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**Cooperative learning FAQ’s**

1. **How can CL work when students are accustomed to teacher-centred classrooms and only want to hear teacher talk, because they don't believe they can learn from their peers?**
2. **Discuss CL with students and encourage them to consider the pros and cons of CL, and then decide for themselves what's good for them.**
3. **Urge the class to calculate how many minutes a month the typical student gets to talk when the traditional teacher-fronted approach is used. This will be a very small amount. Then, they can calculate how much more student talk there is when CL is used. Isn't all that extra opportunity to be active worth the possible problems?**
4. **Mention the large amount of research that supports the use of CL.**
5. **Let students know how we have learned from them and our past students. This encourages them to believe they can learn from one another.**
6. **Give your own examples of learning from peers and ask students for their examples.**
7. **Show videos of CL lessons or have students observe a CL lesson to let them see how it works.**
8. **Explain that CL will not be the only way we teach - sometime students will hear lots of teacher talk. However, CL will be used a significant amount of time, not just an hour a week for variety.**
9. **Students need time to know each other and an opportunity to respect the use of CL.**
10. **Choose familiar/favorite topics initially so students will feel more comfortable.**
11. **Gradual exposure and involvement eases the transition from familiar teacher-centered techniques to the more student-centered CL.**
12. **While students are in their cooperative groups, circulate among them – instead of staying back at the desk marking papers - available to help groups that get stuck. This shows we aren’t abandoning them.**
13. **My students aren’t very well behaved to begin with. If I put them in groups, I hate to imagine the chaos that will result.**
14. **Perhaps, well-organized group activities, using ideas from CL, may actually lessen discipline problems.**
15. **One reason for misbehavior stems from students seeking power. CL gives them more power.**
16. **Giving students more power may increase their feeling of ownership. Thus, they may be more likely to see misbehavior as not just our problem but their problem as well. Peer support for pro-learning behaviors can be more powerful than teacher support.**
17. **Because students may not be accustomed to having the power and responsibility that CL gives them, they may initially misuse their power and avoid taking responsibility. Patience and persistence may be necessary to overcome this initial reluctance.**
18. **Students may respond to the new-found power that groups offer by saying, “That’s the teacher’s job. Why don’t our lazy teachers want to do their job?” This presents a golden opportunity to discuss with students what exactly the teachers’ job is and what their job is.**
19. **Talking out-of-turn represents a common misbehavior. CL greatly increases the amount of time students can talk, but this talk is (usually) on task. CL meets students need to talk and does so in a way that promotes learning.**
20. **CL adds a social dimension to learning, a dimension lacking in many teacher-fronted classrooms, where talking except when called on is seen as off-task behavior. With CL, students enjoy a social element as part of their learning, not as a disruption to learning.**
21. **Students can develop their own rules for how to behave during group activities**
22. **As William Glasser (1986) put it focusing on discipline ignores the real problem. Students will never behave well if we attempt to make them do something they don’t enjoy or find too difficult. Research suggests that CL makes school more enjoyable for students, and peer support helps students succeed.**
23. **Students need to understand why group activities are being used. It might seem like they are having a break when groups are used. In reality, groups make them work harder.**
24. **Tasks that are too difficult are a common cause of misbehavior. Yes, when students work in CL groups they can achieve more than if they were working alone. But, CL is not magic.**
25. **As in any type of teaching, when students are off-task, we need to do what Alfie Kohn (1996) proposes, ask ourselves, “What’s the task?” This includes the difficulty level and also the interest level.**
26. **CL groups can provide pupils the support they need to feel comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn. People enjoy places where they feel competent and connected. CL ups the chance students will feel this way.**
27. **Groups are too noisy**

**1. Be prepared to tolerate a bit more noise as the price to pay for having so many students being active. As Robert Slavin writes, “A cooperative learning classroom should sound like a beehive, not a sports event” (Slavin, 1995, p. 142).**

**2. Some colleagues may complain about the sound of our students talking in their groups. Yet, some of these same colleagues can be clearly heard the adjoining classrooms as they lecture on and on to their students.**

