

Group Work: Part 3

Grading & Accountability

In this article you will find 11 variations on group grading, 6 accountability strategies for group presentations, and 5 sample rubrics and assessments.

Grading Group Work

COLLECTIVE GRADING: Give everyone in the group a single grade that reflects the quality of the final product their group created/submitted.

- The application of a single grade for group work is meant to mimic the “real world” where teams are held equally accountable for competently completing work projects, regardless of how much or how little each person on the team contributes. While there is an argument to be made for letting students feel the sting of this type of grading, an argument can also be made for school being a place where students can enjoy learning and can have the opportunity to work on building skills and making good judgments without being unnecessarily penalized during the process. For this reason, consider limiting the use of this type of grading to groups that were self-chosen (the students chose their own partners) and/or use it in combination with one of the more equitable, individual grading ideas below.

INDIVIDUAL GRADING: Give everyone in the group a separate grade based only on their individual contribution to the group. Here are six variations on this type of grading.

- Teacher assigns each student a grade for just their part of the project, using a pre-created rubric ([see sample Rubric #1](#)).
- Students each self-grade their own effort/contribution using a rubric ([see sample Rubric #2](#)).
- Students grade their peers using a rubric ([Rubric #2](#)). Each student receives the average of their peers’ assigned grades.
- Students self-grade AND grade their peers, using a rubric ([Rubric #2](#)). Each student receives the average of their own and their peers’ assigned grades.
- Students self-grade and grade their peers, while also answering reflection questions on the process and outcomes of working in a group ([see sample “Group Work Self-Assessment”](#)). The teacher decides what grade to ultimately give each student after reading through their reflections and the reflections of their group mates.
- Teacher assigns a single grade for quality of final work product to all students and averages that with each student’s self-grading or peer-grading to arrive at a unique final grade for each student.

WEIGHTED GRADING: Teacher uses a combination of several “individual grading” ideas, but some are weighted more heavily than others.

- Weighted grades are used to limit the impact of kids giving themselves and their friends higher grades than they deserve. For example, the grade given by the teacher is worth 50% of the student’s final grade. The student’s self-grade is worth 25% of their final grade. The average of the student’s peer’s grades is 25% of the final grade.

CURVED GRADING: Teacher limits the number of “A”s that can be given, requiring the students to rank their respective contributions to the group. Here are three ways to do this:

- The teacher identifies one group member as the MVP (most valuable player) and that person receives an automatic A, regardless of the quality of the final product. The other members are individually graded using one of the “Individual Grading” ideas listed above, but the highest grade anyone else can earn is a B. Only the MVP can get an A. A variation of this is to have each group nominate their own MVP, rather than the teacher selecting the MVP.
- Teacher allows groups to self-grade but requires them to give out one A, one B, one C, and one wild card. The wild card can be made into any grade A-F. Together each group must come to consensus on who gets each of the three pre-determined letter grades and who gets the wild card. They also must agree on what letter grade the wild card will represent.
- The teacher gives the group a total score, or number of points, for their project. The students divide up the points however they think is most fair. For example, in a group with four people, the maximum points they can earn for their project is 400 (100 points per person). The teacher assesses the group’s project and assigns them a final group score of 332 points. The students in the group discuss and decide how to most fairly divide up those points, or how many of those points each person will receive. If they feel they all contributed equally to the project they simply divide their score of 332 by four, and each person receives 83 points, or a B, for their project grade.

Curved Grading is meant to teach students to truly evaluate the respective contributions of each group member. While everyone can potentially receive a “passing grade,” students must be more discerning about what constitutes “good” effort versus what constitutes “excellent” effort. This kind of grading can also lead to deep and interesting discussions about effort, fairness, merit, and group responsibility, when the experience is de-briefed as a whole class discussion after grades have been assigned.

Pro-Tip: *If the thought of this type of grading makes you or your students anxious, but you are nonetheless intrigued, you can lower everyone’s anxiety by allowing any student who is unhappy with the grade they receive to submit a written “challenge.” They can make their case for why their grade should be changed/raised and you can change their grade if you are convinced.*

Group Presentation Accountability:

GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY: Provide a structure for group presentations so that each person can be individually assessed for their contribution to the presentation. Here are two ways to do this:

- Assign group roles that require each person to create something unique for the project. Each person then presents what they created/contributed. For example, if the group roles were Summarizer, Visual Expert, Actor, and Researcher then each person presents and explains what they created. **See Part 2 in this series at tinyurl.com/GroupWorkPart2** for more about these roles.
- Break up the information that will be presented by each group into four chunks and have each group member choose one chunk to present. During collaborative group time, each person in a group may have a unique and specific role as described above. When it comes to the presentation, however, each person will take on all roles for the presentation of their chunk of the content. For example, each person will summarize one idea, describe the supporting visual created for it, teach the class the definition of one key word using “Mirror Words,” and answer one question about what they presented. **See 3-minute video on how to use Mirror Words at tinyurl.com/video-mirror-words**

AUDIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY: Give students in the audience a goal or a purpose when watching their peers present: i.e. something to look for or something to assess in each presentation. In **Part 2 in this series at tinyurl.com/GroupWorkPart2** we offered three ideas for how to do this. They are lightly abridges and re-printed below, with one additional idea.

