NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

Communication, Teamwork
and Presentation Skills

Top tips for team-working

Can you think of an example (in your own life or elsewhere) of good teamwork? What do you think are or were the main reasons for the team's success? Effective team-working doesn't 'just happen'. If you are working as part of a team, here are some top tips for ensuring your team's success:

Try to **meet in person** regularly. It is hard for a team to work well without coming face-to-face every now and again to figure things out. Between meetings, you can work independently and communicate online, but make the effort to meet up in person too. You can book group study rooms in the Library.

Identify each team member's **strengths and preferences**. If you are a research whizz and your team mate is all about graphic design, it makes sense to bear this in mind when you are dividing out tasks. At your first meeting, get everyone to jot down up to three (relevant) things that they are good at or don't mind doing.

Identify each team member's **weaknesses/areas for improvement**. At your first meeting, get everyone to jot down up to three (relevant) things that they are not so good at, are still learning, or would really prefer not to do. For example, if you have a learning difficulty such as dyslexia, this could be a good time to disclose this to your teammates and request that the proofreading is left to somebody else!

Agree on your **aims, goals and strategies**. Teamwork doesn't go well when there is no agreement or shared understanding on these things. Some questions to ask during this discussion might include:

- What is this team required to produce? (A report, presentation, video, machine?)
- What grade is the team aiming for? (A bare pass, honours, a first?)
- Are we clear about the guidelines that we have been given?
- What tasks have to be done in order to accomplish our goal, and in what order?

- Who will do these tasks? (Will people work independently, in pairs, or as a whole team? The answer to this may change depending on the task and the stage that your project is at)

- How much time do we think each task will take? When should each task be completed?

- How will we ensure that the end result looks like a coherent team effort, rather than a cobbling together of individual efforts?

Ensure that all team members feel that roles and responsibilities have been allocated in a **clear and transparent** manner which is seen to be **fair**. If team members feel unfairly overburdened, or resentful that others are not doing their fair share, it will affect your team's productivity.

Make sure that **all members of the team are heard**. Some people are naturally more reserved than others, but they may have the best ideas! Others are naturally more outgoing, and can take on a leadership role. Leaders need to take care not to overly dominate other team members, and to find ways to get the most from everyone. For example, you could gently ask a person who has been holding back if they have anything that they would like to contribute; or you could ask all team members to jot their thoughts down on a post-it note. Effective teams are built on trust and good communication.

Decide how you will **manage and resolve disagreements**. Members of even the best-functioning teams will inevitably disagree about something along the way. It's OK to disagree, but do so respectfully. Be willing to hear other points of view and to compromise. If the team is at loggerheads over an issue, how will you resolve this? Will you hold a vote, or will you talk it out until everyone can live with the eventual agreed outcome? The best teams usually find ways to build consensus.

Team-working skills, like all other skills, take time to develop and hone. Treat each team-working task as a **learning experience** and, afterwards, reflect on what you might do differently the next time.