Try a different model. Smaller models (e.g. `llama3.2`) are faster. Larger models (e.g. `llama3.1:70b`) produce higher quality but need more RAM. Change the model in the AI Muse sidebar.

Ideas Not Saving

Ensure JavaScript is enabled. Check for browser extensions that block `localStorage`. Try a private/incognito window.

Mobile Layout Issues

The interface is responsive but best experienced on screens $\geq 768\text{px}$. On mobile, the Kanban board stacks vertically and the chat sidebar moves below the chat area.

Import Fails With “Invalid File”

The import expects a valid JSON file matching the Brainstorm Engine state schema. Check that the file hasn’t been corrupted or truncated.

17 Accuracy & Limitations

The Brainstorm Engine is a creative ideation tool, not an authority. Understanding what AI can and cannot do helps you use it effectively.

FEATURE	NATURE	NOTES
Idea Wall / Refinement / Timer	Deterministic	Pure data storage and display. No AI involved.
Mind Map	Deterministic + optional AI	Manual mapping is exact. AI Expand suggestions are creative, not factual.
Challenge Lab	Technique-guided + optional AI	Techniques are proven frameworks. AI Assist output is suggestive.
AI Muse	LLM-generated	Conversational AI. May hallucinate. Quality depends on model and context.
The Alchemist	LLM-generated	Idea breeding is creative synthesis. Offspring should be evaluated critically.
The Oracle	LLM-generated	Future-self role-play. Imaginative, not predictive. Use for inspiration, not forecasting.
The Echo Chamber	LLM-generated	Time-travel debate is creative fiction. Insights are suggestive, not authoritative.
AI Cluster / AI Expand / AI Spark	LLM-generated	Quick AI assists. May produce irrelevant or repetitive results.

DISCLAIMER

All AI-powered features rely on local LLMs via Ollama. LLM output may contain hallucinations, omissions, bias, and inconsistency. AI output is **suggestive, not authoritative**. Always apply your own critical judgment. The Brainstorm Engine is a creative tool, not a substitute for professional advice of any kind.

18 Glossary

Alchemist	AI-powered idea-breeding tool that combines 2+ parent ideas into 5 offspring types (Hybrid, Dominant, Mutation, Opposite, BOLDx10).
Brainstorm Engine	The complete product: an offline-first creative workspace by Offline.Ltd.
Challenge Lab	Structured creativity tool offering 7+ techniques for attacking problems from multiple angles.
Echo Chamber	AI-powered time-travel debate between Past Self, Present Self, and Future Self.
Ember	The warm red-orange accent colour (#E85D3A) used for the brand mark and buttons.
Focus Timer	Timed brainstorm sessions with configurable durations from 2 to 25 minutes.
Idea Wall	The primary brain-dump canvas where ideas are captured, colour-coded, voted, and selected.
Iris	The purple accent colour (#7B68EE) used for wild ideas, AI elements, and the Muse.
Kanban	A visual workflow system with columns representing stages of development (used in the Refinement Board).
localStorage	Browser-based storage mechanism used to persist all session data locally.
Mind Map	Visual concept mapping tool with draggable nodes and togglable connections.
Mint	The green accent colour (#3ABB8E) used for feasible ideas and success states.
Muse	The AI conversational brainstorming partner that draws context from your session.
Ollama	A local LLM runner required for all AI features. Runs on localhost:11434.
Oracle	AI-powered future-self review that provides hindsight on your selected ideas.
Offspring	Ideas generated by The Alchemist from parent idea combinations. Tagged with alchemy colour.
Refinement Board	Three-column Kanban board (Raw Sparks → Developing → Polished) for idea development.
Rose	The pink accent colour (#E8597A) used for human-centred ideas and danger actions.
SCAMPER	Creativity technique: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to use, Eliminate, Reverse.

Six Thinking Hats	Edward de Bono's technique for examining problems from six perspectives.
Spark	The gold accent colour (#FFAA32) used for bold ideas, active states, and primary actions.
Spark Orb	Floating button providing random creative prompts, constraints, mashups, and quick Alchemist access.
Spark Pack	A themed workspace template containing starter ideas, custom techniques, quick prompts, and AI personality tweaks.
Steel	The grey accent colour (#6A7A8C) used for notes, secondary labels, and neutral elements.

THE BRAINSTORM ENGINE

Creativity is Intelligence Having Fun

Stay curious.

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