**Benefits of Pair and Group Work in Teaching English**

In the last few decades there has been a major shift towards the communicative approach and student-centered learning in education, reducing the amount of teacher talking time (TTT). It gives your learners more opportunities to speak and practice what they’ve learned.

Gorupwork also allows the teacher to move around the classroom and have an opportunity to listen to what the students are saying and thereby what they are thinking.

No one likes to do the same thing all the time, and breaking the students up into either groups or pairs will also **change the pace of the lesson.** This can often be a [great way to add energy to the classroom](https://www.fluentu.com/english/educator/blog/esl-video-lessons/), especially when the topics are considered heavier or more difficult, like grammar.

When the groups or pairs are working together, it’s also easier for you to **manage and monitor your classroom.** You’ll be able to move around the classroom with ease, with a good opportunity to listen to the language your students are producing.

If your ESL class is like most, you probably have students of mixed abilities and levels. When you give your learners the chance to collaborate in pairs or groups, **weaker students can feed off the stronger students and vice versa.**When modeled by other students, those who generally have a harder time understanding will be able to gauge what’s going on through the modeling of other students. Additionally, there’s always **a sense of achievement** attached to pair and group work. When a pair or particular group finishes something successfully through collaborating with each other, there’s a greater feeling of pride upon reaching a team goal. Aside from the realistic speaking and listening practice, this also teaches your learners extra skills, especially children. When you divide them into groups, you’re helping your students to learn how to lead and be led, which are vital skills in life.

**8 Solid Teaching Tips for Effective Pair and Group Work in English Classes**

Here are some details to take into consideration when using pair or group work in the English language classroom.

1. **Know Your Reason for Using Pairs/Groups**

Not all types of work are suitable for group work. There should be a clear benefit and value to the learning in groups-being able to collaborate thinking must be of value.appropriate for pairs and groups, so never have students work in groups on an activity simply for the sake of working in groups. There should be a clear benefit and value to collaboration for the particular activity. Your students will also be more keen on working with others if you share this reasoning with them too. Pairs and groups work best for collaborative or project-based learning, for example, where students can solve more complex problems together—not something like a straightforward worksheet.

**2. Demonstrate the Activity First**

Before dividing your class up, you need to make sure that you fully explain the process and what you expect from your learners. This will stop any interruptions halfway through the task, and it will also ensure that the task is completed quickly and smoothly with little confusion.

No matter how advanced your learners are, always demonstrate what you expect, either alone or with the help of one (or several) of your learners. This will help the activity run smoothly and there will also then be less room for any kind of misunderstanding. For most activities, refrain from handing out necessary materials until *after*you have explained the rules and completed the demonstration. With younger learners especially, as soon as they have a worksheet or scissors in front of them, concentration is usually lost.

**3. Give a Clear Time Limit**

After you’ve shown what’s expected of your learners, it’s also important to set a clear time limit. Make it a bit challenging, to force collaboration and to keep students on task. If your students have a really easy task, plus the knowledge from multiple heads put together, the time won’t be well spent. That’s why a bit of a challenging time limit can really help. If you have a projector, you could leave [any of these classroom timers](http://www.online-stopwatch.com/classroom-timers/) up on the screen for all to see.

**4. Have a Method in Place for Volume Control**

To avoid a classroom where it’s too noisy to concentrate, make a “silence signal” before starting. This could be a simple hand signal, like a time-out “T” sign, or a flickering of the lights, which you can use to indicate they need to bring the volume down a few notches. This non-verbal signal will keep you from shouting, as you shouldn’t have to speak over their rising noise levels. If you have a projector and microphone, you could also use free sites like [Bouncy Balls](https://bouncyballs.org/) and [Calmness Counter](http://www.ictgames.com/calmCounter.html), or the paid app [Too Noisy](http://toonoisyapp.com/) to monitor volume visually.Another way to reduce any foreseeable noise problems is by spreading your groups or pairs out around the classroom. This way they can hear their other group members without having to shout, thus keeping the general noise level of the class down to an acceptable level.

**5. Assign a Language Monitor per Group**

In monolingual classes, it can also be a challenge to keep your learners speaking English and not slipping into their mother tongue. One way to prevent this from happening is to delegate a monitor in each group who’ll be tasked with observing the group speaking. To make your students aware of how much of their mother tongue they’re speaking, have the monitors stand up every time they hear a non-English word spoken. The more your monitors have to stand, the more obvious it’ll be to your class. As teacher you should only be a facilitator during group work, so this technique helps put the responsibility on the groups.

**6. Start with a Quick Ice Breaker**

To get students more comfortable working together, start group/pair work with a very brief ice breaker. Remembering to include this small step can have a huge effect on how well groups or partners work together.

Here are a few ideas for very simple, short ice breakers:

* Answering [a “Would you rather…?” question](http://www.signupgenius.com/groups/would-you-rather.cfm)
* Answering a [funny question](http://www.signupgenius.com/groups/funnyicebreakerquestions.cfm)
* Trying to say their name backwards
* Sharing their favorite X (animal, app, song, movie, food, dessert, etc.)
* Ordering themselves (by birthdays, by height, by shoe size, alphabetically by last names, etc.)
* Playing a quick round (1-2 minutes) of [word association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_Association)

**7. Prepare Filler Activities for Early Finishers**

Sometimes these tasks can go more quickly than you’d planned, depending on your class and the given topic. To avoid getting caught with early finishers, always have a few filler activities or a Plan B on hand for these groups This doesn’t have to be an entirely new activity that you spend lots of time planning. It could be anything from an extension on the current group/pair work to an activity that reviews another topic you’ve recently covered together. But just like the pair/group activity itself as mentioned in #3, if the filler activity is too easy, students could get chatty and unfocused. So keep this in mind as you brainstorm a few back-ups for early finishers.

**8. Include a Peer Evaluation** When your students work in pairs or groups, include some type of peer evaluation at the end of the activity. Make sure students know ahead of time that they will need to evaluate their group members. This alone is another strong tool for keeping students on task and behaving.