

Possible Roles on Teams

Student teams often function most effectively when members have designated roles. These can be instructor-determined or established by the groups themselves, e.g., by giving teams a list such as the one below and asking them to decide on and delegate appropriate roles within their group.

The roles you – or your students – assign will depend on the goals of the assignment, the size of the team, etc. They can be fixed or rotating. Here are some possible group roles, but the list is not exhaustive. Think creatively and come up with your own!

Facilitator:	Moderates team discussion, keeps the group on task, and distributes work.
Recorder:	Takes notes summarizing team discussions and decisions, and keeps all necessary records.
Reporter	Serves as group spokesperson to the class or instructor, summarizing the group's activities and/or conclusions.
Timekeeper	Keeps the group aware of time constraints and deadlines and makes sure meetings start on time.
Devil's Advocate	Raises counter-arguments and (constructive) objections, introduces alternative explanations and solutions.
Harmonizer	Strives to create a harmonious and positive team atmosphere and reach consensus (while allowing a full expression of ideas.)
Prioritizer	Makes sure group focuses on most important issues and does not get caught up in details.
Explorer	Seeks to uncover new potential in situations and people (fellow team members but also clients) and explore new areas of inquiry.
Innovator	Encourages imagination and contributes new and alternative perspectives and ideas.
Checker	Checks to make sure all group members understand the concepts and the group's conclusions.
Runner	Gets needed materials and is the liaison between groups and between their group and the instructor.
Wildcard	Assumes the role of any missing member and fills in wherever needed.

These roles are adapted from lists in:

Barkley, E.F., Cross, K.P., & Major, C.H. (2005). *Collaborative learning techniques*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., and Smith, K. (1991). *Cooperative learning: Increasing college faculty instructional productivity (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 4)*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Millis, B. J., and Cottell, P. G., Jr. (1998). *Cooperative learning for higher education faculty*. American Council on Education, Series on Higher Education. The Oryx Press, Phoenix, AZ.

Smith, K. A. (1996). "Cooperative Learning: Making 'Group work' Work" In Sutherland, T. E., and Bonwell, C. C. (Eds.), *Using active learning in college classes: A range of options for faculty, New Directions for Teaching and Learning* No. 67.

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<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/tools/Groupworkroles.doc>