**2. Help students develop two different voices. One is used in groups. This is a 15-centimeter or 6-inch voice. In other words, a voice that can only be heard a short distance away. The other voice is a class-size voice that can be heard when one student is speaking to the entire class.**

**3. When our students sit close together, they do not need to speak as loudly to be heard. 15-centimeter voices are sufficient when students are sitting eye-to-eye, knee-to-knee.**

**4. Along the same lines, when we keep groups small, students can speak quietly and still be heard by their groupmates, provided they are sitting close together. Thus, a pair is a good size for a quiet group.**

**5. Ask groups to have a Noise Monitor, also known as Sound Hound or Hush Hush Captain (Chapter 6). Here are some ideas for successful use of noise monitors.**

**a. Students need to learn how to be noise monitors. First, they need to understand why a low noise level is usually appropriate. Some reasons are: to not disturb other groups or other classes, to not get sore throats, and to appear to be calm, reasonable, and polite.**

**b. Next, students need to consider some of the different ways the skill of asking others to talk more quietly can look and sound. While this may differ from one culture to another, asking people to lower their volume could look like putting one's forefinger in front of one's lips and saying "shhhh" or moving one's hand downward with the palm facing the floor in a repeated manner.**

**c. As to what asking for lower volume sounds like, students can quietly use certain phrases or gambits, such as "Please speak more softly" and "Could you be quieter, please".**

**d. To practice these gestures and gambits, students can do role plays in their groups in which each takes a turn to be a noisy student and each takes a turn to be the noise monitor.**

**e. Groups can follow up on this by discussing in their groups how well they did on maintaining a proper noise level. For instance, they can each talk (in quiet voices, of course) about whether they ever spoke too loud, and, if so, what caused this and how it can be remedied the next time.**

**f. The class can persist in making the noise level a focus as long as it seems necessary and raising the matter if the problem reappears after initial improvement.**

**6. Students may be noisy and disruptive because they do not know what to do or because they find the task too difficult. We need to help students have the necessary knowledge and skills to do it, or know how to problem solve if they don't.**

**7. Many teachers have an attention signal they use when they want the class to stop talking and give their attention to the teacher. We can use another signal that says, "Please continue discussing, but do more quietly". Here are two examples we have learned from colleagues.**

**a. Raise your hand with an open hand, it means, "Stop talking - attention to teacher," and when you raise your hand with a closed fist, it means, "Continue talking but turn down the volume".**

**b. Put a check mark on the board as the signal for students to give their attention to the teacher. An arrow facing downward is the signal for lower volume.**

**9. Of course, the quietest way for our students to share ideas is via the written word, either on paper or on a computer screen. Many CL techniques, such as Circle of Writers (Chapter 4) involving writing in at least part of the technique.**

**10. When our students communicate with groupmates via computer, this is also very quiet.**

**11. Tell students that the discussions in their groups should be their secret, for instance, when they do Question-and-Answer Pairs (Chapter 7). They can share their secrets with others later on.**

