

Working in Groups Transcript

Chapman Learning Commons



Intro

Everyone participates in group work at some point in their academic career. Working with others is a skill; practicing now can help you prepare for working on a team in the future. Group work can also be a rewarding, fulfilling and even fun experience. In this video, we will talk about project planning, strategies for project planning, and challenges that may arise.

Project Planning

Before actually starting the project, have a discussion to flesh out the logistics with your group. Detailed project planning can be a hassle but it makes the process of group work a lot more smooth and conflict free.

Logistics you should discuss are:

1. Project Goals and Objectives
2. Timeline
3. Division of Work
4. Communication
5. Content Sharing and Storage

Document these in a team agreement or group charter, which can be revisited and re-adjusted throughout the project.

1. Project Goals + Objectives

Discuss with your group about project goals and objectives; discussing these can help in deciding how to approach the project and what deliverables your group wants to produce. Project goals usually directly correspond with the project deliverables while objectives discuss how the group plans to achieve these goals.

For example, a goal for a project about carrots could be:

Goal: Identify gaps in current research about the health benefits of carrots.

And then, a few examples of corresponding objectives could be something like:

Example 1: Interview top carrot researchers about their thoughts on carrot research

Example 2: Review current literature about carrot research

Remember to make these specific and concise!

While discussing project goals, also discuss individual member goals. These can be personal goals and can be integrated later when your group divides the work.

2. Timeline

Another thing to do is break down the project into smaller parts. This makes the overall project less daunting and it can also help your group organize tasks by importance or urgency in order to create a comprehensive timeline to make sure the project or assignment is completed by its deadline.

For example, you can use tools like Gantt Charts or project management softwares like Trello, Notion, or even a shared online calendar to keep track of project deadlines.

3. Division of Work

After breaking down the project, have a group discussion about the division of work. Aim for a fair division of work or a division of work that feels comfortable for all members. Talk about individual group member strengths and areas they or you want to grow in; this can help in assigning tasks or even roles within a group. During this discussion, you may want to revisit the individual member goals to help determine division of tasks or responsibilities.

Examples of common group roles:

- Notetaker
- Someone who submits
- Scheduling coordinator
- Communications coordinator

Revisit the timeline that you made to organize or document member tasks. You can document these on the group charter or team agreement.

Remember, division of work can be re-adjusted throughout the project with communication.

4. Communication

Communication is a crucial aspect of group work, but it can be tricky. It is vital in keeping a good work dynamic and is important in moments of conflict. A good level of communication looks different for each group but it can help to outline:

1. Communication frequency expectations
2. Informal check-in dates or frequency
3. Meeting times (this can be on a regular basis or just a more formal version of a check in)

Outside of class time or check in times, establish a more casual and convenient form of communication. Having this can aid in updating your group members, asking quick questions, and making changes to check in dates.

For choosing a communication method, find one convenient for everyone. Options include email, a group chat, or even the messaging feature on Canvas.

5. Content Sharing & Storage

Finally, establish where all material will be shared so all group members can access it. On-screen are some platforms that are particularly convenient when working online and when sharing content with multiple people.

For File Storage:

- Google Drive
- One Drive (UBC offers for free)

Google Drive and OneDrive are popular since multiple people can store their work in a central but accessible place.

For content creation we recommend:

- Google Slides
- Google Docs
- Canva

Possible Conflicts

With multiple perspectives represented within a group, it is easy for conflict to arise. Common conflicts are differing opinions, frustration from a perceived lack of communication, or missed deadlines.

When conflict arises consider these steps:

1. Be calm, patient, and respectful. Some ways to do this are:
 - Use a calm tone
 - Take some to process and find the best way to articulate your thoughts
 - Actively listen to group members and try to listen with empathy
2. Address the issue rather than the person.
 - Try using phrases that start with “ I feel” or “I think”
3. Consider meeting issues through compromise. You can try:
 - Discuss the different options and find a way that works for multiple members
 - Try to weigh the pros and cons or try to find a middle ground
4. Revisit the group agreement about work quality.
5. And finally, you can reach out to a TA or professor for suggestions on next steps.

Outro

Group work can be a challenging experience but it can also be a great opportunity to learn and practice skills that you will use in the future, as most workplaces require group work.

Thanks for watching!