

## Group Management Skills

Working with groups of students can be productive and rewarding. At the same time it does present some special challenges for tutors. The following information may help you organize effective tutoring groups.

Groups ideally include between three and five students enrolled in the same class. If the group is larger, it may be helpful to form partnerships of two or three students who work together and help each other. The term collaborative learning is frequently used to refer to this type of group process. Group, drop-in and collaborative learning strategies will be discussed in this training.

Two ground rules are especially important for tutoring groups:

1. Students agree to attempt the assignment on their own before the meeting, and
2. Students agree to come to the session with questions prepared.

Without this structure the tutoring session may become limited to a review of the lecture or the book, while difficulties in understanding persist. Often several students will have the same questions, and this makes a good place to start the session.

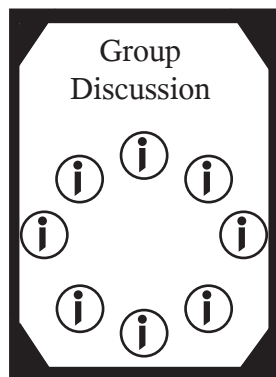
Here are some basic strategies to help your group tutoring become more effective.

1. Insure visibility
  - a. Arrange seating to have a clear view of everyone – circles are good.
  - b. Turn notes or drawings around so students can easily see what you are doing.
  - c. If each student can work at a chalkboard, the tutor has a better view of everyone's work, and can easily see those students who need help. Also, the students can look at each others examples for help.
2. Have students question each other on the material assigned (be sure they have all the readings and assignments done!).
3. Use the textbook readings as a basis for discussion. Make sure your students understand the readings.
4. Use the questions at the beginning or end of each chapter, or use the chapter subheadings as discussion items.
5. Have students take turns "teaching" each other the material. The person who "teaches" always learns more than the person being "taught." If you have to teach a concept you really have to know that concept.

6. Try to predict test questions. Write them down and begin to develop your own “test bank.”
7. Compare notes. Maybe you need yours “filled in” or maybe you can help someone else “fill in” theirs.
8. Control dominant students. Redirect the discussion to others who may be quieter or better prepared.
9. Divide and conquer. If you have some students who are “bad chemistry” for each other, don’t be afraid to switch them into a different group or into a one-on-one tutoring session.
10. Take a vote in response to a question. This easily draws all students into the discussion.
11. Discuss and share study skills and strategies that group members have found useful for this specific course.
12. Summarize the student’s ideas – This ties together everyone’s comments and encourages further participation.
13. Take a few minutes at the end of the session to evaluate what you’ve done. (What did we learn? Did everyone put in their full effort? Did we spend too much time on one topic?)
14. Plan the next meeting. Give the group assignments, if appropriate.

## Collaborative Learning Strategies

Collaborative learning is essential for the effective functioning of large group tutoring sessions. It puts the responsibility for learning on the student by establishing a dialogue from student to student, not strictly student to tutor. The following are just a few of many collaborative learning activities.



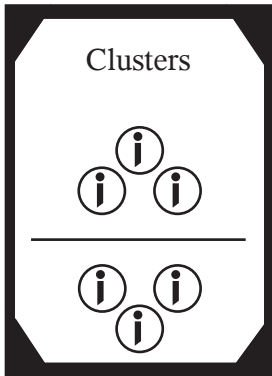
### Group Discussion

A group discussion, is more or less, just like it sounds: a general discussion of an issue or topic by the group. Individual members are free to contribute or not contribute.

### Hints

This is the most common form of collaborative learning. It is also the form that requires the most skill to use successfully.

Ideally, everyone is actively involved in the discussion and the discussion topic is of the equal interest to all group members. When group discussion is successful, it may be difficult to determine who is actually leading the discussion.



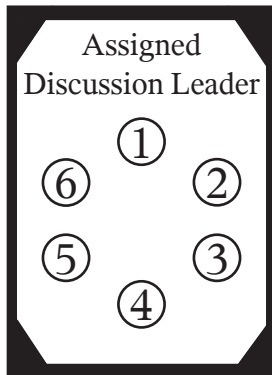
**Clusters**

In clusters, group participants are divided into smaller groups for discussion. They may also be allowed to self-select the small group they want to be in. After discussing the assigned topic the cluster may report their findings to the large group.

**Hints**

If possible, see that each group is provided a flip chart or a space on the blackboard to record the important points of their discussion.

Allow time for each group to report back to the large group. You may have to assign someone from each group to report back.



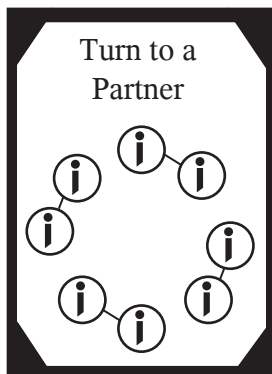
**Assigned Discussion Leader**

One person in the group is asked to present on a topic or review material for the group and then lead the discussion for the group. This person should not be the regular group leader.

**Hints**

When assigning a discussion topic to individual members of the group, you may need to be prepared to allow a little time for the person leading the discussion to prepare for the discussion.

This technique works best when everyone or nearly everyone in the group is given an assignment to be the “expert” on.

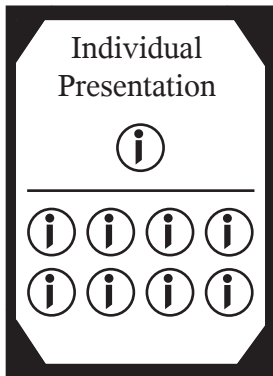


**Turn to a Partner**

Group members work with a partner on an assignment or discussion topic.