1. ***Some groups are not carrying out the task/activity properly.***
2. **Students should understand the objectives of the lesson and how a particular task fits into the overall plan for the course.**
3. **Involve students in formulating the instructions.**
4. **Students also need to know how their work will be evaluated and what the criteria are.**
5. **Think through instructions from the students' perspective.**
6. **Before students begin the activity, ask a member of the class to repeat the procedure to the whole class and/or ask a member of each group to repeat it to their group mates, for example, "Fred, you're B in your group, right? What is going to happen after you finish interviewing Rosa who is A?**
7. **Let students read the instructions aloud, either as a class or in their groups.**
8. **Give students a chance to ask questions, clarify doubts, and suggest modification to the instructions.**
9. **Wait until we have students’ attention before giving instructions.**
10. **Put the instructions on the board, a piece of poster paper, OHT, data projector, or a handout.**
11. **All our students should be able to see us, any written directions or graphics, or any students involved in explaining the directions.**
12. **When we use the same CL technique many times, our students become familiar with it, thus reducing the need for detailed instructions. This familiarization occurs faster when our colleagues use the same CL techniques.**
13. **It may be that for some of our students, more complicated techniques can only be understood after experiencing them once.**
14. **When first using a new CL technique, especially one that may be a bit complicated, use content that is not too difficult.**
15. **Students should understand not to begin a task until the instructions - or at least the appropriate part - are complete.**
16. **Give instructions in stages, so students have less to remember.**
17. **Demonstrate the technique using students as our groupmate, or ask a group of students to demonstrate for the rest of the class.**
18. **Groups can have a facilitator or other role that is responsible for their group working efficiently (Chapter 6).**
19. **Instead of us giving directions, students can just begin the task. After a given amount of time, stop the class and ask groups how they are going about the task. Groups can learn from each other about how to approach the task.**
20. **Tolerate different procedures, as long as everyone in the group is learning.**
21. **Monitor groups to see how they are conducting the activity. Keep an eye on groups that experience shows often have difficulties. If some groups are confused, stop the class to re-explain.**
22. **Stop the class to highlight one group that is working together particularly well.**
23. **Just as with understanding content, give students a chance to figure things procedures for themselves before intervening.**

# Groups finish at different times

1. **Check to see that they have indeed really done the task.**
2. **Two groups that have finished early can compare results with each other.**
3. **Groups can talk about how they worked together on the task. This might provide useful information that can be shared with groups that are having difficulty.**
4. **If a group really has finished the task, give them a sponge activity or ask them to develop their own. Sponge activities soak up extra time in useful ways. A sponge activity could be some kind of enrichment activity on the same theme as the lesson.**
5. **The class could have a regular sponge activity, such as reading a book.**
6. **Groups that finish ahead of others can help groups that are having more difficulty with the task.**
7. **Some activities are best stopped a bit before everyone has finished.**
8. **Set time limits to encourage groups to stay on task. These time limits should be flexible. If groups are working together well but need some more time, extra time can be given.**
9. **How can I find the vast amount of preparation time necessary to set up structured CL activities?**
10. **More and more materials are being published which incorporate CL. Look for these and for CL ideas in teachers guides.**
