

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS FOR GROUP WORK

Know What You Want

Talk with your teammates about the quality of work your team aspires to produce and the amount of commitment to reach that goal. What type of team do you want to be? Define the general rules by which the team will work. How will the team determine who does what? How often will you meet, and for how long? How will you keep in touch between meetings? Spending a few minutes at the start to put these “rules” in writing can save you much frustration and disappointment later.

Plan How to Get There

Team projects can feel overwhelming at first, and you may be tempted to quickly split-up the work so that everyone can get started on it. Do not do this. Take time to identify:

1. The specific steps needed to complete the project
2. The skills required at each step
3. The strengths of each team member. Two benefits of being in a team are that you do not have to be an expert in **everything** and you do not have to do it all yourself. So, assign work to team members based on their strengths and workload, ensuring that everyone gets to do their fair share. Our research shows that teams earn better grades when everyone participates in a meaningful way.

Work as a Team

Teams are more than just groups of people. To be a team, you must be committed to the same goal and be willing to “step up” when you can. Teams can accomplish much when working as a single unit, but not without the individual effort made by team members. Research shows that the highest project grades are earned when team members work together bringing their skills and abilities to bear on each task.

Build the Team

Teams rarely are perfect when they first start. It takes time to build the trust that is needed when relying on others. Help each other along by scheduling times to review each other’s work and to give constructive feedback on how it can be improved. As a team, assess the whole team’s performance and the openness of its communications. Do this often, and small difficulties will be less likely to turn into big problems.

Hilton, S. and Phillips, F. (2010). Instructor-assigned and student-selected groups: A view from the inside. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 25 (1), 15-33.