



# PEPPERDINE

## Graziadio Business School

### Student Success & Career Advancement

#### Succeeding Together: Essential Tips for Group Projects

Collaborating on a group project, whether in person or online, is an important skill you'll use throughout your career. While it can be challenging, a little preparation can set you and your team up for a successful experience.

Here are some tips to help you succeed in your next group project.

#### Getting Started: The Group Contract

Before diving into the project, have a kick-off meeting to establish a group contract. This document is an agreement that outlines how your group will function. It's a key first step that prevents misunderstandings and holds everyone accountable. A group contract should cover:

- **Group Norms:** Discuss how you'll handle communication, meeting times, and decision-making. Will you use a messaging app, email, or video calls? Agree on a communication method and exchange contact info.
  - You can use this [sample group contract](#) from UC Irvine as a starting point. It provides a good framework for setting expectations, responsibilities, and consequences within a team. You can adapt it to fit the specific needs of your group and your project.
- **Roles & Responsibilities:** Clearly define who will do what. This ensures the workload is distributed fairly and that everyone knows their specific tasks.
- **Expectations & Consequences:** Set clear expectations for things like deadlines, attendance, and quality of work. Also, decide what the process will be if someone isn't meeting those expectations.

Having everyone sign this agreement shows their commitment and gives you a professional framework to refer back to if issues arise.

## Suggested Group Roles

Assigning specific roles helps keep the project organized and efficient. While roles can be flexible and shared, having a designated person for each of these functions can be highly effective:

- **Leader/Facilitator:** This person coordinates the group, organizes meetings, and handles communication with the professor or other external parties. They ensure the group stays on track and that the final project is submitted.
- **Time & Task Manager:** This person's job is to keep everyone on schedule. They break the project into smaller tasks, set internal deadlines, and check in with group members to ensure everyone is meeting their commitments. [Smartsheet](#) provides free task list templates for a variety of projects and tasks.
- **Notetaker/Secretary:** This person takes notes during all group meetings, summarizes decisions and action items, and shares these with the group. They also help create the agenda for meetings to keep discussions focused.
- **Resource Manager:** This person gathers and organizes all necessary materials, such as research articles, datasets, and presentation templates. They ensure everyone has access to the resources they need to complete their part of the project. [Pepperdine's Google Workspace](#) has a variety of tools the group can use to store and share resources.

## Addressing Group Member Issues

If a group member isn't contributing, it's important to address the problem proactively and professionally. Don't wait until the last minute.

1. **Communicate Directly:** Start by reaching out to the person directly. Use "I" statements to express your concerns, for example, "I need your help with this section," rather than "You're not doing your part."
2. **Reference the Contract:** Remind the person of the specific agreement and commitments they made in the group contract. This keeps the conversation focused on what was agreed upon rather than personal feelings.
3. **Involve a Professor as a Last Resort:** Try to resolve the issue as a team first. If you've tried to work it out and the problem persists, you can then bring the issue to your professor's attention.

## General Tips for Success

- **Be Professional:** You don't have to be friends with your group members, but you must be polite and professional. Your goal is to complete the project successfully, not to build a social circle.
- **Be Flexible:** Be considerate of everyone's schedule and personal commitments when arranging meetings. Finding a time that works for the whole group is essential.
- **Communicate Clearly & Often:** Keep your group members updated on your progress, especially if you foresee a delay or need help.
- **Keep the Workload Even:** While it may be tempting for a motivated group member to take on more, ensure tasks and responsibilities are as evenly distributed as possible. This promotes a truly collaborative effort and prevents resentment.
- **Self-Assess:** Take time to reflect on your own contributions. Are you meeting your commitments? Are you being a good communicator? Regularly assessing your performance is key to your professional development.