11. **Internet sites contain ready-made CL lesson plans. Ask around and surf for ones that you like.**
12. **Use non-CL activities from textbooks by just changing the directions to make them cooperative group activities.**
13. **Share materials and lesson plans with colleagues.**
14. **Like with most other things, the more we do CL, the better and faster we get at it. Plus, over the years, we accumulate lots of materials. We can recycle these.**
15. **With time and guidance, students too get better at doing CL and can work together more independently. Involve them in some of the preparation.**
16. **CL sometimes reduces our workload in two ways: less products because there is sometimes only one handout per group rather than one per student; and easier correcting because peers can help eliminate some problems before they get to us, and peers can give some positive feedback as well.**
17. **How can CL be used with large classes?**
18. **Large classes make it even more important for us to use CL, because in a teacher-fronted mode, the larger the class, the less chance each student has to participate.**
19. **Basically CL is used the same way in large classes as in small ones. We just have more groups.**
20. **Work with students to establish routines early in the year, so that group procedures, such as moving in and out of groups can happen quickly and quietly.**
21. **Do more preparation to choreograph and rehearse movements in groups. Otherwise chaos may result. Also, make instructions very clear because we cannot get around to every group.**
22. **Similarly, groups in large classes need to learn to be more independent because, as stated earlier, we have less time to supervise each group. We need to find ways to help students be more independent, not necessarily a bad thing, but definitely a challenge. (See Chapter 8 on Group Autonomy.)**
23. **Another result of the fact that large classes make it more difficult for us to monitor groups, we may want to spend more time helping students develop collaborative skills (Chapter 7) and more effort having students monitor their own groups, e.g., appointing pupils to be task-master in each group.**
24. **Use groups to help with such matters as attendance, catching up absent or newly admitted students, and checking homework. Groups also provide a support network, so that students do not feel lost in a large class.**
25. **Rather than each group coming to the front of the class to do a presentation, which can take forever in a large class, we can CL techniques in one group shares with another. In this way, presentations take much less time and we promote Simultaneous Interaction (Chapter 5).**
26. **Strive to reduce the feeling among teachers and students that unless the teacher sees the group present their work, the activity in incomplete. After all, teachers have other means of checking students' understanding, and teachers aren't the only source of verification. Use TTT (Chapter 1).**
27. **Large class size in terms of students does not always go with large class size in terms of the dimensions of the classroom. To cope in these cramped conditions, we can:**
28. **Encourage students to sit close together.**
29. **Keep group size small, four or less.**
30. **Use a uniform arrangement for all groups.**
31. **Make sure there is space for us to walk around the room and monitor all the groups.**
32. **Students don’t seem to participate much in CL activities**
33. **Make sure what happens in the CL part of the lesson is perceived by students as clearly aligned with their goals, e.g., doing well on exams. All parts of a course need to fit together.**
34. **Design the assessment instruments first, then design the CL activities. This will help us make clear to students how the CL activities fit with assessment.**
35. **Use CL activities that have a game-like quality, such as Teams-Games-Tournament (Slavin, 1995) or Two Facts, One fiction (Chapter 1).**
36. **Try CL activities that use a range of abilities, such as musical/rhythmic and bodily/kinaesthetic (Chapter 6).**
37. **Encourage enthusiasm for cooperation by talking about how you benefit from cooperation, with fellow teachers and with others.**

