**Scaffolding to Support Group Work**

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**Initial exercise instructions**

In clusters of ~4-5, introduce yourself and quickly assign roles[[1]](#footnote-1):

* **Agenda-keeper**: Initially summarizes the exercise goals and required tasks; then, keeps track of the clock to make sure there’s time to discuss main points
* **Facilitator**: Make sure everyone has a chance “at the mic” to talk
* **Pattern-finder**: Make connections and summarize what you’re hearing
* **Note taker**: Write down main points
* **Reporter**: Prepared to share points with class

**Sample Exercise #1: Generating Real World Examples/Applications**

[Instructor presents a short list of concepts covered in class for review.]

I’m going to give each of your groups a number [counts off the groups].

Now, in your clusters, can you give some examples of how these concepts affect politics?

* **Pick the tab** on this sheet that matches your group number: [Use shared Google sheet or equivalent, with one tab for each group]
* List your **names and group roles**
* Note what **concept** you’re focusing on
* **Define** the concept together
* **Write down an example** related to politics where you see this concept in action.

**Sample Exercise #2: Hypothesis Development and Testing**

(Assumes students understand the concept of a hypothesis.)

In your clusters:

* Share your hypotheses about why [class topic] happens. [Example: Why people do or don’t vote.]
* Add your hypotheses (and reasoning) as a reply to the appropriate discussion board thread.
* Pick one of your group’s hypotheses. How could you test this hypothesis? Be prepared to share with the full class.

**Groupwork tips for students**

**Saying what you need** can feel hard (we want approval), but it’ll make your life easier!

* **“Sandwich” feedback:** Say one point you like, one area that the person can improve, and finally a second point you appreciate.
* Be clear about **constraints/challenges** you’re facing that could affect the team. Propose how you’ll still contribute (and **others can support you**)

Challenge yourself beyond your usual communication style

* **Speak up if you tend to be quiet:** Advocate for your ideas and make suggestions if you think the group could be working better.
* **Make space if you tend to be loud:** Consciously check in from time to time to see if quieter members of the group have different ideas.

**Make your group proud!**

* Everyone learns more if everyone contributes earnestly.
1. Based on Group Roles suggested by Carnegie Mellon University’s Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation: <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/tools/index.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)