

# Getting Started with Team-Based Learning

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## What is Team-Based Learning?

Team-based learning is an active learning strategy that uses the following important ideas:

- Students are required to prepare ahead of class, and are held accountable for doing so.
- All in-class work is in groups, which do not change throughout the semester.
- Peer-evaluation ensures that student's grades are directly related to their level of group participation.
- The class is able to determine (to an extent) the blend between team and individual components in determining their final grade.

## Setting the stage on the first day

Students are generally unfamiliar with team-based learning. It's important to set the stage on the first day of class.

- Explain why the course is structured differently from what students may find typical.
- Focus on the goals of a college education, and how the course structure supports those goals.
- Reference the need for personal accountability in earning the desired grade.
- Give students time with their teams.
- Provide plenty of detail, as the grading structure tends to be complicated.

## Assigning Teams

The instructor should take care in how teams are assigned.

- An initial survey of students is helpful in creating teams.
- Keep teams diverse.
- Spread out ability/confidence levels.
- Consider splitting up groups of known friends.

## Getting Students to Prepare for Class

- Readings are posted well in advance.
- Students are given the expectation that the work is to be completed before class.
- The preparation can be more than just a textbook.
- Videos, instructor created or otherwise, are helpful.
- Accountability is pushed to the students, and checked via in-class assessments.
- Feedback should be immediate when a student arrives unprepared.

## Individual and Team Readiness Assessments

- Multiple choice assessments, given following each reading/preparation assignments.
- The quizzes are given to the students as individuals (iRAT), then the same quiz is given to the team (tRAT).
- Grade the iRAT while the team is completing the tRAT.
- Zipgrade helps with quickly scoring the iRAT, while keeping the solutions a secret until after the tRAT is finished.
- Scratch off sheets for the tRAT give immediate feedback.

## How is grading handled?

Teams are given the choices for determining grades. They then discuss and vote as a team and elect one individual to represent their team in a discussion to determine how the class wants to be graded. One example of choices are as follows:

- A. Individual 20%; Team Performance 60%; Peer Evaluation 20%
- B. Individual 25%; Team Performance 65%; Peer Evaluation 10%
- C. Individual 30%; Team Performance 65%; Peer Evaluation 5%
- D. Individual 30%; Team Performance 60%; Peer Evaluation 10%

## In-class team activities

Team activities occur nearly every day. Students work with the same teams during the course of the term.

The 4 S's for team activities:

- 1 Same problem
- 2 Significant problem
- 3 Specific choice
- 4 Simultaneously report

## Peer Evaluations

Part of what makes TBL unique is that students are accountable to their instructors **and** their peers. While the specifics of peer evaluations vary by instructor, their inclusion is an essential part of TBL. Some principles regarding peer evaluation:

- Guidance and instruction regarding providing constructive feedback should be given to students.
- A midterm peer review allows students a chance to practice giving feedback, and allows time for students to improve their peer evaluation grades.

## Benefits of the method

- Understanding the course content - most importantly, this can be done without boring lectures. Students are given the readings and the RATs assess student understanding (first, individually and then with their team).
- Applying the course content to problem solving, decision making, etc. - more application! Students are given various activities that apply course content. These activities are worked on and completed in class.
- Developing the skills for working effectively on a team - crucial skills to prepare our students for careers after college.
- Valuing the team approach to solving complex intellectual tasks.
- Restoring the joy of teaching!

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