

10 Tips for Making Group/Teamwork Work

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SETUP

1. **Let them practice:** early on in the quarter, put the students in teams regularly. They need experience with the process.
2. **Let Students have some say:** I ask students for their top 3 or 4 choices and ensure them that I'll get at least one of their choices on their team.
3. **Tell the students to break bread:** teams will be more willing to share ideas if they have multiplexity.
4. **Always assign a leader:** For a major assignment, you need clear roles and a competent leader
5. **Let them know your role (and the whole point of this).** You are the manager, and you have to check in with them. Let them know you'll do this regularly, and that they can check in with you anytime. We are doing this to get better at working in teams--it's not a fixed skill, and students should be willing to take advice to get better at it.

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

6. **Remind students to assume positive intent.** This means that when someone suggests an idea, it's because they want the best for the team and/or for it's members. They are not doing it to be conniving, or because they are upset with you, or because the process is rigged.
7. **Talk to students about the role of feedback.** A study of 6000 knowledge workers found that the ability to Give and Receive Feedback Effectively were the two most desired traits in a coworker.
8. **No Assembly Lines, No Sales Teams:** Teams can work in lots of different ways. One extreme is to have each student handoff the assignment to the next student. Another extreme is to let each student work on their own and then paste their work together. Better than that, teach students to get involved in different processes and work together and separately when appropriate.

GRADING

9. **Create individual and team grades.** Be clear about which part is which, but make sure that they are still relying on each other to do well.
10. **Make Students Evaluate.** By engaging in evaluation themselves, students better understand the challenges of group work evaluation, and also hold each other accountable. Of course, most if not all of a students' grade should be determined by the instructor, but it helps to have both qualitative and percentage-based feedback from each student about their teammates.