

# Using Groups

Courtesy of Hal White and Deb Allen



*Institute for Transforming  
Undergraduate Education*

*University of Delaware*



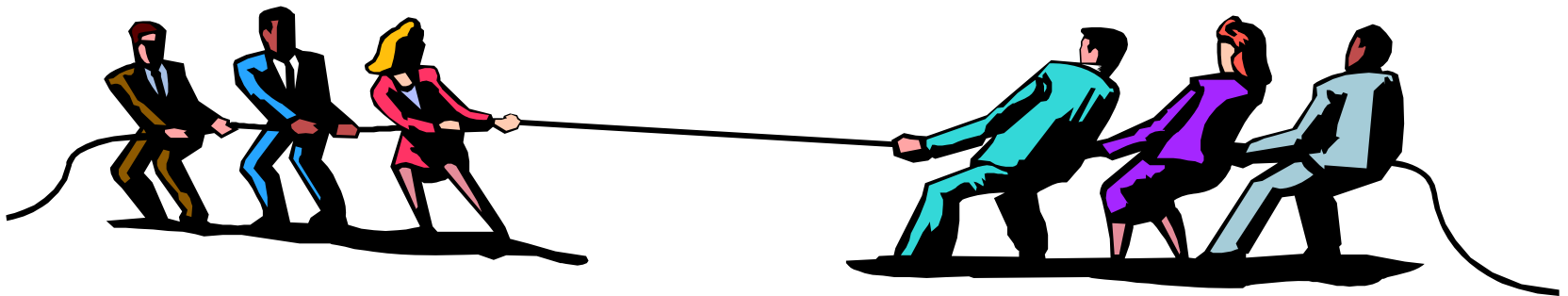


# The Top 5 Ways to Wreck a Group

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List 5 behaviors or actions that can undermine good group function.

*Report out in 5 minutes.*





# Video Clip

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<http://www.udel.edu/pbl/groups-in-action/mpegs/dawn.mpg>

## Questions to Consider:

What if anything is wrong with this group?

What could be done to help this group work better?

Could this situation have been prevented?



# Videotape Credits

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***Author:***

“Dawn’s Eight O’Clock” – Harold White

***Director:***

Nancy King

***Producers:***

Deborah Allen and Harold White

***Student Actors:***

Melissa Reddish, Michelle Lyons, Eric Moskal,  
Crystal Mack, Amanda Simons



# Suggestions for Using Groups

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Set the stage early.

Form heterogeneous groups.

Use permanent groups.

Rotate roles of responsibility.

