

How to Work Effectively in Groups

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1

Get to know each other. Take time to introduce yourself.

2

Assign roles to each individual.

3

Exchange contact information.

4

Identify the group's goal. Discuss and document the goal to make sure all are in agreement.

5

Divide tasks into steps and assign each group member a step to complete.

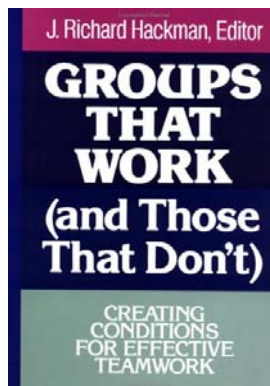
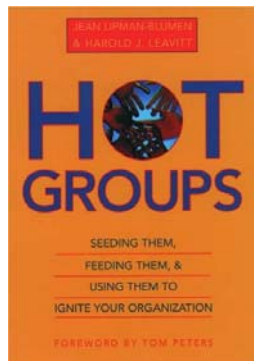
6

Listen and encourage one another.

7

Deal immediately with conflict if it arises.

Read *Hot Groups* by Jean Lipman-Bluman and Harold Leavitt to learn more about productive groups. This book is available in the Center for Student Leadership & Community Engagement's Resource Library.



Another book to consider is *Groups That Work (and Those That Don't)* by J. Richard Hackman. Obtain a copy from your local bookstore or library.

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Working in Groups



Understanding how
working together
enables everyone to
reach a common goal!

student *life* 

GROUP WORK

In college, your teachers may ask you to work with other students to:

- Solve a problem
- Study an issue
- Develop an argument
- Complete a project
- Do anything else they can think of!

Your teacher has put you in groups because he or she expects that you will learn more by working together than you will by working alone.

But working in groups is different from individual work and you need techniques to bring your group together successfully, whether it's for a short in-class assignment or a long out-of-class project.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES FOR GROUP WORK:

- Write down roles and responsibilities of each team member to avoid confusion.
- Communicate clearly and in writing about deliverables and deadlines, especially when they change.
- Be as specific as possible so that individuals don't start the next meeting with "I thought you meant..." sentences.
- Put what you came up with in a meeting in an email so that everyone has the information in writing.
- Use your calendar and write down meetings times immediately to avoid confusion.
- Whenever you send an email out, send it to the entire group. This keeps everyone informed no matter what part of the project they are working on.

DEALING WITH GROUP CONFLICT: Sometimes conflict can't be avoided.

- If conflict becomes a problem for the group, try to determine the root of the conflict.
- Is it just a difference of opinion or is it something more?
- Remember to be open and honest.
- Do other group members have suggestions on how to handle it?
- Have you tried several different methods to deal with the conflict?

Why Work in Groups?

- In group work, you can draw on each group member's knowledge and perspectives, frequently giving you a more well thought out paper at the end or a better understanding of the class material for exams, labs, etc.
- You can also draw on people's different strengths. For example, you might be a great proof-reader while someone else is much better at organizing papers.
- Groups are great for motivation: they force you to be responsible to others and frequently, then, do more and better work on a project than you might when only responsible to yourself.
- Group work helps keep you on task. It's harder to procrastinate when working with others.
- Working in groups, especially writing texts together, mirrors working styles common outside school. In business, industry, and research organizations, collaborative work is the norm rather than the exception.

(<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/processes/group/pop1a.cfm>)