

Forming Effective Groups

Random Heterogeneous Groupings

In most cases, random, heterogeneous groups are more effective for learning than letting students choose their own groups. This eliminates the problem of students who are not chosen for a group, an experience that is embarrassing for students and teachers alike. Although students often complain when they are not allowed to choose their own groups, once this kind of grouping becomes an established practice, students get used to it.

Groups can also be formed for discussions or feedback by asking students to group with students who sit near each other, eliminating the confusion of moving students around the room and then back to their regular seats. Certainly allowing students to choose their own groups occasionally for discussions or short projects makes them less likely to object to randomly assigned groups.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are exposed to ideas and people they may not normally consider.• Students with less ability or motivation can learn from more able students.• Students may be less distracted by common interests, such as membership in other groups.• Projects benefit from having input from students with diverse perspectives and talents.• Friendships can form from group participation that contribute to feelings of community and respect in a classroom.• Working with students they do not know very well is good preparation for life in society and the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalities may clash, resulting in problems getting work done.• Some students may experience negative reactions from their peers.• Students who are friends may find it easier to work with friends on a project that involves out-of-school activities, such as collecting data or visiting experts.• Shy students, or students who are not native speakers, may feel uncomfortable with students they do not know well.• Sometimes, working with a friend can motivate students to do better work.