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**How to Do Group Work**

**The aim of this resource is to:**

* **provide you with tips on how to engage in group work; and**
* **introduce you to some strategies that you could use when working with others.**

**Forming Your Group**

* **Choose your groups with care.**
* **Do not just team up with people sitting next to you.**
* **Choose people who are as motivated, positive and industrious as you.**

**Management experts have identified eight key roles in group activities (Belbin 1981).**

**Research has indicated academic groups work best if they contain four to five people.**

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| **Belbin’s (1981) Group Roles** | |
| **Company worker** | **A dutiful, organise person, who may tend to inflexibility** |
| **Chair** | **A calm, open-minded person, who may not shine creatively** |
| **Shaper** | **A dynamic person who may be impatient** |
| **Creative thinker** | **One who may come up with brilliant ideas, though these may be unrealistic** |
| **Resource investigator** | **An extrovert character who may respond well to the challenge but who may lose interest** |
| **Monitor** | **A sober, hard-headed individual who keeps everything on track, but who may lack inspiration** |
| **Team worker** | **A mild social person with plenty of team spirit but who may be indecisive** |
| **Completer/finisher** | **A conscientious perfectionist, who may be a worrier** |

Source Adapted from: Burns, T & Sandra, S 2009, *Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at university*, 2nd edn, Sage, London.

**Tip**

* **Allocate roles wisely and ensure you have a chairperson.**
* **Ensure that everyone knows what the task is, what they are doing and deadlines.**
* **Adopt different roles for different tasks.**
* **Use your group work experience to develop your CV.**

**Group Work Processes (Adair 1987)**

* **Forming: when a group comes together and takes shape. This is a period of high anxiety as group members work out:**
  + who is in the group and what they are like;
  + what the assignment is and what it involves;
  + what the ‘rules’ are about behaviour, about the task, about assessment; and
  + what they will have to do to get the job done and who will be doing ‘all the work’.
* **Storming: where conflict arises as people sort out all the confusions highlighted above. At this stage, people are reacting emotionally against everything as they challenge:**
  + each other;
  + the value of the task; and
  + the feasibility of the task.
* **Norming: the group begins to settle down. A sense of interdependence develops as:**
  + plans are made;
  + standards are laid down;
  + cooperation begins; and
  + people are able to communicate their feelings more positively.
* **Performing: the group gets on and does what it was asked to do. The task is undertaken and completed and success can be experienced. It is useful if:**
  + roles are accepted and understood;
  + deadlines are set and kept to; and
  + communication is facilitated by good interpersonal skills.
* **Mourning: As you work hard to complete an assignment with people, you develop links and bonds.**
  + You enjoy a sense of mutual support and commitment.
  + When the task ends, there can be a real sense of loss.

Source Adapted from: Burns, T & Sandra, S 2009, *Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at university*, 2nd edn, Sage, London.