

Group Work Guidelines and Tips

Try different strategies for arranging students in groups. Counting off and making all the ones, twos, threes, etc. get together is a good way to move students around the room.

Always give instructions and a time limit before you have students break into their groups. Restate the instructions and time limit after the groups have formed.

Walk around the room, check on, and engage with each group as they work. This technique helps build rapport with students and keeps them on task.

End group work before the allotted time if you see that most groups have finished and are getting off topic.

Make all the groups responsible for responding or recording information when the other groups present. You don't want one group presenting and everyone else tuning them out.

Try having students produce some kind of work or response individually and then get into groups to share, discuss, and come to consensus.

Try giving students individual tasks within each group – one person takes notes, one person presents, one person provides an alternate viewpoint, etc.

Types of group activities (list is not exhaustive)

Have students get in small groups, share thesis statements, find a good statement to revise and share with the class. Other groups are responsible for critiquing a certain element of each presented thesis.

Have students summarize a reading (maybe for homework) as a bulleted list of information. In small groups, they share their lists and discuss what needs to go into the summary.

Have students collaborate to complete a Hacker scavenger hunt. Give candy or stickers to the winning group. You could also have student groups compete to correctly complete A Writer's Reference exercise worksheets.

Have students in small groups read their introductory paragraphs (or some other part of their essay) aloud to each other. These groups could occasionally select the best paragraph to analyze and share with the class, identifying the writing strategies they think work well in the draft. They could also select a piece of student writing that needs revising and work together to revise it, sharing with the class what they revised and why.