



STUDENT RESOURCE

How to form an effective group or team

Group work is a necessary component of student and professional life, and we all need the skills to manage it well. This resource addresses key things to consider when forming a group, partnership or team. The resource can be used for discussion prior to group assignments and also to help students build career strengths

If you have worked regularly with a group, you know how effective and how much fun group work can be. You have probably also learned that group dynamics can be complicated. Whatever the challenges, they are simpler to overcome when partnerships are founded with agreed-upon objectives and ground rules. Here are 12 basic questions for prospective members to discuss as you consider whether to team up.

Before you weigh these questions with potential colleagues, do some work together to verify that your abilities and interests match - even if you weren't given any choice in the team members! Also, ensure that all of you come with or agree to develop solid reputations for professionalism (punctuality, preparation, courtesy, and integrity).

Within your group, consider which of the following questions are relevant to your situation:

1. What are your individual goals, and how will working with a new group fit your plans?
2. Will your group exist for a finite period or will you collaborate indefinitely?
3. Will you structure yourselves as an egalitarian group, a leader-run group, or some sort of hybrid?
4. What is your mission? That is, what sorts of activities will you undertake, and how will you brand yourselves?
5. Where and when will you work?
6. Where and how frequently will you showcase your work?
7. Do you have commitments that could cause scheduling conflicts?
8. How will you meet any equipment needs?

9. Which of you will oversee things such your group's schedule, website, social media, and deadlines?
10. How will you manage bookings, marketing and travel or assignments, presentations and group submissions?
11. If you make money as a group, how will you administer your rights and business affairs?
12. What are some possible names for your group, and who will own the name?

Remember, if you intend to launch a professional partnership but have little experience in your industry, your prospects for success will increase if you consult a mentor during the formative process and as your group matures.

Digital literacy

You are likely to work with others who are not in the same physical space as you. They could be at another campus, in a different department, or in another state or country. There are some extra things you need to think about and set up when team members are geographically dispersed! Here are some of them.

1. You may need to use a virtual meeting point (VMP) or other online communication tool such as Skype or Zoom. If you can, set this up well in advance and make sure that all team members have access and know how to use it. Access online help if you need it.
2. Do you need to share resources? Do team members need to be able to share and edit documents? Is there a standard set of tools in your environment (where you are studying or working for example) that you can or should use?
3. Are your team members in the same time zone? If not, have you double-checked time differences and accommodated these when planning meeting times?
4. Are there other factors with working online that may impact the effectiveness of the group? For example:
 - Ensuring appropriate behaviour
 - Recognising and accommodating cultural differences.

Virginia Shea's book on [Netiquette](#) is an internet classic. Despite the references to technology being rather dated, it provides some great guidelines for appropriate behaviour online.

Make it count!

Which of the group or team roles are you good at? Go to your CV and add the heading 'Strengths'. List these underneath and then start to build some evidence. Make a note of the things that are not your strengths and seek opportunities to develop them.

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