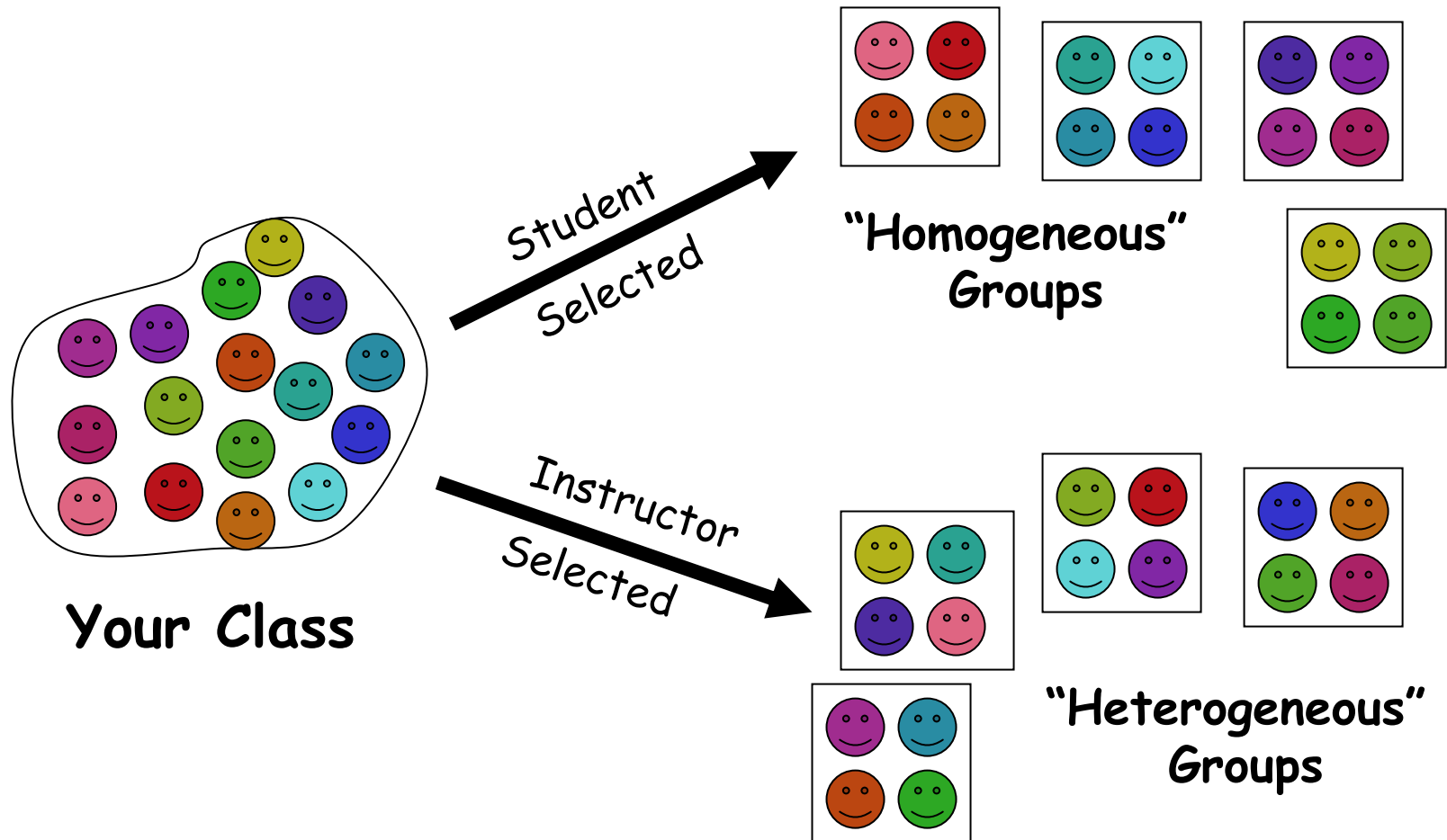
Rely on group-selected ground rules.

Conduct peer evaluations.



# Forming Groups

## Homogeneous vs. Heterogeneous





# What Aspects of Heterogeneity are Important for You?

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Skills?

Age?

Major?

Gender?

Schedule?

Learning Style?

Ethnicity?

Academic Record?

# Factors to Consider When Forming Groups

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Is the size of the group appropriate for the task?

For this task, is it better to select the students for the groups or allow students to select their group?

For this task, is it better to form heterogeneous or homogeneous groups?

Will you need to keep the group together or break it up throughout the semester or problem?

Are students with different ability levels placed in the same group?

# Factors to Consider When Forming Groups

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Are the personalities of students in the group compatible?

Are some members likely to be dominated by others? (by virtue of gender, cultural differences)

Does the physical arrangement of the room affect how you need to select groups?



# Roles of Responsibility

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## Discussion Leader

Keeps group on track; maintains full participation

## Recorder

Records assignments, strategies, unresolved issues, data; convenes group outside of class

## Reporter

Reports out during whole class discussion; writes up final draft of assignments

## Accuracy Coach

Checks group understanding; finds resources



# Sample Ground Rules

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Come to class on time every day

Come to class having done the assignment and prepared to discuss it

Must notify members of the group ahead of time if must miss class for any reason

Be willing to share information

Respect the views, values, and ideas of other members of the group

***If members of the group violate these ground rules, other members of the group may impose the following consequences:***



# Peer Evaluation

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Some general suggestions:

Use predetermined written criteria that focus primarily on behaviors.

Do at least 2 times per semester.

Factor results into students' grades?

Summarize results and distribute summaries.