# i.One or two students want to work alone

* + - 1. **Many group activities combine individual and group work. For instance, when a group does a project, students often research, write, and present individually. Point out to students the individual aspects of group activities.**
      2. **Perhaps the student wants to work alone because of past bad experiences with groups. Find out about this and explain how CL addresses these concerns, because CL isn’t the same as just throwing students into groups.**
      3. **Assessment may be one reason that some students want to avoid groups (Chapter 9). For instance, the entire group receives the same grade. If we use this type of assessment, we should carefully explain why, and perhaps we should adjust matters if one group member really leaves the group in a lurch.**
      4. **Increase the difficulty, complexity, or length of a task. This helps students see that they need group mates to succeed.**
      5. **Remind students of the benefits of learning how to collaborate with others.**
      6. **Use more team- and class building activities to create more of a community feeling within the class.**
      7. **If we decide to let one or two students work alone, suggest some conditions:**
         1. **Anyone working alone must do the same work as groups**
         2. **After working alone for a certain period of time, the student should give groups another try**
         3. **The student will plan what they will do to make their subsequent entry into a group successful**

***j.Some students dominate the group while other seldom participate***

1. **Assign dominant students to observe group interaction.**
2. **Explain why everyone should participate: we can improve our ideas by trying to explain them to others; when others hear what we say, they can learn from us and also help us learn; the group benefits from getting everyone’s ideas.**
3. **Talk to low-participation students alone or use dialogues journals as ways to find out why they do not participate more. Perhaps it is due to family problems, a speech impediment, or adjustment to working in groups.**
4. **Use Talking Chips and Web of Talk (Chapter 6) or limit each person to 20 seconds per turn. Hopefully, after doing this a few times, awareness will be raised, and students will not need these artificial constraints.**
5. **Each time a group member speaks, one member of each group records who spoke. They can also record to whom they spoke, whether to all members, to only one member, etc.**
6. **Assign roles to uninvolved students. Start with roles that match their strengths (Chapter 6).**
7. **Similarly, talk to students who dominate their groups. Ask them why they do not encourage others to participate.**
8. **Perhaps some students don’t participate much because they find the tasks too difficult.**
9. **Reduce group size (Chapter 2). The fewer members there are, the more likely that all will participate. In this regard, pairs are ideal. Pairs also make groups easier to manage for students.**
10. **Place non-participating in a group with at least one student who seems very good at helping and encouraging others. Show your appreciation to such students.**
11. **Allow planning time so students can prepare what they are going to say. One way to do this is by using activities such as Write-Pair-Switch (Chapter 3) that provide time for students to write out their ideas first before being asked to speak.**
12. **In many CL activities each group member has unique information, e.g., Jigsaw (Chapter 3). The group cannot succeed unless each member shares their information.**
13. **Other CL activities provide each member a turn to speak, e.g., Circle of Speakers and Circle of Writers (Chapter 4)**
14. **Give less talkative members a role which calls for talking, e.g., facilitator, and give more talkative members a role which calls for listening, e.g., recorder (Chapter 6).**
15. **One group member can take the role of Checker (Chapter 6). The Checker’s job is to be sure that all group members can tell about and explain their group’s work.**
16. **Teach the collaborative skills of turn taking and encouraging others to participate (Chapter 7).**
17. **Provide scripts to students. These provide some or all of the words they will need to use in particular situations. For example, a card with set phrases lists the opening words students can use for a particular purpose, e.g., praising others or asking for reasons.**
18. **Create groups of all talkative and all less talkative members.**
19. **Some students who aren’t talkative may be more willing to write, draw, sing, mime, or participate in other ways. Tasks that call for a wide variety of intelligences help all group members have a chance to shine.**
20. **Pay attention to the seating arrangements. Arranging chairs symmetrically encourages everyone to participate (Chapter 1).**
21. **Because of students’ different backgrounds, in any particular activity, some students will be likely to participate more. That’s okay. What’s not okay is if it is always the same students who are participating more.**

**k.Weak members bring groups down**

1. **Urge weak students to ask for explanations and urge their fellow group members to provide explanations not just answers. Research by Webb (1989) suggests that if groupmates provide each other with answers but not explanations neither party learns. Just passing someone the answer helps neither the recipient nor the giver (Chapter 5).**

1. **Pre-teach weaker students, e.g., by asking them to come in after class, upcoming course content so that they have information other students may not have and, thus, may be in the position of giving, rather than always, help.**
2. **Use different level materials for different members of the group. For instance, this can be done in TGT (Slavin, 1995) and in Jigsaw (Coelho, Winer, & Winn-Bell Olsen, 1989).**
3. **Explain to students the benefits of helping others.**

**5. Teach the collaborative skill of asking for explanations. Quote this Malay proverb: If you are reluctant to ask the way, you will be lost.**

1. **Use multiple ability tasks (Chapter 6), because these give all students a chance to be the star of the group.**
2. **Remember that when we use CL, we have more time to spend with students who are having problems, because with CL other students are, hopefully, engaged in learning in their groups.**
3. **Find ways to motivate students to help weaker members and for weaker members to try hard to improve.**
4. **CL increases motivation because it is no longer just the teacher trying to motivate students, but their peers are motivators as well. Thus, weaker students are likely to try harder.**
5. **Richard Felder <http://www2.ncsu.edu/effective\_teaching/>gives this advice to students complaining about being slowed down by having to explain material:**

**If you ask any professor, "When did you really learn thermodynamics (or structural analysis or medieval history)?" the answer will almost always be "When I had to teach it. "Suppose you are trying to explain something, and your partner doesn't get it. You may try to explain it in a different way, and then think of an example, and then perhaps find an analogy to something familiar. After a few minutes of this your partner may still not get it, but you sure will. In our experience, most students bright enough to complain about being held back by their classmates are also bright enough to recognize the truth of the last argument. We also point out that most students will eventually have jobs that require them to work in teams, and that learning how to do so is an important part of their professional training.**

1. **Felder continues, “Perhaps the most effective selling point (unfortunately) involves grades. Many research studies have demonstrated that students who learn cooperatively get higher grades than students who try to learn the same material individually.”**

