

## Group Work: Assignment of Roles

As you meet within your groups, think about your strengths and weaknesses and figure out which role listed below will work for you. There are four fundamental roles to consider: facilitator, monitor, note taker/timekeeper, and devil's advocate.

### Facilitator

- Clarifies the aims of the group and helps the group to set goals at the beginning.
- Makes sure that all group members understand the task
- Starts the work session, introduces each topic, and keeps the group on task and oriented towards its goals.
- Ensures that the group completes its tasks before deadlines.

*Typical phrases:*

- "Thanks for your contribution, Mary. What do you think, Brian?"
- "From what I'm hearing, it appears that we should include this or remove that, if that is agreeable to everyone?"
- "So, it appears that we all agreed that ..."

### Monitor

- Observes group functioning carefully and initiates regular discussions on group climate and process, especially if he or she senses tension or conflict brewing.
- During disagreements or conflicts, clarifies the arguments and proposes suggestions for resolving disputes.
- Ensures that all group members have a chance to participate and learn; may elicit comments from members if they are not participating.
- Acts as a cheerleader for the group whenever possible, praising members for work well done.

Note: For larger groups the role of "encourager" could be done by a different student.

*Typical phrases:*

- "We haven't heard much during our meeting from you, Alex. Do you have any thoughts?" "It might be helpful if you backed off a bit, Kate, so we can hear what Hannah has to say."
- "I'm sensing a bit of tension among us over this decision; I think we should get our disagreements out into the open."

- "I think we can feel really good about what we've accomplished to this point. Especially nice work on the project outline, Ahmed!"

## Notetaker/Timekeeper

- Take notes during work sessions and fill out documents as needed.
- Summarizes discussions and decisions for the rest of the group. Distributes an update on group work to all group members.
- Presents group material to the rest of the class/supervisor.
- Keeps track of time during meetings to avoid spending excessive time on one topic. This is best handled by deciding how much time will be allocated to each issue in the agenda, and letting everyone know when this time is up. It is also useful to point out when time is almost up so that issues can be wrapped up appropriately.

Note: For larger groups, the roles of notetaker and time keeper could be fulfilled by two students.

*Typical phrases:*

- "Hold on, please, I just need to get this down before we move on."
- "I'll send you an updated version of our report tomorrow, along with a summary of today's meeting."
- "We've spent about 15 of the 20 minutes we allocated to this topic, so we've got about 5 more minutes to sort it out."

## Devil's Advocate

- Remains on guard against "groupthink" scenarios (i.e., when the pressure to reach the group goal is so great that the individual members surrender their own opinions to avoid conflict and view issues solely from the group's perspective).
- Ensures that all arguments have been heard, and looks for holes in the group's decision-making process, in case there is something overlooked.
- Keeps their mind open to problems, possibilities, and opposing ideas.
- Serves as a quality-control person who double-checks every detail to make sure errors have not been made and searches for aspects of the work that need more attention. Keeps an eye out for mistakes, especially those that may fall between the responsibilities of two group members.

Note: For larger groups, this role of devil's advocate could be divided into two roles: devil's advocate and quality control.