Group Work

This document contains some tips for assigning group work to your class as well as types and samples of group work activities. Students work best in groups when given clearly articulated tasks. The best tasks:

- promote controversy,
- have a product (to be written and handed in and/or presented orally),
- can be accomplished in the specified time limit, and
- are directed toward broader learning goals for the course.

When possible, tasks should be written and distributed as handouts or posted on the board so that students may refer back to them. The best assignments specify:

- the question or problem to be addressed,
- the time frame for completing the project (this may be 30 minutes of a class period or several weeks of both in-class and out-of-class work for more involved projects),
- the form that the final product will take, and
- the kind of feedback they can expect to receive.

Group assignments should always include an element of reporting or critiquing.

- Presentations — whether impromptu or planned for longer-term projects — help groups stay on task and provide stakes for the work they do together. They also help students to develop speaking skills.

- Following group work, it is helpful to plan debates, class-wide conversations or additional assignments. These can make the class as a whole invested in the work other groups are doing, help students work through ideas prior to more formal assignments, and relate the group activity to broader learning goals.
Group Activities

There are numerous group activities you can try with your class.

**Problem-posing**
Provide students with a particular disciplinary problem framed as an open-ended question. The groups must propose an answer in the form of a thesis statement and provide a list of justifications.

**Believing and Doubting**
(Developed from Peter Elbow) Provide students with a controversial thesis. Ask half of the class to "believe" the claim and half to "doubt" it, developing arguments to support their assigned position. Stage a class-wide debate following the group session.

**Question-generating**
After instruction in the kinds of questions asked by a particular discipline, have groups brainstorm possible questions related to a provided topic. These questions can form the basis of class discussion or future exams, research projects, or assignments.

**Metacognitive Tasks**
If students present ideas that differ from those of experts in the field, have small groups analyze differences in reasoning between themselves and the experts. Groups can articulate assumptions, strategies and leaps behind their own viewpoints and those of the experts. This kind of activity helps deepen students' understanding of how knowledge is created.

**Group Presentations**
Formal, long-term, structured group presentations can help students get to know each other, build teamwork skills, and apply course content. They can also extend course coverage and bring contemporary debates and external sources into the classroom. You can ask different groups to "teach" portions of the class, do additional research and reading, or create questions for discussion. Group presentations might be distributed over the course of a semester, with one group presenting per class period, or be clustered at the end of a module or syllabus.

When creating a group presentation assignment, it is helpful to specify the following:

- **Division of labor:** Who will be responsible for different aspects of the work and presentation? How will they be held accountable?

- **Work timeline:** How much in-class time will be devoted to presentation preparation, and how much will students be expected to meet outside of class? When will the presentations take place, and when are supplementary materials due?
• Supplementary materials: Will groups be expected to prepare handouts, multimedia components or written reports in conjunction with their presentations?

• Assessment: Will group presentations be graded individually? By what criteria will presentations be judged? Will there be space in the grade for peer assessment?

Peer Review
Having your students review each other's papers, drafts, components of formal projects is a great way to engage them in the writing process. Below are some sample handouts that instructors have used to guide the peer review process. You may adapt these templates for your own course.

In groups, peer feedback can help students work through various parts of the writing process. Students can review paper elements — such as thesis statements or introductory paragraphs — or entire drafts of papers. Peer review works best when students are given discrete questions to answer about each other's work and clear guidelines for providing feedback.

Response–centered Reviews
Group members provide personal responses to a classmate's draft, describing what they liked, what was confusing, etc.

Advice–centered Reviews
Using norming sessions or teacher–provided scoring guides, have students provide each other with concrete suggestions for improving elements of their writing. Advice–centered reviews work best when a particular element of the paper is highlighted for consideration.
Summarizing a Source

Lesson Objective
During this lesson, students will learn how to summarize an article and will then identify the best summary during a brief exercise.

Handouts
1. “Summarizing a Source”

Length of lesson
20-30 minutes

Variations for different disciplines
1. General version using an article on identification for illegal immigrants
2. Speech

Source
Brooklyn College Writing Fellows

Approved
11/10/09

File Name
ML_Summary_Gen_A.doc
Lesson Description

1. Have students read the article below. (5 min.)

2. Discuss summaries with the students. It might be helpful to mention that summaries must be Accurate, Brief, and Comprehensive. The summary should represent what the original text says (you can give your opinion later). To cue the reader that you are summarizing another person’s views, you will likely use signal words such as: according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, argues… (5 min.)

