

Interpersonal and small group social skills

Develop decision-making, consensus building, communication, conflict management, trust building skills.

A smoothly working group helps members by providing them with opportunities to discuss work, help one another, and keep updated on material. It takes all members to make a group succeed.

The main characteristic of a successful group is that everyone contributes, though, perhaps, in different ways. Each person has different strengths and weaknesses and by cooperatively pooling resources the team gets stronger. Building this strength requires each person to take responsibility for

- group harmony,
- shared decision-making and leadership,
- open communication channels,
- trust among members,
- respect for one another's views despite disagreements,
- and conflict resolution instead of conflict avoidance.

These may be difficult to master but they will prove valuable in future careers. In the world of work, working well with peers is as important as knowledge. Group coursework teaches both information and vital collaborative skills.

Groups that work collaboratively, productively, efficiently, and without friction require members to have developed certain social skills. An instructor should help students to develop the following abilities for that to happen:

- Make decisions after a full discussion of the issues.
- Forge consensus even despite widely differing views.
- Maintain full and open communication.
- Build trust amongst group members.
- Enable every member to explain group conclusions.
- Encourage everyone in the group to participate.
- Listen accurately and respectfully to the ideas of others in the group.
- Have the courage and be willing to stand up for one's beliefs and submit or tolerate minority reports if consensus cannot be reached.
- Know how to criticize ideas and not people.