

WORKING IN GROUPS

Group work

Whether you are allocated a group or form a study group with your friends, a key to good group work is remembering that everyone has different skills and strengths.

Find out each group member's strengths at the start: the group's mix of knowledge, personalities and talents can make for successful team work.

Tips for effective group work:

At the first group meeting, set the group's goals and objectives. You might also want to create a timeline with due dates for tasks to be completed.



Establish some principles or rules for your group that require each member to:

- do the pre-reading and any other preparation required,
- respect what each person has to say,
- be prepared to put forward differing points of view, and
- criticise ideas but not other members of the group.

TIP: At the first meeting, discuss and agree on a set of working practices for your group that ensure everyone is included and equally responsible for the group's success.

Group meetings

To be effective, group meetings should be scheduled at a regular time and place convenient for all group members.

As a group, ensure that meetings start and finish on time and that everyone is informed of any change of plans.

Before the end of each meeting, it is a good idea to make a list of items to be discussed / decided on at the next meeting, as well as any tasks to be completed before the next meeting.

Meeting roles

On a rotational basis, appoint:

- a facilitator whose task is to keep the discussion on track and ensure that everyone contributes. This is particularly important if English is not everyone's first language.
- a note taker who types up meeting notes with action items for distribution to the group.
- a timekeeper to keep the meeting on track.

Study groups

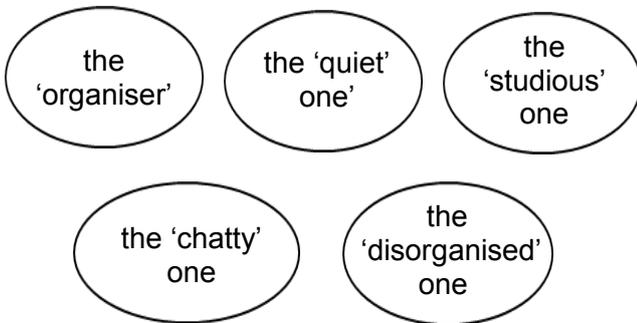
For study groups, try this procedure:

- Begin with a different person each week explaining his/her understanding of the concept / topic / question at the beginning of each session.
- Follow with open discussion.
- Conclude with one or two individuals summarising the discussion and the facilitator checking that each person in the group knows what he/she has to do for the next meeting.

Group dynamics

Each group will have a mix of personalities, skills and strengths. In addition, each member will have preferences for what they want to do.

Some personality types you may encounter:



Group challenges

Working in groups presents many challenges. These include:

- Finding out what each person's strengths are.
- Making the most of those strengths while giving each person the opportunity to try out and develop new skills.
- Dealing with those who are not pulling their weight.

TIP: At the first group meeting, ask each group member what their strengths are and which tasks they prefer doing.

Dealing with conflict

Conflict can arise in groups, especially if:

- members feel they are not being heard/respected/supported,
- one person dominates the group,
- Some members feel they are doing more than their fair share of the work, or
- someone is not doing their fair share of the work.

Some ways to avoid conflict:

- Rotate the role of meeting facilitator to give everyone a chance to manage the group (to avoid one person dominating).
- Make sure everyone is clear about the action items they are responsible for and the timeframe for completing them.
- Ask members to give a brief update on their action items at each meeting.
- Be mindful that group members may sometimes not meet a deadline for a good reason; avoid being judgemental.
- Keep in regular contact and support each other, especially if someone is struggling to manage their workload.

TIP: Each group is different so be flexible and be prepared to make changes to suit the needs and goals of your group.

Like this Survival Guide? Why not check out more of our guides...

StudySmarter, Get the Most from Lectures, Make the Most of Tutes, UWA Lingo, Critical Thinking, Mind Mapping, and Note taking.

Want to know more about STUDYSmarter?

Find out about all our services and resources at: www.studysmarter.uwa.edu.au

Any suggestions?

We would love to hear from you. Email us at studysmarter@uwa.edu.au

This resource was developed by the STUDYSmarter team for UWA students. When using our resources, please retain them in their original form with both the STUDYSmarter heading and the UWA logo.