3. Ask them to spend a few minutes writing a list of what they would include in a summary of the article. (5-10 min.)

4. Ask students to read the five sample summaries below and determine which is best. The first summary is not accurate, the second is too long, the third too short, and hence not comprehensive. The last two are OK, though the fifth is probably best. (5-10 min.)
Summarizing a Source

When summarizing an article it is important to be:
- **Accurate**
- **Brief**
- **Comprehensive**

Your summary should isolate the most important points and should represent what the actual text says. Often signal words such as according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, and argues are important clues to the reader that you are summarizing someone else's work.

Part 1. Summarizing an Article

*Read the article below and then write your own summary. It may be helpful to list the most important points before writing a summary.*

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“California Should Not Ease Rules for Illegals”  
*Herb Klein*  
*San Diego Union-Tribune* Editorial December 10, 2004

At least some of the Sept. 11 terrorists, all Arabs, obtained illegal driver's licenses and used them to board airliners on that horrific day. Which is why the issue of granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants is a matter of pressing national security concern. The truth is, a driver's license is America's national identity card, proof that the holder is who he says he is, which is why airline agents ask to see your driver's license before you board a plane. Under new federal legislation, the Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Department of Transportation, is directed to develop uniform national criteria for issuing driver's licenses. The measure calls for the implementation of “standards for the verifiability of documents used to obtain a driver's license.”

Governor Schwarzenegger, sensibly citing the new intelligence bill, has declared that the question of driver's licenses for undocumented Californians should be put off until the new federal guidelines are developed. That is expected to take up to 18 months.

Apart from national security concerns, there are other reasons why illegal immigrants should not be given driver's licenses. One is a simple matter of fairness. Extending the privilege to undocumented residents would reward them for their illegal conduct. What's more, it would severely undermine enforcement of America's immigration laws. Gov. Schwarzenegger should stand firm against this ill-advised attempt to legitimate illegal immigration.
Part 2. Choosing the Best Summary

Now that you have written your own summary read the summaries below and identify the best one. What are some of the problems with the other summaries? Now that you have seen some example summaries, return to your own work and revise it.

1. Herb Klein says that illegal immigrants should not get driver’s licenses because it would pose a security risk for the country. For example, everyone needs a driver’s license to board a plane. He says that giving licenses to illegal immigrants would be unfair to people without licenses and that the federal government should wait before making a decision on this important issue.

2. Since terrorists are likely to use driver’s licenses to board planes or perpetrate other terrorist acts, it is important that they not be issued to someone unless that person’s identity can be positively ascertained. Therefore it is dangerous to issue driver’s licenses to illegal immigrants. The federal government is making plans to increase the security and usefulness of driver’s licenses across the country, but until this legislation is passed, probably more than a year from now, California should not allow illegal immigrants to get licenses. Furthermore, there are other reasons why granting licenses to illegal immigrants is a bad idea: one is that it would be unfair because it rewards illegal behavior, and the other is that illegal immigration is legitimized by giving illegal immigrants the privileges of citizens.

3. In his editorial Herb Klein claims that giving driver’s licenses to illegal immigrants would be a threat to national security because a driver’s license is often used as a form of identification. For this reason he urges Governor Schwarzenegger not to allow licenses for illegal immigrants in California.

4. According to Herb Klein, a driver’s license is an important form of ID that currently is not secure; therefore he argues that driver’s licenses should not be granted to undocumented immigrants because it would endanger national security. Furthermore, he worries that it would legitimize illegal immigration.

5. In his December 10, 2004 editorial, Herb Klein argues against granting driver’s licenses to people he terms “illegal immigrants” because he worries this would pose a national security threat. He suggests that California should wait until the federal government has made driver’s licenses into a more secure, verifiable form of identification. He also thinks that the issue is a “simple matter of fairness” and that granting licenses to undocumented immigrants would legitimize illegal behavior.
Summarizing a Source

Lesson Objective
During this lesson, students will learn how to summarize an article and will then identify the best summary during a brief exercise.

Handouts
1. “Summarizing a Source”

Length of lesson
20-30 minutes

Variations for different disciplines
1. General version using an article on identification for illegal immigrants
2. Speech

Source
Keyed for Speech by Siobhan Cooke (Writing Fellow 2008-2010).

