

## **ADVICE: Working in a group**

Don't socialize. Nothing will kill a group quicker than wasting time.

Be on time. Go to work immediately.

Introduce yourself. Make sure you know each group member's name. (If you've forgotten, don't be shy – say “I'm sorry, I've forgotten your name. What is it again?”) Use people's names, rather than saying only ‘she’ or ‘him’. Talk in terms of “we” and “us”. You're a team, and you're in it together.

Agree up front: will you work independently and collaborate when there are questions?

Or, will you work together on each problem, all the time?

Or, perhaps two members will do every problem together, while others work independently?

Make a commitment to the group: Come regularly, and tell the other members when you'll be there. Keep each other honest: tell missing group members that you noticed when they were gone. Don't waste time telling your excuse story. Just get to work.

Don't bring non-working guests with you.

Have a plan for what to do if you're all stuck. Here's some ideas:

- ❖ figure out exactly which parts of the problem you can do and which parts give you difficulties.
- ❖ try to make the problem simpler first, or do a simpler problem to remember the method
- ❖ read your class notes and/or the textbook
- ❖ get the student solutions manual at the reserve desk in the library
- ❖ look for examples in textbook, class notes, or student solutions manual
- ❖ go ask a tutor or the instructor
- ❖ go on to the next problem and come back to it later

Don't drink alcohol or do drugs before or during the group.

Share your resources: textbooks, class notes, solutions manual, pencils, chalk, erasers, markers, calculators, etc.

Don't screw around. If you waste time with your group, they won't be there when you want to work.

Be polite. Listen to each other. Don't interrupt. Don't talk over someone. Don't shout.

Ask questions—half the process of learning is figuring out how to ask what you don't know.

Share the load. Don't do all the work and let others copy you. Don't watch someone else do all the work and then copy them. The goal is for each person to understand and contribute.

Don't do work for other classes unless you're finished with all the math and are just staying to help others.

Explain yourself.

- ❖ If you know it, you'll solidify that knowledge, and have to study less later
- ❖ If you think you know it, you'll get feedback on what you know correctly and what you don't have quite right

Be patient. Some of us need to hear it or see it or do it several times before we understand it. Sometimes there's a magic word that suddenly makes sense, even if the rest of the explanation is the same as the last three times you said it.

If you agree, say so. Give your teammate some moral support.

If you disagree, say so politely, and explain why.

If you're sick, stay home. If you must come to group, tell your group mates you're sick, so they can tell you if that's okay with them. If it's okay, then sit away from the others, wash your hands frequently and throw your dirty tissues away promptly.

Stay on task. If you need a break, go outside, away from the group, so that you don't disrupt those who want to work while you're taking a break. Don't take longer than 5 minutes on break, and don't take more than 2 breaks per hour.

Be professional. If this were a job and these were your coworkers, you'd get fired if you didn't get the work done, goofed off, or did the work in a sloppy or incomplete way. Treat this like a job, and focus on completing the task well.