

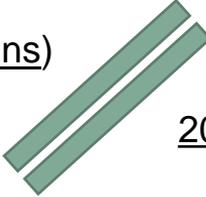
How to organize group work and make sure that everyone is involved?

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Schedule

- Introduction (1-2 mins)
 - Poll (1-2 mins)
 - Group division (3 mins)
 - How to make sure everyone is involved (3 mins)
 - How to motivate group work (3 mins)
 - Assessment of group work (2 mins)
 - The reflection and feedback discussion about group work (4 mins)
 - Wrapping up and interaction with the audience (2 mins)
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- 20 minutes

Group work

«Group work refers to work done in student groups independently of teacher assistance to achieve the groups goals.»

«A group is not functional right from the start. The group's formation into a functional unit, whose members trust each other and are ready to work for the group's common good, may take time.»

The first thing to think about: how to group?

Hyppönen & Linden: *Handbook for teachers - course structures, teaching methods and assessment*

Group division

If as the teacher you are limited in time, you may use **random** group division methods.

- ❑ **Student** choice.
- ❑ **Group students** with a **drawing lots**:
 - pieces of paper or cards
 - numbers: give each student a number between one and four: 1-2-3-4, with each student saying the next number when it is his or her turn.

An easy way to divide students into groups so that people sitting next to each other will not end up in the same group.

Get inspired! A guide for successful teaching by M.Hemminki, M.Leppänen, and T.Valovirta

Group division

If you don't want to make it random, but the speed is crucial, you should group **in advance**. If your activity is going to take up most of the class period, you don't have time to waste.

- Group students** based on differences.
- Based on topic** – market: teacher can provide topic categories, subjects, themes, methods, keywords.
- Based on skills**: to divide students into groups according to their phase in their studies.

Get inspired! **A guide for successful teaching** by M.Hemminki, M.Leppänen, and T.Valovirta

How to make sure everyone is involved

This will always be tricky, but some things can help:

- ❑ Student motivation (more about this later)
- ❑ The more structured the group work is, the easier it is for students to share responsibilities. For example: *“In this group work the goal is to come up with a proposal of an artwork for a museum exhibition. The proposal should have at least the following: synopsis, work plan, background (why is this artwork important now) budget, and an installation plan.”*
- ❑ Individual learning logs are one way to follow how students are dividing the tasks and how they are learning.

TIP: Point out the most important aspects of the group work i.e., the desired learning outcomes: *“In this group work the most important thing to learn is the actual working in a group, who takes the lead, does everyone feel like they are listened, how do you make compromises in conflict situations, how do you keep yourself open for the ideas of the others and so on.”*

How to make sure everyone is involved

Roles

a) Sharing the tasks:

- Teacher can offer pre-determined roles (for example, in Teak a team will have director, actors, scenographer ect.)
- Teacher can also instruct the group to share the task and possible roles themselves and inform the teacher about them

TIPS: Remember to encourage the students not to pick a task or role that they are already good at but a task/role where they can learn the most.

When teaching online remember to reserve enough time for group work (including unofficial chatting that would normally happen before and after contact teaching)

How to make sure everyone is involved

Roles

- b) Using roles (or role play) can be a way to bring in new perspectives to the assignment. For example, having art students work on a project where each member of the group has been assigned an imaginary role: artist / curator / general public / art critic / funder / buyer.

”One of the strengths of roleplaying is that it enables experimentation on various situations and solutions. It simulates and models the interaction between people. Roleplaying is a good way to bring up challenges and problems that are related to the various roles of people or organizations, for example. It also activates students and helps them to link the subjects of the course to practical situations.”

How to motivate group work

- ❑ **Positive experiences of group work**
- ❑ **Varying group work content**
 - Role play / problem solving / making it somehow fun.
- ❑ **Explicit motivation**
 - Making students see that working as a part of a group they have to do less than if they would do the tasks individually  giving an option to do alone.
 - By telling students that they will do a lot of group work after they graduate.
 - Telling students that in group work you often learn something from other students.
- ❑ **Freedom**
 - Students may choose teams.
 - Students may choose assignment either freely or from a set of possibilities.
- ❑ **As part of a bigger whole**
 - Finding a perfect balance between group and individual work.

How to motivate group work

❑ Group work as a tool for motivation?

"Student Groups as a Tool for Motivation"

"Motivating through Collaboration"

"Motivating through Creative Freedom"

"Motivating through Equality"

Assessment of group work

- ❑ Purpose of assessment is to help student to improve his/her skills or knowledge, but also gather data for evaluation and grading.
- ❑ In group work the **target of assessment** can be:
 - Small-group skills and/or performance of an individual student.
 - Small-group skills and/or performance of the group as a whole.
 - The outcome of the group work.

In every case, the target(s) of assessment should be clear to students already when starting the work

Self-assessment & peer-assessment in group work

Self- and peer-assessment are particularly suitable for group working as group work as assessment can then be used for learning small-group skills such as clear communicating, active listening, giving peers feedback and considering different perspectives.

- ❑ **Self- and peer-assessment require clear instructions from the teacher:** students should have similar understanding of what kind of skills or what things in the outcome are being evaluated
- ❑ **Self- and peer-assessment are skills to be learned:** especially in the early stages of education teacher should supervise and monitor the assessment to:
 - Make sure that assessment is fair and of good quality.
 - Turn assessment into learning experience for the whole group or even for the whole class.

The reflection and feedback discussion about group work

– One possible structure

Modified from the structure designed by dramaturg, play writer Taija Rautio, based on DAS Theatre - method <https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/theatre-programmes/das-theatre/feedback-method/>

- ❑ **The aim** is not to assess the final outcome of the group work but **to develop to be a better group-worker** and **to understand better the process of the group work** (and also to “clean the table” after the process).
- ❑ The whole structure is best to be used in rather long (and intensive) group working processes, but can be modified or shortened for different occasions.
- ❑ Duration 1-1,5 hours, in the end of the group working process.
- ❑ The structure should be led by the teacher but the groups can discuss independently. If every group had an own discussion leader, it would be great of course.

Structure

1. The warming-up question: What worked well in the group working process?

- 5 mins
- Everyone answers in turn
- E. g. “I think our schedule worked well.”

2. The self-reflection

- 15 mins independent working
- Everyone gets an A4-paper and divides it with a line in two parts (this can also be done virtually)
- On the other part of the paper everyone writes moments, which were “**plus signs**” in the process – like moments and feelings of success, inspiration, exhilaration...
- On the other part of the paper everyone writes moments, which were “**question marks**” in the process – like moments of unmotivation, uncertainty, annoyed...

3. The sharing the self-reflection with the others

- 20-30 mins
- Everyone chooses 2-3 “plus signs” and 2-3 “question marks” to share with the others and writes them to post-its (this can also be done virtually)
- The timeline of the group working process with some main waypoints is drawn to a big paper/in some virtual tool
- Everyone puts their “plus signs” and “question marks” into the timeline
- Discussion about the “plus signs” and “question marks” – some helping questions could be needed

4. The peer-feedback: What would I have needed in the process?

- 20-30 mins
- Everyone answers in turn, there can be many rounds.
- In this session it's very important to think about **the point of view** from where students are giving their feedback. **There is no such thing as an objective feedback in group work.**
- E.g., “As a major student I would have needed the minor students to commit more to our task.” or “As a person in charge of --- I would have needed the others to finish their parts a bit earlier.”
- In the end the needs can be discussed.

References

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