

Intermediate – Collaborate to Organise A Group Activity

Aim: To help students collaborate effectively in order to work well as a group.

Lead-in: Write the following examples on the board:

1. *Completing a class project*
2. *Organising a special celebratory event*
3. *Choosing a gift with school friends for a teacher*

Discuss with the class which of these tasks they have done and how they found working in a group. Put students into pairs and get them to think of some of the benefits of doing tasks 2 and 3 as a group. Suggest they try to come up with at least two advantages. Let them brainstorm for about three minutes, then elicit answers and write them on the board (e.g., *more fun, sharing ideas, discovering new ideas, spreading the workload, getting more done in less time, achieving better results, feeling more confident, sharing responsibility, etc.*).

Using students' ideas, try to elicit ways in which they could make sure a group task works effectively: *share ideas, try to listen, give each person a specific job, vote to make sure everybody agrees, make sure everyone does the same amount of work, etc.*

Choose A Scenario: Ask students to work in groups of four and choose one of the scenarios (A–C). Explain to students that their first task as a group is to identify and list decisions they must make and jobs that must be done in order to complete the task successfully (*deciding on a day for the activity, where it will take place, food, gifts, training activities, etc.*). They should be aware of potential problems that require a group decision, such as when most people will be free to take part. Ask students to work through their list in a collaborative way, making decisions and deciding *who, how* and *what* for each item. Explain to students that they should try to assign tasks to a person who is able to do that particular task. Remind students to keep referring to the Reflection Point and to think about the appropriate language for collaborating.

Reflection Point: Point out to students that when they work together as a group, it's important to share the task equally and give each person their own responsibilities. They should try not to let one person take control or do most of the work. To do this they should be ready to listen and to offer ideas. And they should be ready to accept it if their idea isn't the best one.

Class discussion: Put each group of four with another group that worked on the same scenario. Encourage them to compare the problems, jobs and decisions they identified. In what ways did they do things differently? Elicit the findings from each group. Then ask them to compare the decisions they made and the kinds of jobs they shared. Did they make similar decisions? Did they share the task in the same way?

Ask them whether they feel their group covered everything, or if there is anything else they could do to make the activity even better.

Write the questions below on the board. Allow students time to think of the answers before holding a whole class discussion:

- Did everybody make the same amount of effort? Why? / Why not?
- Did you manage to share your ideas?
- How did you decide who to give different jobs to?
- Was anyone quieter than the others? How could you encourage someone shy to take part?

Work alone: Get students to choose a second scenario from A–C and begin working through and organising their ideas on their own. Allow students about five minutes to do this. Then put them in groups of about four again, organised by which scenario they chose, and ask them to compare ideas and collaborate to come to a final decision on how to share out the task equally.

Move around the class checking students' progress, then invite individual students to share whether they found it easier to work alone first or to collaborate from the beginning. Ask whether collaboration among groups was easier this time round.

Extension: Write the following up on the board:

- *homework*
- *revising for exams*
- *getting to school*
- *after-school clubs*
- *weekend activities*

Ask students to get into pairs and choose two of the areas listed on the board. They should think of ways they could collaborate with other students in order to improve these aspects of their lives.