Setting Students Up for Successful Group Work

1. Teach the value of group work
   - Groups build communication, conflict resolution, and delegation skills.
   - Team projects provide experiential learning for the professional world.
   - Collaboration skills are marketable.

2. Assign groups intentionally
   - The most effective groups have 4-5 members.
   - Assign students to groups; don’t just randomize or let students choose.
   - Successful groups have members with a strong commitment to the content and outcomes.

3. Create interdependence
   - Consider assigning roles to group members.
   - Complex projects encourage students to lean on one another.
   - Fostering trust between members transforms individuals into a team.

4. Set clear expectations
   - Provide examples of a successful final product.
   - Consider interim deadlines or milestones - starting at the beginning of the semester.
   - Present a task that can be turned into a shared common goal.

5. Clarify individual responsibility
   - Add accountability by creating individually graded portions of a project or implementing peer evaluations.
   - Create contract grading where each student signs an outline of their tasks and deadlines.
   - Provide opportunities for students to give each other feedback.

Additional tips:
- Embrace the process as more important than the product.
- Let students express their preferred group culture.
- Make sure the project is something that is best done in groups.

References