

Team contract

Why you do it

The team contract sets the “rules of work” for your team. You will use the team contract to define initial standards, expectations, and work practices for your group. The initial time spent discussing these issues and developing this contract will help your team work productively and enable you to resolve conflicts that arise.

How to prepare the team contract

Each team will have a unique way of working together. Some may prefer strict rules, a set hierarchy, and regular meeting times. Another team may adopt a flexible model that “outsources” responsibilities to individual team members, who report back their work to the group. Your contract will define your team’s culture.

Write the contract together as a team. You may need several meetings or online conversations to develop the document. All team members **must sign and date** the document and turn it in for the first cycle deadline.

All contracts should state, at the top, the purpose of the contract (NOT the purpose of your project, but rather who it applies to, for what reasons, and for how long). It should then provide information on the following broad categories. The decisions you make within each category will be personal, but use the suggestions as a guide to the choices you need to make about how you will work together.

- **Team leadership and member roles:** When your team operates loosely and without clear roles, confusion can result. Members may find themselves working on the same things as other members, or discovering an important task was left undone. Assigning roles helps team members shoulder responsibility and capitalize on their individual strengths. Some teams assign static roles for the entire year; others opt to rotate roles so that team members can determine the task best suited to their interests and skills. Your contract should specify the roles your team will include, who is assigned them (or how and when assignments will be made), and whether roles will remain static or change. While the exact roles that work for teams will vary between teams, some of the roles that you might consider as a team are:
 - **Team leader:** Serves as the primary contact for the team. Keeps team on task.
 - **Secretary:** Records team communications. Manages team paperwork and documents. May also serve as team “scribe” or editor depending upon how team chooses to organize document creation.
 - **Treasurer/purchasing agent:** Manages budget. Places orders and tracks purchases. Maintains list of purchases/expenditures and parts list.
 - **Subject-matter experts:** Specializes in key elements of project, from domain knowledge (biologist vs mechanical engineer) to specific tasks (“He’s our machinist.”)
 - **Liaisons:** Some teams specify who will communicate with managers and advisors and prep the binder for delivery. Teams may also designate someone to be the primary liaison with sponsors or manage competition materials.
 - **Scribe:** The documents in capstone design are created by the team, together, but you may want to designate someone to manage this process. Some teams

designate a “scribe” who drafts all the documents for the team to edit. Other teams parcel out writing tasks and designate one person to edit the documents into a consistent style.

- **Scheduler/evaluator:** Compiles and updates Gantt chart. Tracks milestones. Analyzes teamwork process and suggests improvements.
- **Communication:** Discuss how your team will communicate, work together, and make decisions. Will you use email, IM, or OWL-Space? Will you meet regularly? How will you capture and archive discussions? How will decisions be made and recorded?
- **Participation:** Set minimum expectations for team member participation in the project (attendance, responsibilities, use of laptops, cell phones during meetings, etc.). Consider how you will handle exam schedules or team member travel. Discuss how your team will resolve disputes should someone appear to not be “pulling their weight.”
- **Work products:** Begin listing the outputs your team will need to produce. How will you collaborate to build and test your prototype? How will you manage the production of course documents? Will you draft them as a group and pull them together as a team? Will you have a team scribe or editor responsible for maintaining stylistic integrity within documents and across different documents? Also think about actions that you will need to take to accomplish your project, such as obtaining parts, contacting vendors, participating in competitions or producing conference talks, etc. What rough time line do you plan to operate under? All of this thinking will help you in creating your Gantt chart.
- **Conflict management and resolution:** Discuss how you will manage disagreements (both personal ones and those related to team decisions). Does “majority rule”? How should disagreements or proposals be presented to the team? Also indicate how your team will respond if a team member is perceived to have been in breach of contract.
- **Logistics:** When will you meet? How will you disseminate information about meetings, due dates, or responsibilities? How should team members be contacted?

How to revise the team contract

You will receive feedback from your manager after handing in the team contract for the first deadline. Incorporate this feedback, as well as needed changes based on your teams dynamics and work into the version handed in at the end of Cycle 3.

The rules set forth in the contract will help you plan the project and allocate time and resources. Your Gantt chart will reflect the thinking that went into your contract.

Team Contract Rubric