

# Group Projects

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to work on group projects with your peers. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

## 1. The Value of Group Projects

Your coursework will occasionally require collaboration—that is, working together with other students.

In a group project, two or more students collaborate to produce one unified piece of work. Group projects can help you develop skills that will be vital to your professional life after school. These skills include communicating effectively, dividing and delegating responsibilities, building consensus, and giving and taking constructive criticism.

The majority of situations in the “real,” or working, world are going to involve collaborating with co-workers. Therefore, group projects in school are not merely an academic exercise, but rather they are some of the more useful elements of your education in preparing you for your future career.

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## 2. Effective Collaboration in Group Projects

Effective collaboration in group projects begins with establishing active and open communication. Active and open communication entails making sure each member of the group’s voice is heard and their opinion is taken into account.

If you communicate well within your group, each member will understand their individual role and responsibility and the group can therefore proceed confidently and efficiently toward its goal.

Also, if healthy communication is established within the group, this will help facilitate a timely and satisfactory resolution to any conflict that might arise.

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## 3. Responsibilities in Group Projects

Effective collaboration in group projects requires that you fully understand your responsibility within the group and do your best to execute the work you are responsible for.

The process of determining individual students' responsibilities within the project should approximate consensus—that is, the agreement of everyone involved—as much as possible. Some students may naturally gravitate toward leadership roles and others toward secondary roles; this is perfectly acceptable and can result in more effective collaboration, as long as no one's voice is ignored or overshadowed.

Once roles and responsibilities are established, it's crucial that they are honored and that every member of the group contributes according to plan. Problems arise when students do either more or less than their share of the work.

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## 4. Resolving Conflicts in Group Projects

Any time you are working on a group project, there is the potential for conflict to arise among group members. After all, you are often being evaluated as a group, so each individual member of the team's performance can affect everyone's grade.

Once again, the best way to avoid conflict is to establish clear and open communication from the start. However, this does not ensure that each individual within the group will follow through on their responsibilities or that any unforeseen circumstances won't interfere with the success of the collaboration.

If a conflict does arise, it's best to address the problem directly and candidly. If you feel one individual is responsible for the problem, express your concerns to that individual respectfully. Conversely, if a student or students in your group express a concern they have with your work, consider their point of view carefully and try to avoid defensiveness.

In any event, do your best to resolve conflict within the group and move forward. You should only contact your instructor or seek help outside of the group when a resolution of the issue fails despite your best efforts.

### IN CONTEXT

It is the nature of group projects that not every member of the team will contribute an equal amount of effort and work. So, one of the most common issues students have with working in groups is when one or more members of the group are not doing their share. It's understandable to be frustrated in this situation, as it is indeed not fair that students will share credit equally when their individual contributions are far from equal. So what should you do if you find yourself in a group project doing most of the work yourself?

Again, it is important that you communicate your concerns to your group mates. Be polite but clear and direct. If this doesn't work, you can inform your instructor of the situation. In some cases, it can be clear to the instructor who is and isn't doing their work, and they may take that into consideration when evaluating the project. You might also choose not to tell the instructor; to some extent, an imbalance of effort in group projects is inevitable, and this will be true in your life beyond school as well. You can settle for taking pride in your own work.



### SUMMARY

**Group projects are valued** and often assigned in higher education. Making decisions as a group through **effective collaboration** and then executing your **responsibilities of the project** to the group's

specifications are keys to success. Being able to **resolve conflicts in group projects** when they arise is also crucial to the success of the project.