

Group Charter Activity

Props/Prep: Yes

Time: 30 min.

Audience: Groups

Physical: No

This is an activity to help establish group norms. Students work in groups to develop ground rules and goals for their group. This is best done at the beginning of a group formation. The aim of this activity is for group members to express their expectations and encourage them to come up with behaviours they expect within the group and from each other.

Time Requirements: Allow 30 minutes for the entire process.

Materials needed per group: Pens for each person, and 1 set of handouts per group.

Special features: This teamwork activity is focused on building a team charter while increasing positive group dynamics. It is unique in that it is done within each group from the beginning to the end of the activity, and will therefore look unique when compared to other group charters. This will help group members feel ownership to their group.

Procedure: Have groups sit together. Give them the rules. Give each group one set of handouts (A & B). Encourage groups to organize the activity themselves, and tell them they need to complete it. Give them a specific time frame. At the end of the activity, each group member should get a copy of the charter, and a copy should be provided for the teacher.

Debrief: Each group is expected to discuss the following questions once they have completed their charter. Every group will likely come up with slightly different responses, which is reflective of the variations within the groups.

Questions to guide debriefing:

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- What have you achieved by doing this activity?
- How can this information help your group function more effectively?

Function in the class:

- To facilitate understanding of what they expect from a group, and how a group works together
- To help form several people into a functioning group for a specific learning outcome
- To help students write a group charter and understand the importance of functioning within its framework

Adapted from; Federman Stein, R., & Hurd, S. (2000). Using student teams in the classroom: a faculty guide. Anker: Boston, MA.

Team Charter (Handout A)

Rational: Teams work better when members have a common understanding of the group goals and ground rules for group member behaviour. The purpose of this activity is to facilitate your group in setting ground rules and goals. Each group member will have some idea how a group should operate. These ideas may be very different. This is your opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas to promote optimal group function and prevent misunderstandings in the future.

Directions: As a group, please complete the charter categories on this page (you may want to use another piece of paper). When finished, have each group member sign the charter. Distribute copies of the charter to all group members and to the instructor.

Group Name: _____

Questions to Establish Ground Rules:

- Other than class, when will the group attempt to meet (what time, how often, where)?
- Group meetings - how long should the meetings be?
- When is it OK to skip a meeting?
- How do we communicate with each other (in case someone is running late, etc.)?
- How will we deal with chronic lateness to meetings?
- What does on-time really mean?
- What is our expected behaviour regarding mobile phone use during meetings?
- Can we bring food to meetings?
- How do we deal with members who do not participate enough or distract others from our work?
- How are we going to make decisions?
- What will we do if group members' work does not hold up to our group standards?
- Other?

A Question to Establish the Group Goal:

- What is our group trying to accomplish?

Charter Contract (Handout B)

We, the team named _____ agree with the information documented in our team charter, and will try our best to uphold this charter. By signing below, we indicate our commitment to our team. The group is expected to demonstrate positive, cohesive teamwork while developing and presenting this assignment. All members of the group are to make equal efforts for the success of the group presentation. All group members are to fulfill the responsibilities of completing the assignment and making strong efforts for success related to group role expectations.

For the next several weeks, I will participate effectively in this group and strive to do the following:

- Come to class or group meetings on time (If I miss a group meeting, I will inform the group members ahead of time).
- Come prepared to share with my group (If I am unable to prepare for the meeting or a portion of the assignment, I will make up additional work according to the group needs).
- Listen actively to what others have to contribute (If I appear to not listen, my group peers can ask me to focus and pay attention).
- Be supportive of the efforts and initiatives of others (If I am too critical, my group peers can point this out and ask me to soften my approach).
- Be respectful at all times (If I demonstrate disrespectful behaviour, my group members have the right to ask me to stop).

Signatures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Exit Clause:

- The group leader will determine if each member of the group is meeting their individual obligation, and may warn the member(s) of poor contributions. When a group member(s) continuously causes group dysfunction, the leader and offending member(s) must meet with the teacher. When a group member(s) chooses not to meet the minimum expectations of positive group cohesion, that member(s) will receive a grade of 0 (zero) for the group presentation and be removed from the group. The teacher has the final decision making responsibility for group exit.