

## EXAMPLE: Making group contracts

Norms are very important elements of group dynamics because they not only provide guidelines that indicate how members should behave, but they also help to keep the group unified by providing common beliefs, opinions and behaviour. Writing down and agreeing upon norms in the form of a contract provides a way to clarify and enforce these norms when necessary.

A contract should contain:

1. Those group behaviours which will be expected of all group members, choosing only those behaviours which are crucial to the group's effectiveness.
2. Procedures for resolving impasses in the group. There should be an exact mechanism: will the leader decide? Will it go to a vote? How will ties be decided? Will the dispute be arbitrated by a designated person? Etc.
- 3.

### Sample contract:

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#### Group behaviours expected of each member

##### Temporal

1. All group members will be punctual. Meetings will start five minutes after the agreed start time and everyone should be there and ready by then.
  2. We should turn up to all meetings unless it has been agreed beforehand or unless there are unavoidable events such as illness.
  3. All group members will remain in the meeting until (a) all tasks for that meeting are completed, or (b) there is unanimous adjournment.
  4. Breaks will be decided by unanimous consent, and breaks will not exceed twenty minutes in length
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##### Procedural

1. All group members will come to the meetings prepared:  
(a) reading the assigned material (as much as possible), and  
(b) coming with ideas pertaining to the tasks and decisions to be made.

2. Tasks that group members agree to undertake should be completed to the agreed deadline. If it looks as though there will be a problem meeting a deadline, the person concerned should seek help from other members of the team in time to avoid a delay.
  3. There will be an assimilation period at the end of the session to evaluate group mechanics and ensure that all tasks have been completed adequately.
  4. Each group member has the right to point out whether any of these rules are being broken.
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## Behavioural

1. The group will actively seek a consensus of opinion based on the opinions of every member.
  2. Each member will take turns listening as well as talking, and active listening will be a strategy for all group discussions.
  3. Discriminatory remarks are not acceptable.
  4. Aggressive and dominating behaviour is not acceptable.
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## Roles

1. Roles will be assigned prior to a meeting or, if this is not possible, at the beginning of a meeting.
2. The leader will, at the beginning of a meeting, set sub-goals. These sub-goals will be presented to the group for a consensus of approval. The leader is also responsible for the presentation of the group material to the rest of the class.
3. The secretary is responsible for taking in-session notes and preparing presentation materials from these notes.
4. The timekeeper is responsible for keeping track of the time allotted to each discussion, and keeping the group aware of time remaining. The leader is responsible for deciding what to do when time is running out during a discussion.
5. The devil's advocate will keep his/her mind open to problems, possibilities, and divergent or opposing ideas.

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## Methods for resolving an impasse

**Step 1:** The group members will isolate areas of disagreement, and the group will come to a consensus. If no consensus is reached, proceed to Step 2.

**Step 2:** The leader will decide the relevance or importance of the dispute and may postpone the conflict if its relevance or importance is deemed questionable or minimal.

**Step 3:** The leader will decide the amount of time for discussion or arbitration before calling a vote.

**Step 4:** The leader will call a vote. If the vote is a stalemate, the leader makes a final decision.

## Resources

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- Learning in Teams: a Student Guide by Graham Gibbs.

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/group-work/making-group-contracts>

