

Group Project Management

Good teams are organised and plan their time well. A common mistake that student groups make early in their project is to fail to manage their project very effectively. These tips provide some key advice to bear in mind!

- 1) **Be clear on the task!**
Check everyone's understanding of the task before you begin and give everyone a chance to express their ideas to allow time for brainstorming and discussion. Once you have settled on the best idea, make sure you all agree and are clear about what your final goal is.
- 2) **Break it down.**
It is difficult to start on a task that seems like it will take a long time or is very complicated. Try dividing the task into smaller 'mini-tasks'. These will seem less daunting, will give you a sense of progress and quickly add up to a lot of work!
- 3) **Know your time limits.**
It is a good idea to check with everyone in the group that they are clear on the final deadline. Also, you should specify at the start of each meeting how long you have to discuss things. Meetings that run out of time can be wasted meetings!
- 4) **Create a schedule/plan.**
Once you have broken down the task, it can be a good idea to create a plan and work out when each 'mini-task' needs to be completed. Start with your deadline and work backwards, using planned meetings as markers. Then, work out by which meeting, each task would need to be done by to finish on time. Try and stick to it!
- 5) **Have regular meetings.**
Meetings can serve as good deadline points and keep a project focussed and on time by allowing group members to communicate effectively and discuss progress. Consider having a regular time for these. Just before or after a timetabled class often works well but try and choose a time that is good for everyone.
- 6) **Allocate tasks and actions effectively.**
Meetings are ideal for agreeing action points from the 'mini-tasks' and deciding on who should do them. Rate your actions by importance and do the most important ones first! You should record who is doing the action and when it should be done.
- 7) **Have a back-up plan.**
It can be a good idea to nominate a back-up person for each action just in case. What would happen if someone got sick and was unable to do their action? Could you re-distribute the work? Are you sure you have to do *all* the actions? Prioritise!
- 8) **Be realistic.**
Keep an eye on your time and know the team strengths and limitations. Try and get the basic stuff done first and then you can look to make improvements to make the project better. A basic project that satisfies your goals and gets completed in time is better than a innovative, exciting project that gets stuck on a technical issue!
- 9) **Keep people informed.**
Communication is vital! Make sure you attend your meetings and keep each other informed about your progress. Let each other know as soon as you get stuck or experience problems and consider keeping in touch outside meetings (internet?).
- 10) **Know when to ask for help.**
Problems *will* happen. Don't leave them because you don't know what to do. Know who to ask for help and do so as quickly as possible. We all need help sometimes!