

Two Ways to Do Classwork



I go to Lincoln School. Mr. Marshall is my teacher. He gives us assignments. There are two ways that we do our assignments.



One way is to work alone. Working alone is *working independently*. When I work independently, I finish an assignment on my own. Then I get a grade.



Another way to finish an assignment is to work with others. This is called working in a small group, or *working cooperatively*. When we work cooperatively, each person in my group receives the same grade.

Mr. Marshall decides if we will work independently or cooperatively on an assignment.

In my class, we learn independently and cooperatively.

Learning Independently and Cooperatively

Students complete assignments in school. A teacher gives them directions and the students begin to work. There are two ways that students work on assignments.



One way is to work alone. Working alone is *working independently*. A teacher may help. In many classrooms, most assignments are completed independently. Each student works alone and then receives a grade.

Another way to finish an assignment is to work with others. This is called working in a small group, or *working cooperatively*. Teachers are often there to help the group. Students work together and each student receives the same grade.



The teacher decides if students will work independently or cooperatively to complete an assignment.

In my class, we learn by completing independent and cooperative assignments.

I Would Rather Work Alone (Most of the Time)

My name is Logan. I have said, "I would rather work alone" many times. I have also said that I feel disappointed when a teacher makes a small group assignment. It's okay to feel disappointed about a small group assignment. As I grow, I am learning what to do with disappointment so that I can do my best work when I work alone or with others.

I am not the only child in the world who would rather work alone. There may be kids in my group who would rather work alone. It's okay to feel that way. Staying calm and safe for others helps everyone to do their best work. That way, we may finish the assignment faster!

It's possible to feel disappointed *and* calm and in good control at the same time. As children get older they get better at it. For example, at the YO-YO assembly, I was disappointed when they ran out of Yo-Yos and my class had to wait a week for ours to arrive. I stayed calm and in good control. Mr. Huizer said that I "...did a great job handling my disappointment."

Knowing what to think helped me when they ran out of YoYos. I thought about the next Monday when everyone in my class would get a YoYo. When there is a small group assignment, one happy thought is, "As least there are not hundreds or thousands of small group projects!" or "Most of our group projects are short, and staying calm keeps them as short as possible!" Sometimes, I may need to ask my teacher for a happy thought to use. That's okay.

Staying calm and in good control is a good way for kids to learn and work independently or as a small group.

Using Others' Ideas in a Group Project

As students grow older they are sometimes assigned a group project. As students grow they work together in groups more frequently. Understanding why teachers assign group projects, what happens in a group project, and how to use the ideas of others can make it easier to finish a group assignment.

There are some good reasons for group assignments. Studies that show that when students work together on a problem, they come up with a better solution than if they were to work alone. Going to school gets students ready for going to jobs someday. Most jobs and careers require people to work together on the same goal or project. Working in a small group is one way that teachers prepare students for the future.

Every group assignment has a goal; a project to complete. The older the students, the larger or more difficult the project. Many larger group projects have two or more deadlines. Students turn in their work at each deadline to show the progress of their project.

A group project can be *difficult at times*. Many members of a group may have ideas that they want to use. Most students like their ideas best and want them to be used in the project. This can lead to disagreements or uncomfortable feelings. For some students, using the ideas of others and not making all the decisions is one of the main reasons they do not enjoy group work.

Students often decide which idea or ideas to use by voting. Other times, group members recognize a *really good idea* and there is no vote, the idea is accepted immediately by everyone, or almost everyone, without a vote.

Many students have good ideas. It's often only possible to use one of them. The other ideas are still good. They are un-used good ideas. A group member may "save" an unused idea to use on an independent project later. Once, a high school student, Andrew, was so excited about his idea for a group project (and frustrated that it was voted out), he did *two* projects, one at home and other with his group at school! Using all of his own ideas at

home, even though he knew his independent version of the project could not be turned in, helped Andrew to use the ideas of others at school. As Andrew's home project progressed, so did the one at school. The projects were not identical, but both were very good!

Working in a group isn't always all group work. There is often a lot of time spent working independently. Often students may volunteer for tasks that they know they will be able to do well. Or, members of a group will ask a student with a talent or specific skill to work on a part of the project where that skill is needed. Students then complete different parts of a project and put them together.

Teachers are ready to help. Most if not all teachers remember that working with a group may be difficult at times. They were students once, too, and they completed group assignments.