

# I'm working on a group presentation and one of the members isn't working as hard as the rest of us. Help!

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*Group presentations can bring out the worst in people, especially when you feel like people aren't pulling their weight. Lack of equal contribution between group members can introduce tension, and it's your job to resolve that problem. These tips could help you make the best of this situation.*

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## Tips and strategies for successful group work

- Try to go into the assignment without preconceived notions about your group members. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, and it's the task of the whole group to find a balance that works for everyone
- Hold a group meeting at a time when you are sure all group members can make it. If everyone can't make it in person, maybe they can Skype in to be a part of the conversation
- In the meeting try to keep things respectful: communicate in a constructive and positive manner
- Ask everyone in the group how they are proceeding; give everyone a chance to report their progress in regard to what is going well, and what is not going so well
- When one member seems to be contributing unequally it is really important to communicate openly. It may be that there are other demands on your group member's time that have not previously shared with the group. They may be very conscious of their lack of contribution and looking to improve. The workload should be shared equally across the group members and it may be that the split of the work can be re-allocated. For instance, if a member has to care for children during the day, they may be more suited to literature searching, doing the analysis, and writing, which can be done at anytime
- It may seem obvious, but in the heat of the moment, try to avoid accusations; i.e. "You have not done your part of the assignment and now we are all going to fail!" will not be a group dynamics winner. Try some "I" statements: "I am feeling stressed because there is a chunk of this assignment that has not been started"
- Plan to come out of the meeting with a group agreement around responsibilities and expectations, dates for when tasks will be completed, and plans for future communication
- Email the agreed expectations around to the entire group so everyone is on the same page
- If you still find that a group member isn't meeting the agreed expectations and timelines then it is time to get further help. Contact your lecturer or tutor and ask for their advice. Your lecturer or tutor is there to help your group work together, so if your efforts to fix the situation were unsuccessful, then it's important that you let them know as early as possible. This ensures there's still enough time for them to help you through.

Although it doesn't feel like it now, this is actually a good experience for you. In the workplace you will have to deal with difficult people or people who do not have the same approach as you, so facing up to problems with

group work is good practice. A classic interview question is “Can you tell us about a time when you have dealt with a difficult person, and what you did about it?” You will have a really good answer now.

## There will be more group work in my life in future, so what can I do for the next group assignment to prevent this?

- For your next group assignment, set up the expectations around group communication and responsibilities in your first meeting.
- One of the most basic but most important points is to get everyone on the same page with regards to responsibilities and goals of the project as early as possible. Make a plan about how and when you will communicate (email, Skype, in person); how quickly it is expected emails will be responded to; what dates drafts will be completed by; when you will meet again; and what the plan will be if an individual is having trouble with their designated tasks
- Ensure that the group agrees to the shared expectations and responsibilities, write them down, and circulate them to everyone. This starts everyone off on the right foot and makes sure you don't leave the meeting with one person planning to complete the group assignment a week before it is due and another person planning to complete it the night before it is due – another recipe for group dynamic disaster....

## Further Reading

[Working In Groups](#)