

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Group Discussion

A Group Discussion is, more or less, just like it sounds: a general discussion of an issue or topic by the group. Individual members are free to contribute or not contribute.

Hints

This is the most common form of collaborative learning. It is also the form that requires the most skill to use successfully. Ideally, everyone is actively involved in the discussion and the discussion topic is of equal interest to all group members. When Group Discussion is successful, it may be difficult to determine who is actually leading the discussion.

Clusters

In Clusters, group participants are divided into smaller groups for discussion. They may also be allowed to self-select the small group they want to be in. After discussing the assigned topic, the cluster may report their findings to the large group.

Hints

If possible, see that each group is provided a flip chart or a space on the blackboard to record the important points of their discussion. Allow time for each group to report back to the large group. You may have to assign someone from each group to report back.

Turn to a Partner

Group members work with a partner on an assignment or discussion topic.

Hints

This technique works best with group participants who have already been provided with enough background on a subject that they can immediately move to a discussion with their partner without previewing or reviewing concepts.

Think / Pair / Share

Group members work on an assignment or project individually and then share their results with a partner. After discussing with a partner, share findings with the larger group.

Hints

The goal of a Think/Pair/Share is to allow participants time to think BEFORE they discuss. Research shows that when people are given time to contemplate an answer to a question, their answers differ from those they would give if they responded immediately.

When doing a Think/Pair/ Share, give participants a specific amount of time (30 seconds, five minutes, etc.) for the "think" portion.

Individual Presentation

An Individual Presentation is an uninterrupted presentation by one person to the group. Group members present on a topic, question, or issue to the group. Unlike an Assigned Discussion Leader, this is a formal presentation delivered to a captive audience.

Hint

Individual Presentations should typically be used sparingly and only when independent research is required.

Assigned Discussion Leader

One person in the group is asked to present on a topic or review material for the group and then lead the discussion for the group. This person should not be the regular group leader.

Hints

When assigning a discussion topic to individual members of the group, you may need to be prepared to allow a little time for the person leading the discussion to prepare for the discussion. This technique works best when everyone or nearly everyone in the group is given an assignment to be the "expert" on.

Jigsaw

Jigsaws, when used properly, make the group as a whole dependent upon all of them in subgroups. Each group provides a *piece of the puzzle*. Group members are broken into smaller groups. Each small group works on some aspect of the same problem, question, or issue. They then share their part of the puzzle with the large group.

Hints

When using a Jigsaw, make sure you carefully define the limits of what each group will contribute to the topic that is being explored.

Group Survey

Each group member is surveyed to discover their position on an issue, problem or topic. This process insures that each member of the group is allowed to offer or state their point of view.

Hints

A survey works best when opinions or views are briefly stated. Be sure to keep track of the results of the survey.