

GROUP WORK

Many courses will require some form of group work, such as a group presentation, essay, lab, or other type of assignment. Whether you already know your group members or you have been assigned to a group of strangers, it is important to know who your group members are and how you will work together; otherwise the group will not work effectively and you will experience more stress and harm than good. When working in a group, try the 'MADMAN' strategy:

MEET THE FOLKS

First things first: you should get to know your group members. Group projects are a social experience and are designed to help you develop your interpersonal skills. Introducing yourself and taking a little time to get to know your group members will make for a better experience. It will also help you get a feel for the specific nature of your group. Every group is different, and it is up to you to figure out how your own skills will be most useful. You shouldn't always fall into the same role, even if it is where you are most comfortable. By trying out different roles in group work you will develop new workplace skills and make yourself easier to work with.

ASK QUESTIONS

Have the team take a look at the project outline, looking to figure out the different criteria that will need to be met for success. Ask each other:

- How will the project be evaluated? What will your prof/TA be looking for in your work?
- Are there different stages/checkpoints? What are the associated due dates?
- What are the content and presentation expectations?
- What are the expectations regarding group work and individual accountability?

You also need to ask yourselves what are the "whos", "whats", "wheres", and "whys" associated with your topic to determine potential subtopics that could be investigated.

DELEGATE AND FIND ANSWERS

Once you have determined some areas that can be investigated, it's time to split up the work equally among yourselves and get to it! It is usually helpful to set a deadline for this first research stage. Set up another meeting with the group for when everyone has done their bit of research. At this stage of the process you are just looking to familiarize yourselves with the topic so you can make informed decisions about what you need to cover in the final project. Don't worry about going too in-depth.

MAKE A PLAN

Now that you and your group members know a little more about the subject, meet and discuss what you have learned. Once everyone is up to speed you can all discuss what ideas would be most relevant to your assignment. Once you have all agreed on what areas your project needs to cover, write out an overview of those key areas. If the project is a presentation, create a plan for presenting your findings to the audience.

ACADEMIC

Now that you have an idea of what needs to be done, identify the different tasks that will be required to complete your project. Brainstorm to identify potential resources that might be used to complete each task. Also take some time to ask what obstacles might be encountered as each task is undertaken. How can you overcome these obstacles? The last thing you need to do is agree on when these tasks need to be completed. You want to leave yourselves enough time to put it all together before your deadline.

ALLOCATE RESPONSIBILITY

Now you know exactly what needs to be done, and when it needs to be done by.

Figure out the strengths and talents of your team members and split up the jobs equally. Talk with each other about the quality of the overall project/presentation. You should all agree on what to expect from each other and when to have things finished.

NEATEN UP THE RESULTS

Meet and work as a group to put everything together. If there is a presentation aspect, get together and rehearse the presentation. Some groups will assign the task of putting everything together to one group member, instead of doing it all together. This can be effective, but can also put a lot of stress on the editor if the other group members do not stick to the agreed deadlines.

REFERENCE

Ellis, E. S. (1998). Watering up the curriculum for adolescents with learning disabilities – Part 2: Goals of the affective dimension. *Remedial and Special Education, 19*(2), 91-105.

Commitments to quality of project and presentation

By signing my name below, I am making a commitment to:

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1. Developing a high quality product that I will be proud of,
2. Creating a product that will make sense, be interesting and informative to my audience.
3. Being neat and careful.
4. Doing my share on time.
5. Doing my best.

Signatures of team members

Commitments to collaborating effectively

check 3 that will be primary goals

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening without interrupting | <input type="checkbox"/> Respecting different opinions, skills & abilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving "I" messages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn-taking & involving everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging & complimenting others | <input type="checkbox"/> Consensus building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offering assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing and celebrating others' successes | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving negative feedback |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicating about difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing unique talents of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Peacefully resolving conflicts |

Other _____

Commitments to using effective habits of the mind

check 3 that will be primary goals

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using & keeping timelines | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing ideas & being clear | <input type="checkbox"/> Being open minded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resisting impulsiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Being accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> Being creative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging in challenging tasks | <input type="checkbox"/> Noticing how you & others think | <input type="checkbox"/> Viewing an idea in unusual ways |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persisting during tough times | <input type="checkbox"/> Using information resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Presenting an idea in usual ways |

Other _____