Group Writing Assignments

Group writing may be intimidating, but with the right preparation and organization, it can be extremely rewarding. Writing as a group will give you the opportunity to hear many ideas and opinions and develop teamwork skills, which will be valuable in your education and future career. This handout offers several strategies for effective collaboration on group writing projects, but be sure to tailor your work to your audience and assignment.

Create a Shared Purpose

Without adequate preparation, the task of group writing often falls on only one or two group members. However, through clear communication, careful planning, and respectful cooperation, group writing can become clear, efficient, and cohesive. Consider the following strategies as you prepare to write your paper:

- **Meet together to determine the purpose** of your paper before you start. Consult the assignment description. If possible, connect the material to a topic that is interesting to everyone in your group.
- Work together to develop a central idea or argument, and then **create a basic outline**. An established outline will help ensure that the content remains consistent.
- **Plan the writing process**. Set up when and how often you will meet (the earlier, the better). Determine deadlines for sections of the paper and stages of the writing process.
- Consider creating a **group contract**. This contract is a document that outlines the plan and deadlines for your group.

Note: Collaboration requires **respect** for the opinions of others as well as confidence in your own ideas. Don't be afraid to voice your opinions, but recognize that the opinions of others are equally valuable. Be open-minded and understand that others may not share your same interests, viewpoints, or writing processes.

Divide Responsibilities

Concerns in group writing often stem from the lack of participation from individuals within the group or from the tendency of some to control the direction of the work. Many of these difficulties can be avoided by planning specific responsibilities for each group member.

- **Assign each group member a role.** Some responsibilities include proofreading, planning group meetings, helping other students be accountable for their work, and leading group meetings.
- **Balance the amount of work** assigned to each group member.
- Consider first **outlining the paper as a group** before assigning individual responsibilities.
- **Share responsibilities equally** for researching, writing, and presenting materials.
- **Encourage accountability** by communicating or meeting frequently.

Write Together

Writing together can help the paper be unified and cohesive.

- Try to **write as a group**. When writing together is not possible, communicate and establish priorities before revising.
- Work in a **shared document** (e.g., Google Docs or Word Online). This allows group members to collaborate, work at the same time, and leave comments for the group.

Revise and Edit

Once the paper is complete, the final step is to organize and revise it.

- **Review the thesis and outline** to ensure your ideas are clear, organized, and logical.
- **Blend each writer's individual work together** through revising the introduction, conclusion, and topic sentences. This will help each section be cohesive.
- **Proofread** before submitting, and ensure that each member of the group receives credit.