

ESL STUDENTS: HOW TO WORK WELL IN GROUPS

Many classes require you to do group work as a part of the final grade. Whether you choose the group or one is assigned to you, you will likely be working with native speakers of English. If English is not your first language, you might be a little nervous about it. You must not worry. English and English second language students both have the same goals; to pass the course with good grades. If your pronunciation or writing is weak, you can make up for it by being an excellent group member in other ways. You must look at the group experience as an excellent opportunity to practice English. Help the group discover your strengths - they will value what you can offer and will forget about your language level. Following are some tips to help you be a **great** group member:

COMMUNICATE:

- Even if your spoken English is not strong, take the time to speak and to make yourself understood
- If you don't understand something, ask people to explain:
 - DO NOT simply say "Wha?" or "Ugh?"
 - Be responsible for the language you are learning and instead say:
"I am sorry, I did not understand what you said, can you repeat that please?"
OR "That's a new expression for me, can you explain what it means?"
- Be diplomatic: show respect for what others say - ask constructive questions - do not automatically reject or object to someone else's idea - share what you like about an idea before you express your concerns
- Remember that you are important to the group's success

BE A PRODUCTIVE GROUP MEMBER:

- Speak up when you have something to say
- Be dedicated to the group's goals
- Follow through on your commitments
- Plan your time well so that you can keep up with the group project
- Be enthusiastic, friendly, positive and supportive

HELP THE GROUP RUN SMOOTHLY:

- Encourage good organization and planning: define tasks, exchange email addresses, set meeting times and decide how to proceed
- Be daring and offer to take a leadership or coordinator role
- Be on time for meetings; if you have to miss a meeting, have a good reason, and tell people before the meeting
- Keep in regular contact with your group members by text or email
- Show that you are there to help and to support other group members when needed; be encouraging rather than critical
- Try to help deal with conflict or disagreements constructively: encourage group members to find solutions rather than dwell on problems.