**Hints**

This technique works best with group participants who have already been provided with enough background on a subject that they can immediately move to a discussion with their partner without previewing or reviewing concepts.

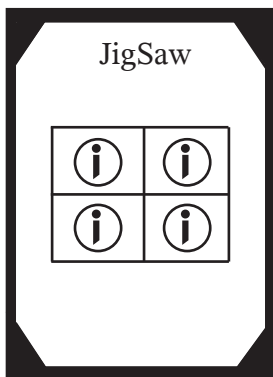


### Individual Presentation

An individual presentation is an uninterrupted presentation by one person to the group. Group members present on a topic, question, or issue to the group. Unlike an “Assigned Discussion Leader” this is a formal presentation delivered delivered to a captive audience.

#### Hints

Use *individual presentations* should typically be used sparingly and only when independent research is required.

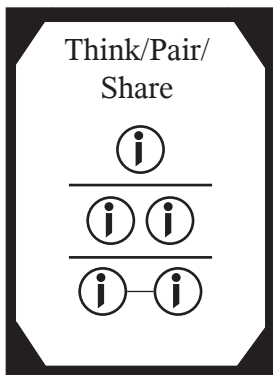


### Jigsaw

*Jigsaws*, when used properly, make the group as a whole dependent upon all of the subgroups. Each group provides a *piece of the puzzle* . Group members are broken into smaller groups. each small group works on some aspect of the same problem, question, or issue. They then share their part of the puzzle with the group.

#### Hints

When using a *Jigsaws*, make sure you carefully define the limits of what each group will contribute to the topic that is being explored.



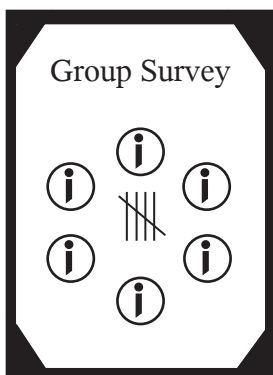
### Think/Pair/Share

Group members work on an assignment or project individually and then share their results with a partner.

#### Hints

The goal of a “Think/Pair/Share” is to allow participants time to think BEFORE they discuss. Research shows that when people are given time to contemplate an answer to a question, their answers differ from those they would give if they responded immediately.

When doing a “Think/Pair/Share” give participants a specific amount of time (30 seconds, 5 minutes, etc) for the “think” portion.



### Group Survey

Each group member is surveyed to discover their position on an issue, problem, or topic. This process insures that each member of the group is allowed to offer or state their point of view.

#### Hints

A survey works best when opinions or views are briefly stated. Be sure to keep track of the results of the survey.

## Guidelines for Conducting Collaborative Learning Activities

1. Integrate collaborative learning into your tutoring slowly. Start with small groups. Pairs, then three, then four. Even numbers in a group keeps no one from being or feeling left out. Example: “Turn to your neighbor for -- minutes. Ask your neighbor something about the lesson; explain a concept; explain the assignment; explain how to do what you’ve just been taught.”
2. If possible, make up the groups yourself. With large groups, seat students close to the small groups you’ve already designed. This makes it quick and easy for you to get them into groups.
3. Make the task challenging/fun. Almost everyone likes a good puzzle or a good mental challenge. If it’s challenging or fun, most will want to be involved. If it is only busy work it will be harder to keep them involved and motivated.
4. Get everyone involved. Design your group work so that every person in the group is involved. If only one person in the group has to fill out a worksheet, for instance, guess what the others will be doing?
5. Make the assignment very clear. The instructions can be on the board or on a sheet of paper. Don’t make them too complex. It’s no fun trying to walk around to each group to explain what it is their supposed to be doing. It’s often helpful to walk them through an example of what it is you’re asking them to do.
6. Explain the task before you separate into groups. If you divide them into groups before you explain the task, you will have a difficult time getting their attention. Many of them will then have their backs to you.
7. Set your expectations of collaborative groups:

|                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Stay with the assigned group  | Make certain everyone is included |
| Contribute ideas              | Make certain everyone understands |
| Listen to other group members | Ask for help if needed.           |
8. Wander during the assignment. This is a good way to keep them on task and to determine if the groups are “getting it” by questioning and quizzing them. It provides you the opportunity to hand out assistance and praise.
9. De-brief the task after they separate from their groups. It’s very difficult to “process” and discuss the assignment if they are still in groups. Again, many of them will have their backs to you. Get them back in their rows and pause for it to be quiet before you begin to de-brief.
10. Seek feedback on the effectiveness of the group.
11. For tests, break students into teams and play a game. This may help kept the session interesting, even for those who are better prepared. This also gives everyone a chance to show what he or she knows and gain self-confidence. This may also encourage better preparedness and participation by those who are less motivated. Note: Be careful in preparing groups for exams. Answer their questions, but do not feed answers out to everything.

**12.** Non-participation of the tutor – As hard as it may be, the tutor should not sit with the group or take part in the main discussion. If the tutor participates, the students rely on him or her, rather than on themselves. Exceptions are answering questions that the group may have, briefing, debriefing, and trouble-shooting.

### **Some Helpful Ideas for Drop-in Sessions**

If several students are waiting to be helped, it is more beneficial to help one student briefly, give the student a sample problem to work on, then move on to the next student. This is more efficient than helping each student with everything before helping someone else. By circulating to each one, you can often help those with fewer difficulties get unstuck, leaving more time for those with longer time needs. Eventually, everyone can be working independently, asking questions as they get stuck. The students learn this way to become more patient, and each feels benefited in the time spent at the session. It is perfectly fine to leave a student alone, working on a problem, if he knows you are close by and available.