

Making Group Activities Work

Ideas for avoiding the 'free riders' syndrome:

- Randomly assigning students to work teams
- Assigning specific responsibilities to each member of the team so the project cannot be completed unless all members contribute
- Rotate tasks on a regular basis
- Design tasks so participants must be familiar with the global assignment, but maintain 'expert control' of one part
- Require all members to teach their part to the other members of the team
- Let students know that you, the teacher, will choose who will report out ... at the last minute! This will encourage all to always be prepared for the task

Provide opportunities to practice team skills

- Active listening strategies
- Effective argumentation
- Role practice

Create an atmosphere of interdependence

- Create roles for students that require collaboration for project to succeed
- Design grading strategies for individuals as well as groups
- Assess group processes for the purpose of continual improvement

Provide groups with specific guidelines for completing a project

- Describe desired outcomes
- Set time limits
- List roles that team members can choose
- Specify strategies for rotating roles
- Provide template for organizing information, reporting out
- Give students directions for working when they are alone or offline waiting for a call in NetMeeting

Make members accountable

- If an individual does not fulfill assigned obligations, the group can ask them to leave the team and complete the entire project on their own.
- Grading occurs in three levels:
 1. Group/project grade
 2. Individual piece
 3. Peer evaluation of individual's contribution to the team project

Organize information to reflect the goals of the course

Encourage students to contribute to information organization

Provide opportunities for communication between groups in and outside of class