**l.Students give each other the wrong information, so that group activities become the blind leading the blind**

1. **See the responses above to the problem of weak students. Many of those responses apply here as well.**
2. **Walk around while students are working in their groups. This will allow you to find misunderstandings that exist.**
3. **If you notice that a few groups have the same misunderstanding, you might want to stop the group activity and do some whole-class teaching.**
4. **Encourage groups that understand to help those who do not.**
5. **When you use a CL technique such as Jigsaw (Chapter 3) in which students teach each other, before they start teaching peers, ask students to answer some questions or do drafts of their teaching presentation. Look at these to see if students are ready to teach their groupmates.**

**Remember that understanding is usually not an all-or-nothing process. Instead,**

1. **understanding comes step-by-step, as we gradually arrive at a fuller grasp of a concept.**
2. **When we teach via a teacher-fronted mode, students also have misunderstandings. The advantage of groups is that during the group interaction, these understandings are made public, allowing teachers and group mates to address them.**

**m.Administrators often demand that we cover the syllabus and finish the textbook. When using CL doesn't it take more time to cover the same amount of material compared to when a teacher-fronted mode is used?**

1. **CL may be slower for us at first because we teachers need to learn how to use it and need to spend time incorporating it into their lessons, and students need time to learn to collaborate and become familiar with various CL techniques. However, CL is quicker and more efficient later.**
2. **Active learning strategies, such as CL, are much better than lecture alone for improving long-term retention, changing attitudes, improving problem-solving skills, developing collaborative skills. Thus, the long-term gain is worth the initial effort and time.**
3. **Our syllabus should be rethought to include objectives for lifelong learning such as "learning to work with others". In that way, doing CL would, even more, be seen as covering the syllabus.**
4. **With CL we don't need as much repetition of points and examples of the points in order to provide reinforcement, because the reinforcement comes in the group activities.**
5. **CL is more efficient because students can read the book or the lecture notes themselves. Why waste class time on that? What is more difficult for students to do in class is to take part in structured activities, with teacher support. They can't easily do that alone.**
6. **Individualized activities, can be done outside of class, e.g., at a self-access centre or on the computer. In that way, we have more class time for activities which promote interaction, such as CL activities.**
7. **In the traditional classroom, students learn that they don't have to read the assigned materials; the teacher will cover all the important stuff anyway. With CL, we can spend class time on trouble spots and going beyond the information given, e.g., application. Plus, students face peer pressure to be prepared to help the group.**
8. **CL apparently takes more time, but in the long run we can see how things speed up, as students become more successful and more enthusiastic about learning.**

**n.A few other teachers I know are using CL. How can we help each other?**

1. **Form a group of teachers who work together to implement CL.**
2. **Group members can teach the same collaborative skill to their students.**
3. **Plan lessons together. Even if you don’t teach the same course, you can still give each other feedback.**
4. **Each try out the same CL technique in our classes and report back on how it worked and on any adaptations that you developed.**
5. **If you teach different subject areas, work together to plan cross-curricular units. For example, a mathematics teacher and a language arts teacher can collaborate to develop cross-curricular project ideas.**
6. **If possible, teach together during the same period, i.e., two teachers in the same class at the same time. This won’t be easy to arrange, but it’s great to do!**
7. **Read the same book or article related to CL and discuss it.**
8. **Observe each other’s classes and provide feedback.**
   1. **Audio- or videotape the lesson**
   2. **Highlight by the teacher being observed of what aspects of the class the observer(s) should watch out for.**
   3. **Hold a debriefing session afterwards to compare notes.**
9. **Try to meet regularly to provide each other with support, insight, and inspiration.**
10. **Remember Positive Interdependence (Chapter 3), Individual Accountability (Chapter 4), and Equal Participation (Chapter 6) in your teacher group.**
11. **Don’t forget to include teachers aides, parent volunteers, and others in your collaboration.**

***o.Students argue with one another*.**

**1. Help students see the benefits of disagreement.**

**2. Use the CL technique “Cooperative controversy” (Johnson and Johnson, 1998) to provide a forum for disagreeing in an agreeable way.**

