

# Effective groupwork

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

A collection of tips for promoting effective groupwork, a sample form for having students in a group evaluate the level of participation from group members, and recommendations for further resources.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

While planning group-based assignments, review the tips to identify strategies that you want to include in your course to maximize the impact of groupwork and minimize potential problems. Examine the sample form to decide whether you wish to include peer evaluation as a means of promoting equal contributions by all group members. For assistance, please [contact CET](https://cet.usc.edu/contact-us/).

Some students have had experiences where groupwork was not managed well by their instructors, leading them to prefer individual work. Effective groupwork does not happen without planning and active involvement of the instructor. Students must be trained in groupwork strategies, and groupwork grading must be thoughtful and appropriate. This resource provides practical tips on ensuring positive experiences with groupwork.

### Common strategies for promoting effective groupwork

* Include groupwork expectations and grading methods in the syllabus and discuss them on the first day of class.
* Clearly communicate the value you place in an effective group work process.
* Explain to students your reasons for having them work in groups, including preparing them for teamwork in their careers. Stress the importance of working well in groups in the workplace.
* Provide both whole-team (shared) and individual student grades.
* Have groups assign clear job roles and responsibilities to each member. Roles may include:
  + Facilitator: keeps the group focused on the task.
  + Recorder or Scribe: writes down notes and group discussion points.
  + Reporter: shares the highlights of the small group discussion to the larger group.
  + Timekeeper: monitors the time and share the time limits with the group.
* Use rubrics to help with clear communication and ease of grading.
* Use peer evaluation to provide insight into the contributions of individual group members.
* Set aside class time for groupwork management. Have brief check-in meetings with groups where you assess their progress and ask specifically about their work as a team. Students need guidance on this. While you are meeting with one group, the other groups can use the time for a group meeting.

### Suggested resources

[Rubric for group presentations (shared grade)](https://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=B3WA45)

USC Library Research Guide: [Group Project Survival Skills](https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/assignments/survivalskills)

### Sample numerical peer evaluation form (self-included)

Please use this form to evaluate the contributions of each team member to the group effort. Consider attendance and participation in team meetings, individual contributions to idea generation and research, communication within the group, etc. These evaluations are completely confidential and will never be shown to your team members. Please respond as honestly as possible.

1. Please allocate a total of 100 points among your team members, including yourself, with higher points going to those members who contributed most. In the case of equal contribution, points should be divided equally among team members.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Team name/number/client/project focus: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Table Sample numeric peer evaluation form (self-included)

| (blank) | **Name** | **Points** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yourself |  |  |
| Member 1 |  |  |
| Member 2 |  |  |
| Member 3 |  |  |
| Member 4 |  |  |
| Member 5 |  |  |
|  | Total | /100 |

1. Explain any particularly high or low allocations, providing concrete examples to illustrate your reasoning.