- **Rubrics:** Give the class a simple **Presentation Assessment Rubric** (see **sample Rubric #3**) to assess each part of a group’s presentation as they present. After one group’s presentation is complete, have the students in the audience confer in their groups and grade each part of the presentation, or grade each person from the presentation team, using the rubric.
- **Learnings:** After a group’s presentation is complete, have each student in the audience write one question they have and one thing they learned on a **Presentation Log** (see **sample Log**) which they will hand in after all the groups have presented. If time permits, take a few volunteers or randomly select a few students to share their questions and have the presentation group attempt to answer them.
- **Test Questions:** After a group’s presentation is complete, have each student in the audience individually write two possible test questions (and their answers) about the topic that was presented. Collect these to use on a future test or for tomorrow’s review.
- **Mini Quiz:** Have each presentation group create a 5 question, multiple-choice quiz that they give to the students in the audience as soon as their presentation ends.

Sample Rubric #1: Teacher Grading

Student Name: _____		Date: _____	
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>Excellent Work</p> <p>Used time wisely and productively throughout</p> <p>Voluntarily helped and encouraged group mates</p> <p>Had a positive attitude throughout</p> <p>Completed product shows tremendous care and effort that goes above and beyond</p> <p>Quality of work is above grade level</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>Good Work</p> <p>Usually used time well and productively</p> <p>Helped group mates when asked</p> <p>Had a positive attitude most of the time</p> <p>Completed product shows effort and care</p> <p>Quality of work is at grade level</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Getting Close</p> <p>Sometimes used time wisely, but was also off-task at times</p> <p>Did not help or encourage group mates, but did not distract them from their work</p> <p>Had a positive attitude some of the time, but not consistently</p> <p>Completed work product shows that more time or effort was needed</p> <p>Quality of work is almost at grade level</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>Needs Support</p> <p>Did not use time wisely or productively</p> <p>Distracted or discouraged group mates</p> <p>Had an unproductive attitude toward self, group mates, teacher, and/or project</p> <p>Work product is incomplete or missing or shows almost no effort or care</p> <p>Quality of work is well below grade level. Support needed</p>
Grade _____			
Teacher Comments: _____			

Sample Rubric #2: Student Self/Peer Grading

Group Member Name: _____		Date: _____	
This group member: (circle one)			
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>Did more than their fair share of work and encouraged other group members.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>Did their fair share of work throughout the project/ activity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Sometimes did their fair share of work, but not always (OR) was occasionally disruptive</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>Rarely or never did their fair share of work (OR) disrupted or discouraged other group members.</p>
<p>What else should I know about the work this group member did?</p>			

Sample: Group Work Self-Assessment

What went well in your group?	
What went wrong or what was challenging about working with your group?	
Did the project come out the way you wanted? If no, why not?	
What do you need to do differently the next time we do a group project to have a better experience?	
What could I (the teacher) do differently next time we have a group project, to make the experience better?	
If you were in charge of this project, how would you change it to make it better?	
What grade would you give your completed project? Why?	
What grade would you give yourself? Why?	
What grade would you give each of your group mates? Why?	
What was the most important thing you learned while doing this project?	
What else, if anything, do you want me to know about your project, your group, or your experience?	

Pro Tip: *If your students are not accustomed to self-assessments, it's important to let them know that it is okay (and encouraged) to answer honestly, especially when evaluating their teacher's role or the structure of the project. If we don't explicitly state this to our students, we run the risk of getting teacher-pleasing responses like "I liked this project and wouldn't change anything!" in an attempt to either not hurt the teachers' feelings or out of fear of retribution.*

Sample Rubric #3: Presentation Assessment

4	3	2	1
Excellent. Everything was very clear and very well done.	Good. Everything was clear and done.	Almost. Things were not always clear. Hard to follow or incomplete in places.	Hmmm. Almost impossible to follow. Lots of missing, confusing, contradictory, or inaccurate information.
Showed a lot of effort and polish. I learned a lot.	Showed effort. I learned a couple of things.	Showed some effort, but needed a bit more. I maybe learned one thing.	Showed no real effort. I did not learn anything.

Summarizer's Name: _____ **Rubric Grade** _____

Explain why you gave this grade: _____

Illustrator's Name: _____ **Rubric Grade** _____

Explain why you gave this grade: _____

Actor's Name: _____ **Rubric Grade** _____

Explain why you gave this grade: _____

Researcher's Name: _____ **Rubric Grade** _____

Explain why you gave this grade: _____

Sample Presentation Log

Your Name: _____ Date: _____ Period or Teacher: _____

Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...
Presentation Topic:	One question I have is... One thing I learned is...