1. **Teach the collaborative skill of polite disagreement (Chapter 7).**
2. **Ask students to paraphrase each other using Tell/Rephrase (Chapter 7). Feeling understood by another person and really trying to understand them often lessens arguments.**
3. **Assign one student the role of facilitator (Chapter 6).**
4. **Join with students in establishing rules for conduct in groups (Chapter 1).**
5. **Video- or audio-tape students as an aid to their understanding of their interaction.**
6. **Emphasize cooperation. It can be a theme, i.e., something to teach about, not just a way of teaching.**
7. **Speak or write individually to students who continue to argue.**

**p.Some of my students don’t get along with group mates**

1. **Establish guidelines and rules for how to work together (Chapter 1). Students can have a voice in establishing these.**
2. **Make clear your strong repugnance toward impolite treatment of groupmates, such as put-downs or refusing to offer assistance (Chapter 1).**
3. **Students may follow the teacher's lead. If we show a high level of respect for all, in time most students will respond.**
4. **Point out that friction occurs within groups in any academic or work setting. Turn a negative into a plus by pointing out students’ opportunity to learn to work with a wide variety of people.**
5. **Stress that in life we seldom get to choose whether to work alone or with others, or with whom we must collaborate. For example, we teachers don't get the choose our colleagues.**
6. **Many high status jobs involve working with others, e.g., doctors in operating rooms need to collaborate with a whole team of medical personnel and also to communicate with patients and their families. CL provides students a chance to practice this collaboration.**
7. **When students come to complain about some group member dominating or never showing up or about their having to carry most of the load themselves, begin by welcoming them to the real world. Point out that they will probably spend a good part of their professional careers working with others, some of whom they won't care for, and suggest that this is a good time to start learning how to do it.**
8. **Emphasize the use of skills necessary to collaborate with others (Chapter 7). For example, we can focus on turn taking by putting a pencil in the middle of the group, and only the person holding the pencil can talk. Then, everyone else must take a turn before that person can talk again.**
9. **Do class building and teambuilding activities (Chapters 1 and 2). One such activity is for students to learn the names of each of their group- or classmates, plus perhaps one other piece of information, such as a hobby. Later, they take a quiz to check their memory. To prepare for the quiz, students try to use their group- and classmates’ names as much as possible.**
10. **Sometimes students find it easier to complain to you than to discuss problem situations frankly with one another. Let them try to work out their own problems.**
11. **Set aside time for groups to discuss how well they are functioning and to think of ways to function more effectively in the future.**
12. **Invite disgruntled groups to make an appointment to discuss their difficulties with you.**
13. **Avoid separating student when they don't get along. Emphasize that you will not separate them until they have learned to get along. If we separate groups that do not get along, we deprive them of the opportunity to learn how to overcome initial difficulties in a group.**
14. **Think of ways to increase the level of positive interdependence in the groups (Chapter 3). For instance, give each group member different information and a task that requires they share information to succeed, as in Jigsaw (Resource Positive Interdependence).**
15. **Strengthen celebration/reward interdependence (Chapter 3). For instance, determine what rewards really matter to students and offer those.**
16. **When students each have a role to play in the group, they work together better. Possible roles include facilitator, recorder, timekeeper, checker, noise monitor, and spokesperson (Chapter 6).**
17. **Start with random grouping at first to emphasize that it is just the luck of the draw who ends up in which group. Ways to randomize include:**

**a. Counting off by numbers. The formula for knowing which number to count to is to divide the number of students in the class by the number of students you want per group. Thus, if there are 40 students and you want groups of 4, 40 divided by 4 is 10; so, students count to 10. For variety you can count in different languages.**

**b. Students can also "word off" (Johnson & Johnson, 1988). We write words on the board, e.g., the names of famous scientists. The number of scientists equals the number of groups you want, just as in the formula in *a.* above.**

**c. Each student in the class can be given a card. Again, the number of different cards matches the number of groups the we want to establish. Students find members with the same card and sit together to form a group. For instance, if animals appear on the cards, students can find their partners by imitating the sound that animal makes.**

