



Grouping

Teachers group pupils in various ways; by comparable ability, by mixed ability, by friendship, by gender, by personality and randomly. Some use groups for some of the time; others for all of the time. Some maintain the same groupings; others vary the group according to the task or the subject. Grouping pupils within the class can enable resources to be shared and can foster social development. The fact, however, that pupils are seated in groups does not necessarily mean that they are working as a group. Group work may quickly become counter-productive if teachers try too many groups or have pupils working on too many different activities or subjects simultaneously.

Types of group make-up

- ◆ Ability group (according to the subject, the aspect of the subject, the topic, the kind of task...)
- ◆ Mixed ability group
- ◆ Gender group
- ◆ Mixed gender group
- ◆ Friendship group
- ◆ Expert group
- ◆ Age group

Issues to consider:

- ◆ Why are the children grouped in a particular way?
- ◆ What are the advantages and disadvantages of grouping in different ways, according to gender, ability etc?
- ◆ How do you plan to divide your time between different groups?
- ◆ Are the groups fixed / dynamic?
- ◆ Are the planned groups working effectively?
- ◆ Is the grouping appropriate to the learning intention?
- ◆ Is the grouping appropriate to the activity?
- ◆ How do you prepare for, and manage group work?
- ◆ How do you give the class a clear rationale for why you have decided that working in groups is an appropriate way to do the task and for the selection of group members?
- ◆ How do you know if the groups are working effectively?



Collaborative vs. Co-operative Group Work

Although these terms are often used interchangeably, a helpful distinction can be made:

- ◆ Collaborative Work - work shared by two or more pupils whose design, planning and / or materials etc. are left to the group to decide.
- ◆ Co-operative Work - work shared by two or more pupils where the task and / or resources etc. and possibly the children's roles are specified by the teacher.

Co-Operative Learning

- ◆ How do you teach pupils the skills they need to be effective group members, including:

Co-operation	Organisation of tasks and time
Self-monitoring	Communication skills
Self-evaluation	Giving and responding to criticism
Negotiation	Turn taking
Mediating	Compromising
Tolerance	Adopting different roles?

- ◆ What impact do differences in tasks have on group talk?
- ◆ What opportunities do pupils have to:
 1. Talk about their own activity / comment on others?
 2. Share in discussion - helping each other to complete individual tasks?
 3. Collaborate in completing a shared task?
- ◆ What co-operative activities are planned in your school / department / class?
- ◆ What learning intentions could be supported by co-operative activities?
- ◆ How do you balance the social and cognitive aspects of co-operative working?
- ◆ How do you plan to develop pupil's ability to make shared choices and shared decisions?
- ◆ How do you assess co-operative work?



Grouping Strategies

Cascade

One or more children learn or develop a skill, knowledge or understanding and are then required to "pass this learning on" to one or more children.

Paired Tutoring

A "one-stage" version of cascade where a "more advanced" child is paired with a "less advanced" child in order to help develop their learning.

Envoy

Different groups work on different parts of the same task or on different tasks. At a given signal, one from each group (the 'envoy') is sent to another group to report on their group's findings or ideas.

Goldfish

Effective for tasks that can be divided up and that focus on sequenced parts, e.g. a study of consecutive paragraphs of a text, or of the stages of a process in science or geography. Each group is allocated a different part of the task to discuss or investigate, e.g. one paragraph or stage. At a given signal, each group's findings are passed on in some form to the group studying the next part in the sequence (e.g. orally by one member of each group, or as a diagram or written account provided by the group). The new group studies and discusses the new information.

Groups in which roles are allocated

For any group work task, children can be allocated, or asked to allocate, particular roles to each member.

Carousel / country dance

Equal numbers of children sit in an inner and outer circle (A and B), facing each other. Each child in one circle speaks to its partner, e.g. sharing new information, expressing ideas or rehearsing arguments. At a signal, the children in the other circle take a turn at doing the same while their partners listen.

Snowball



Children may work individually to start with. If so, at a signal after a while they are paired together and compare notes, collate their findings or negotiate on their task finding in some way. At another signal, pairs join into fours and repeat the exercise. If desired, at another signal, fours join to become eights and repeat. (Turn-taking) and/or negotiation techniques in the groups need to be modelled and practised so that this works effectively).

Jigsaw

Especially suited to 'body of knowledge' learning. Each child within initial groups of 5 or 6 is given a number or a name. These re-form as groups of children with the same number or name, i.e. as 'expert groups'. Expert groups are allocated different pieces of research or investigations to undertake (groups may usefully be split into pairs, then the pairs may collate their findings with other pairs in the expert group.) After this, children return to their initial ('home') groups as the experts in their field and are required to report their findings to these groups. (They may need support in presenting findings and/or taking turns within home groups.)

Pair swapping

Pairs work together on a task (this task may be the same, or different pairs). On a signal from the teacher, one from each pair is swapped with another, and required to report on what they have done or to 'add' their learning to that of their new partner in some way. This makes it difficult for unmotivated underachievers to 'coast' through a whole session. Pair work may also be less threatening than larger group work.

Pupils as teachers

Groups are set up to design interesting ways to deliver various subject based topics – selecting effective ways to resource, research and present their chosen topic. They are given time to produce a variety of teaching packs, including videos, booklets and games which they can present before a class/teachers/parents/invited audiences.