

CETL Weekly Teaching Tips presents

Collaborative Learning on Moodle

Strategies for Successful Online Group Work

Collaboration enhances student learning but can be difficult to facilitate, especially in an online class. The following process increases the value of the collaborative experience to the students, addresses significant learning outcomes, increases engagement, and reduces the stress to all involved!



Timeline out of a 15-week semester.

STEP 1: Syllabus

Warn the students that you think Collaborative Learning is important by inserting language in your syllabus.

Interactive Forum Posts = Collaboration

We have Moodle Forum post activities every week—usually over a weekend to give them time to post and reply—so they become used to sharing and critiquing everyone’s ideas.

STEP 2: Low-Risk Group Assignment (Week 2)

Any activity that requires collaboration within a group of strangers facilitates engagement in the material and familiarity with each other. This can be a two-day in-class or online assignment.

STEP 3: Visual Analysis Assignment (Week 5)

Through an individual assignment, this step familiarizes students with the technology they’ll need later in the group assignment and increases relationships through peer review and analysis.

STEP 4: Collaboration Week (Week 8)

As the name implies, I create an entire week devoted to learning the skills necessary for successful collaboration. Readings and videos from my Moodle Book for that week are listed below as are assignment descriptions.

STEP 5: Group Project (Week 9)

The students have selected their own group mates based on their reading of the Week 1 Bio Post, the Peer Reviews, the Low Risk Group Assignment, all the weekly forum posts, and the activities during Collaboration Week. Depending on the length of the group project and other circumstances, I may permit groups to “vote someone off the island.”

Written by Pamela Todoroff, Special Lecturer in Writing and Rhetoric. Designed by Christina Moore. Published November 2017.

Collaborative Week Resources and Activities

Moodle Book Assigned Readings:

1. "[Coping with Hitchhikers and Couch Potatoes on Teams](#)" by Barbara Oakley, Oakland University. *(Use this to explain difficulties during Moodle forum #1)*
2. "[Writing Eyeball to Eyeball: Building A Successful Collaboration](#)" by Rebecca Ingalls, Drexel University —*(Use strategies described here in Moodle forum #2)*

Assign Videos (or show during on-campus class)

1. [How to Work Within A Team](#) (4:08)—*Introductory material*
2. [Optimizing Virtual Teams](#) (3:56)—*particularly good strategies for online collaboration*
3. [Why Collaboration Is an Individual Effort: Emily Eldridge at TEDxMU](#) (12:38)—*use to explain "difficult" teammates in Moodle forum #1*

Video 'Lecture' re: Collaboration—*tying together concepts from assigned readings & videos; suggesting ways to use materials to effectively select teammates; offering a 2 week 'trial' period after which they may "vote someone off the island"*

Moodle Forum #1: Your Experience with Collaborative Writing Pitfalls—Include a link to "[Group Writing](#)" from which students select a "pitfall" they describe from their previous collaborative experience. Ask for others to comment.

Moodle Forum #2: Create your 'ideal' Group Contract—Include a link to "[Developing effective and cohesive virtual teams](#)" (1:42). The concept of an "ideal" group contract should lead students to create one for their prospective group.

Step 5: Begin Your Group Project

Group Contract: the first Moodle forum of the Group's work is to synthesize the individuals' 'ideal' Group Contracts (from Step 4); this permits the group to hold each other accountable.

After the newly formed groups have read the **Collaborative Assignment** description, assign a separate group Moodle forum to develop their Group **Writing Plan**, a writing schedule that considers each student's calendar.

Group Project Evaluation Rubric

Group Grading		Individual Grading	
Commitment Memo	5	MP#10: Research	10
Writing Plan	5	MP#11: Analysis	10
Letter of Inquiry	15	Reflective Journal #1	10
Grant Proposal	20	Reflective Journal #2	10
Presentation	5	Reflective Journal #3	10
TOTAL	50	TOTAL	50

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