

Surviving Group Work – Tips for Students

Group work has been shown to improve knowledge of the subject and enhance team-working and problem-solving skills, all of which are highly sought after by employers. The tips in this guide tell you how to get started and avoid common mistakes.

During your time in UCD you will have an opportunity to work in different types of groups. 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 **agreement** about 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 complete specific tasks. For example, chair/leader, note-taker, presenter, proof-reader, designer, etc.
5. Agree, write and share **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 **timetable of meetings**.
7. If **problems** arise, for example, dominant or inactive group members, try to resolve this within your group by consulting the 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. All members should think about what they do to improve the **learning experience** for the group, for example, sharing information freely.
10. All members should think about what they can do to make group work more **enjoyable**. This can range from making eye contact with all group members during meetings to arranging social gatherings.