Approved
11/10/09

File Name
ML_Summary_SPEE_A.doc
Lesson Description

1. Have students read the article below. (5 min.)

2. Discuss summaries with the students. It might be helpful to mention that summaries must be Accurate, Brief, and Comprehensive. The summary should represent what the original text says (you can give your opinion later). To cue the reader that you are summarizing another person’s views, you will likely use signal words such as: according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, argues… (5 min.)

3. Ask them to spend a few minutes writing a list of what they would include in a summary of the article. (5-10 min.)

4. Ask students to read the five sample summaries below and determine which is best. (5-10 min.)
   a. Summary 1: The paper is not a real report on the proceedings of a conference and there is not enough information about CAPE-V or its development. It is not accurate and is too brief.
   b. Summary 2: The writer focused primarily on one paragraph of the article. While it is a fair summary of that paragraph it is not comprehensive.
   c. Summary 3: This summary is not brief and contains opinion.
   d. Summary 4: This summary is accurate, brief, and comprehensive.
**Summarizing a Source**

*When summarizing an article it is important to be:*

- **Accurate**
- **Brief**
- **Comprehensive**

*Your summary should isolate the most important points and should represent what the actual text says. Often signal words such as according to, claims, declares, holds, believes, and argues are important clues to the reader that you are summarizing someone else’s work.*

**Part 1. Summarizing an Article**

*Read “Consensus Auditory-Perceptual Evaluation of Voice: Development of a Standardized Clinical Protocol” (Kempster et al., 2009) and then write your own summary below. It may be helpful to begin with a list of the most important points.*

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Part 2. Choosing the Best Summary

Now that you have written your own summary read the summaries below and identify the best one. What are some of the problems with the other summaries? Now that you have seen some example summaries, return to your own work and revise it.

1. This paper is a report of the proceedings of a conference on voice disorders. At the conference, participants discussed the possibility of creating a system to evaluate speech disorders. They created the CAPE-V form.

2. The CAPE-V protocol is used as a standardized way to record and evaluate auditory-perceptual judgments of voice quality. Lawrence Feth’s work was instrumental in developing this protocol. Feth primarily focused his research on the anatomy of the ear as well as how pitch and loudness of a sound are perceived by listeners. He also reviewed research done by Zwicker et al. on how the timbre or quality of a sound is perceived. This is a complex and difficult area of research because sound quality is difficult to quantify.

3. The work of Kempster et al. (2009) focuses on the development of the Consensus Auditory-Perceptual Evaluation of Voice (CAPE-V) protocol. CAPE-V was developed following a conference on voice quality measurement. Many specialists in the field of speech science worked on the development of this protocol. At the conference, Feth reviewed the anatomy of the ear as well as how pitch, loudness, and sound quality are perceived by listeners. Gescheider and Marks presented data on the bases of perceptual scaling and measurement. Many other scholars reviewed the auditory-perceptual scales used internationally. All attendees at the consensus conference agreed that while there was no one best way to measure vocal quality, a standardized way to record judgments of voice quality was needed. In response to this need, CAPE-V was created. When CAPE-V is employed in a clinical context, the patient must complete several tasks. The patient must: 1. Sustain several vowel sounds, 2. Read several sentences, 3. Answer a question about his or her voice problem. These tasks can help the clinician to identify the voice problem. I believe that the CAPE-V system will revolutionize the way that clinicians evaluate voice disorders. The lack of standardization has been a major problem in the field of speech sciences and it is essential that all clinicians begin to use CAPE-V.

4. Following a consensus conference on perceptual voice quality measurement, the authors of this study developed the Consensus Auditory-Perceptual Evaluation of Voice protocol. Currently a number of different protocols are employed nationally and internationally to measure voice quality, and conference attendees agreed that while there is no ideal way to evaluate voice quality, a standardized system is warranted. CAPE-V employs a number of measures of voice quality that take into account the factors that effect psycho-physical measurement and perception. CAPE-V will allow clinicians to evaluate voice quality in a consistent and standardized way.
PEER THESIS WORKSHOP

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________

Author of Thesis Statement: _____________________________________________

Working Thesis Statement: ______________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Is the argument clear?

Suggestions: ___________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Is the argument specific or is it overly general?

Suggestions: ___________________________________________________________

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Is the argument debatable or is it self-evident?

What would be an opposing argument?

__________________________________________________________

So what? (Is this argument interesting or original? What are some of its implications?)

__________________________________________________________

Suggestions: __________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Is it possible to support or prove this argument? Why or why not?

__________________________________________________________

Suggestions: __________________________________________________________