

Group Work

Davis, James R. and Arend, Bridget D. (2013). *Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

The following evidence-supported insights and advice are for assigning group work. Many of these ideas can be applied to online instruction.

- Groups are used when individual effort is insufficient.
- Groups are used to generate ideas.
- Groups are used to deepen understanding through acknowledging different perspectives.
- Groups are used to change students' outlooks.
- Groups are used to broaden participation and cultivate a sense of classroom community.
- Groups of two to four students work best for activities that require students to find the correct or best solutions to a given set of problems.
- Groups of two to six students work best for exploring different perspectives in a single activity.
- Groups of five to eight students work best for semester-long projects that focus on application and problem-solving.
- Groups of nine or ten students work best for having students discuss what is important in a case study or real-world problem.
- Groups require a clearly defined task.
- Groups need to understand the purpose of the task.
- Groups require sufficient time and resources to complete the task.
- Groups with extended projects require deadlines for different phases.
- Groups need to be intellectually challenged by the task.
- Groups need to believe they can accomplish the task.
- Groups need to believe their efforts will be appreciated.
- Mid- to large-sized groups need designated roles such as a facilitator to generate questions and foster discussion, devil's advocate, accuracy coach, note-taker, and time-keeper.
- Groups whose members do not sufficiently challenge each other need their members to be assigned different perspectives.
- Groups need guidelines such as extensive communication of thoughts and ideas, active listening, desire for understanding, nonjudgmental acceptance of others, and willingness to change.
- The professor actively summarizes points, draws attention to recurring themes, asks questions to encourage deeper exploration, plays devil's advocate to foster critical thinking, and interprets for the group what learning has transpired.
- Teamwork requires both individual and team grades.