Keep the process simple.

Incorporate into group assignments.



# Recommendations for Evaluating Student Performance

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Focus questions on observable behaviors, not generalized assessments

- Good: The team member had a positive attitude toward this project.
- Questionable: The team member was a good performer

Student perceptions of other's behaviors are relevant; their assessment of another performance may be less valid.



# Using Groups in Larger Classes, with Inexperienced Students

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Use well-defined activities with clearly stated objectives.

Bring the class together for discussion and/or clarification at frequent intervals.

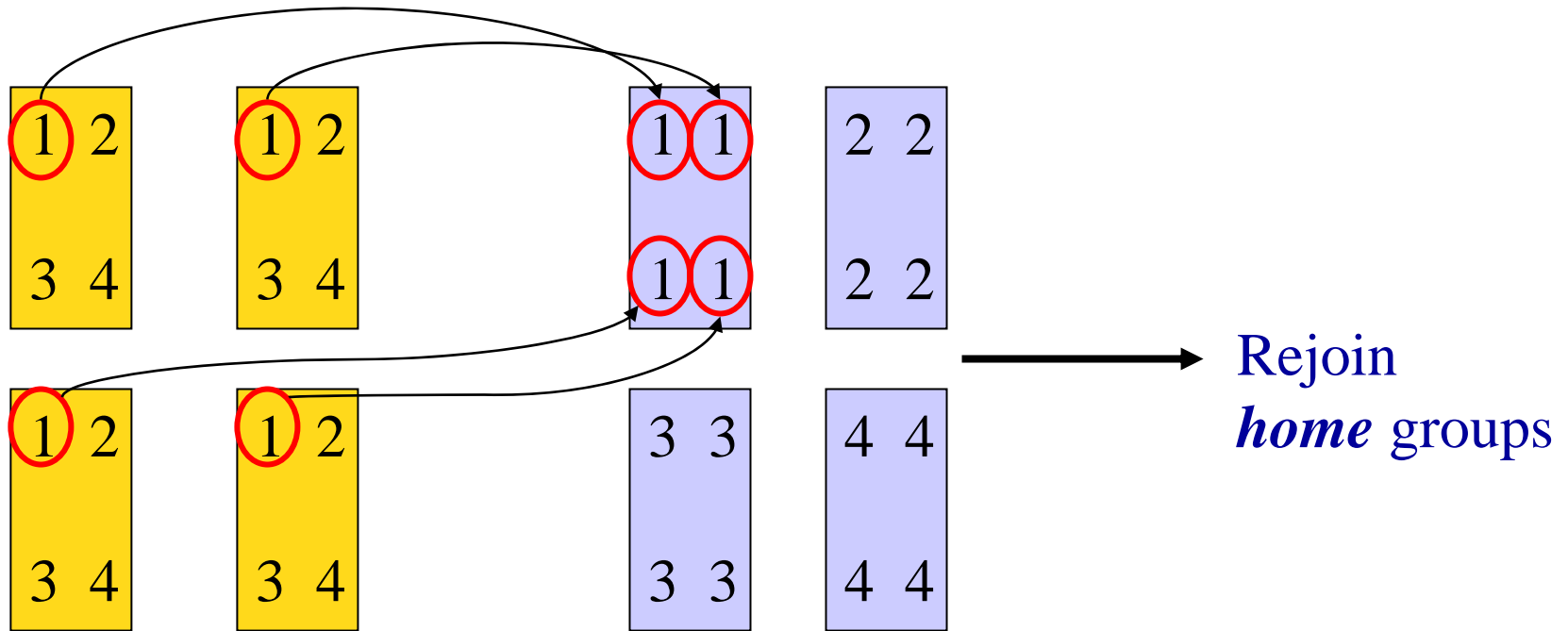
Plan both group and individual assignments.

Watch for signs of behaviors that undermine group function.

Use peer group facilitators.



# Jigsaw Group Scheme



4 *home* groups,  
with 4 members each

4 new *expert* groups, with one  
representative from each *home* group

(Aronson et al. 1978. *The Jigsaw Classroom*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.)