

A Pairing Session Template

Source: <https://tuple.app/pair-programming-guide/template>

1. ☐ Agree on the high-level goal out loud.
2. ☐ Break the work into a handful of tasks and prioritise them.
3. ☐ Decide your driver/navigator swapping strategy.
4. ☐ Configure git to share credit.
5. ☐ Eliminate distractions.
6. ☐ Work.
7. ☐ Analyse the session with a mini retro.

Agree on the high-level goal out loud

State out loud what you hope to accomplish at a high level.

You wouldn't think it'd be possible for two people to start pairing without agreement about where they're headed, but it's surprisingly easy.

Break the work into a handful of tasks (and prioritise them)

It's worth trying to break your high-level goal into a handful of smaller steps.

This has a number of benefits:

- It makes the goal less intimidating.
- You'll spot dead ends and pitfalls more easily.
- You can sort your task list by priority.
- You're more likely to notice that accomplishing task C would make B easier, and reorder appropriately.
- You can decide on a task based on your current energy levels.
- It gives you a clear place to put new tasks you think of while working.

[Some folks](#) like to write each task on its own index card. The stack of them lives in front of the navigator. Each card can be a nice home for notes or ideas to bring up when there is a break in the action.

Decide what will trigger a driver/navigator swap

Unless you already know what works best for you, I strongly recommend the [Pomodoro Technique](#):

1. Code for 25 minutes.
2. Take a 5 minute break.

3. Switch drivers.

Other [pair programming styles](#) exist if you wish to try them.

Configure git to share credit

If two of you work on some code, both your names should appear on the commit.

Here's a [handy guide](#) to configuring git appropriately.

Bonus: GitHub understands this natively and will give you both credit for the commit.

A few tools exist to make this even easier:

- [git pair](#)
- [git duet](#)
- [git-together](#)

Eliminate distractions

Show respect for your pair and the work you're about to do.

- Don't bring your phone. Silence it if you do.
- Disable notifications on the machine you're using to pair.
- Close email/Slack/Twitter/IRC. Never keep something distracting on a second monitor.

Work

Do the work!

Don't forget:

- *When navigating*: ask questions rather than making demands.
- *When driving*: dictate what you're doing and why.
- Err on the side of over-communication.
- Take lots of breaks.
- Swap roles frequently.
- Do the simplest thing that could possibly work (for now).
- Avoid these pairing [anti-patterns](#).

Perform a mini retro

Spend a few minutes after your session reflecting on the experience.

First, discuss what went well.

Then, consider what would make the next session 1% better.

Possible areas for improvement:

- **Focus**: did distractions sneak in?

- **Communication:** were there long stretches of no talking?
- **Pacing:** did the session feel like a grind at any point?
- **Division of responsibility:** did you split the work up well?
- **Code quality:** was your end-product high-quality?