Surviving Group Work – Tips for Students

During your time in UCD you will have an opportunity to work in different types of groups. Group work has been shown to improve knowledge of the subject and enhance team-working, collaborative and problem-solving skills, all of which are highly sought after by employers. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to meet others.

If you are new to group work, the following tips will help you to navigate your way and avoid common pitfalls. These tips have been written for group work that happens mostly outside the classroom.

Group Work – The First Ten Things to Do

1. Groups work best when students know and trust each other, therefore, at the start, introduce yourselves and find out a little bit about each other and your preferred ways of working.
2. Discuss the group’s task to reach a shared understanding of what needs to be done.
3. Break this down into specific tasks with associated deadlines.
4. Assign roles for the functioning of the group and to accomplish specific tasks. For example, chair/leader, note-taker, presenter, proof-reader, designer, etc.
5. Agree, write and share guidelines (ground rules) on how your group will work. For example, how you will: respect each other’s opinion; commit to and communicate about attendance and complete work on time.
6. Share your availability and agree a schedule of meetings.
7. If challenges arise, for example, dominant or inactive group members, try to resolve this within your group by consulting the ground rules and meeting as a group. If the matter is still unresolved, seek advice from the lecturer/tutor.
8. Depending on the duration of the task, review and update the guidelines (ground rules) and rotate the roles.
9. Collaborating and sharing during the group work will lead to more positive and enjoyable outcomes.
10. The more you invest, the greater the return.