

## Tips for using groups as a teaching strategy

- **Identify the purpose and rationale for using groups as a teaching strategy.** Recognize that there are different methods and techniques for different purposes.
  - Cooperative Learning
  - Collaborative Learning
  - Team-Based Learning
  - Problem-Based Learning
- **Create groups of appropriate size and scope.** A group should have enough members to represent the diversity of opinions, perspectives, or skills needed to complete the task, but small enough for everyone to meaningfully participate.
- **Provide an activity or task that produces disagreement or encourages collaboration.** A task that can easily be completed without collaborating is not a great choice for a group activity. Students should not be able to divide and conquer but need to rely on each other.
- **Spend some time teaching students to work in groups.** Provide examples and structures that allow them to set rules, expectations, norms, and guidelines. Make sure to debrief and help students interpret the learning that has occurred not just from the activity, but also from the process of working in a group.
- **Stay involved by setting periodic check-in dates or monitoring the progress of the groups.** Help students identify and address common group problems, give them tools to do this by themselves if possible.
- **Use assessment methods that encourage both individual accountability and group collaboration.** As appropriate, consider giving grades for both the process and outcome of a group activity, and also both for individual contributions and group products.

Website with links to more resources:

<http://otl.du.edu/teaching-resources/using-groups-and-teams/>

## Tips for group projects/participation with international students

- **Promote smaller conversations among students in the classroom**, for example, talk to your neighbor for a few minutes, or use writing prompts to give all students time to compose their thoughts.
- **Assign diverse groups rather than letting student select groups** (but also be careful of isolating international students too much). Keep the groups stable over the quarter to allow relationships to develop.
- **Encourage domestic students to help create a space for sharing of multiple voices and to support international students.** Appeal to their future careers – they will benefit by having experience working with people from all over the world. Explicitly ask domestic students to list the benefits of having international students and brainstorm what they could do to support and welcome them.
- **Provide examples from international student contributions** and remind everyone the value of these contributions.
- **Create group projects with a fair division of labor.** Group projects with a written deliverable often results in unequal division of labor, especially when there are very different language skills. Focus group projects on the concepts and discussion/process, with the deliverable/outcome being something everyone can share (choose a position to defend, recommend a course of action, choose option A/B/C as a group, etc).
- **Provide groups with some basic information about communication and decision making differences.** Create guidelines and ground rules for group projects.
- **Look into the many resources about effective group practices** (available freely online or in many college teaching books).

Website with links to more resources:

<http://otl.du.edu/teaching-resources/teaching-international-students/>