1. **Invite students to group themselves according to such criteria as birthday months, favorite colors, preferred food, or favorite movie. This may help them overcome whatever makes them hesitant to work with one another.**
2. **Provide teambuilding activities that help students learn about each other, e.g., food exhibits, artifacts, art, and music (Chapter 2).**
3. **Allow students the option of changing group membership**
4. **Let groups the option of firing noncooperative members after giving them at**

**least two warnings.**

1. **Let individuals carrying most of the workload the option of joining another group after giving their noncooperative teammates at least two warnings.**
2. **These options will rarely be exercised, but having the options available may encourage groups to find ways of working things out before it comes to that. (Richard Felder** [**http://www2.ncsu.edu/effective\_teaching/**](http://www2.ncsu.edu/effective_teaching/)**)**

**q.Students complain about using the same CL technique or even using CL again and again.**

**1. Students also listen to teachers again and again, day in and day out. Isn't that potentially boring also.**

**2. The keys to making groups interesting are the same for making any kind of school activity interesting:**

**a. engaging topics**

**b. challenging but doable tasks for which students have the necessary preparation to succeed**

**c. tasks which students see as relevant to their needs**

**d. the potential to gain a feeling of satisfaction from work done well**

**3. Using the same CL technique many times has pluses:**

**a. students get good at using the technique and feel comfortable with it.**

**b. just like with learning a new dance, once we are comfortable with the steps, we can focus more on other things, e.g., adding a twist.**

**c. once students master a CL technique they can also think about whether they and their groupmates are using appropriate collaborative skills, e.g., asking for reasons**

**d. students can also spend a little time discussing how their group can work together more effectively in the future (Chapter 7).**

**4. There are many variations on CL techniques. Students can come up with their own or we can suggest possibilities.**

#### r.How Are CL Lessons Different from Teacher-Fronted Lessons

**In many ways, the lessons are the same. This should be no surprise because CL lessons often include teacher-fronted instruction. Features common to the two types of lessons are in normal font below, with the unique aspects of CL lessons in italics.**

1. **Anticipatory Set – Motivating student interest in the lesson and helping students assess what they already know about the topic. *Peer motivation and assessment are also involved.***
2. **Understanding the Objectives – Helping students see (and possibly involving them in deciding) what they should gain from the lesson and how the lesson forms part of course objectives and beyond. *Groupmates checking that they all understand the objectives. Appreciating that everyone in the group needs to learn and help other learn. Besides the normal objectives, CL lessons also include objectives related to how to improve collaborative skills and group functioning* (Chapter 7).**
3. **Input and Modeling – Providing information and skills that will help students attain the lesson objectives, and modeling the use of this information and these skills. *In CL groups, peers help with the input and modeling. Also, discovery methods can be used in which students gain knowledge inductively and test out skills.***
4. **Practice – Students have opportunities to practice with the information and skills. *This practice can come in the form of teacher-led recitation or individual work, but peers can also be help one another practice, either by working together or by checking each other’s individual work.***
5. **Assessment – Monitoring to see if the objectives have been met. *Instead of the teacher being the only one doing assessment, peers can participate as well.***
6. **Closure – Thinking back about what was learned and how it was learned. Plus, thinking forward to how the learning can be applied and what should be learned next. *Many CL techniques are applicable here, e.g., Circle of Interviewers. Also, group functioning will be one of the topics on which students reflect.***

**s.It takes a long time for me to get students' attention when they are working in groups**

**1. Time we spend waiting for students’ attention is time lost. Use the RSPA or another signal (Chapter 1).**

1. **Explain why the attention signal is important, i.e., to save time for learning.**
2. **Similarly, time students to see how fast they can get quiet.**
3. **With young children, as an addition to RSPA, we can ask them to point to one of their ears with the hand that is not raised. This reminds them to listen.**
4. **Another way to involve students in the attention signal is that we clap once and students clap twice in response to say that they are ready to listen.**
5. **If our colleagues use the same attention signal, students become accustomed to it more quickly.**
6. **In the computer lab, one thing to add to the attention signal is hands off the mouse and keyboard. In the regular classroom, also ask pupils to put their pens and pencils down.**