

# IDEAS 47

**International Online Teachers Society  
Debate  
Educational Materials For  
Advance and Upper Intermediate  
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society  
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## WORKING WITHIN A TEAM—TRICKY!

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There are leaders who inspire individuals to shine forth with their own skills and talents, and of course there are leaders whose inspirational style motivates individuals to work together as a team. Working in a highly-diverse working environment can easily put one ill at ease because of the apparent and not-so-apparent differences present in every member. However, great leaders are able to encourage every member to work towards a common goal without leaving anybody behind in the process. The objective may be a little blurry at the onset, but with the whole team working together, everything becomes more enjoyable, less tedious, and clearer in perspective.

Working within a team where bloated egos can easily get burst or feelings readily hurt is not easy. It takes a delicate balancing act to concretize each other's strengths and synchronize all ideas into one cohesive whole. An effective leader is consistently able to harness the abilities of everyone within the team and bring about a harmonious exchange of concepts, perspectives and general and specific ideas in order to realize tangible outcomes.

Working within a team where every individual is prepared to set aside all manner of differences and see the commonness that lies within the uniqueness takes a humble leader to get everyone involved. In a manner of speaking, the team leader is the central axle that either fixes the wheel in position or by which the wheel rotates. If the axle itself gets impaired, the whole configuration may not function as it is supposed to.

Working within a team entails that team members are aware of the team's objectives, whether short term or long term, easily achieved or requiring further work. They should know where the group has been, is, and will eventually be. Unless everyone in the group has a clear vision of the team's progress and what else needs to be done, milestones can easily be overlooked and achievements might appear too hazy to be so. In effective team work, successes and accomplishments are given recognition in order to encourage members to contribute more and jointly, since it is those very achievements which spell final success.

In great teamwork, self-identity of every member becomes so enmeshed with the team's identity that it can be difficult to tell where the "I" ends and the "WE" begins. Every team member is ready to play his part with utmost intelligence, skill and personal ability because the individual is the team and the team is the individual. No selfishness, only a selfless sense of character that's ready to look out for the other as an essential member of the group.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it difficult to work within a team?
2. How would you help each team member optimize their talents in a team if you were the leader?
3. How can a team be unified? Cite specific ways.
4. Why is it important for organizations to have team building activities regularly?
5. What qualities do you possess that you believe can be optimized in a team-based environment?



## WHAT COMPRISES TEAMWORK?

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United we stand, divided we fall. Such is the concept of teamwork. The word itself does not contain an “I”, but it does have “me” and “we” both spelled backwards. Take away the word ‘team’, and all you have is work: dreary and tedious in its essence. Put back the word ‘team’ and it makes a great compound word that denotes cooperation, ease of burden, and a common goal on which the whole group focuses.

You and I have, in one way or another, belonged to several teams: professional organizations; online and offline networks; clubs in school; committees for an event; a board. No matter how they come, teams are always organized so whatever needs to be done is done swiftly, using every team member’s abilities, optimizing skills, and ultimately bringing out the best in everyone. In a team, differences are set aside while working towards a specific objective. An individual who finds it hard to work within a team because he feels it would unduly place him in the sidelines can never hope to find lasting friendships. After all, in the midst of shared joys and difficulties, we find kindred souls who we can turn to in hours of need. The team members we have strategized with, seen results with, and created inroads with turn out to elicit a bit of emotional sympathy from us.

Do you remember your elementary days when you belonged to a club, a scout patrol, or a committee? The ones I truly remember had effective team leaders who gave us assignments and target dates: who was doing what till when. Young as we were, those leaders inspired me to bring out the best I had in order to make the whole team proud. It was a joint-achievement matter, with no room for tremendous egos or finger-pointing. Whatever the outcome was, it was always considered a team-effort. Of course, ultimately, it was always the leader who did most of the work: organizing, collating, stuff like that. But the rating was shared by all as a group.

I had also experienced ineffective leaders who assigned all the work to all the other members except themselves. Throwing their weight around, such leaders often failed to elicit cooperation and wholehearted participation for a certain project, then would give the poor excuse that the others simply refused to help. Pathetic as it may seem, such situations could have easily been prevented had the leader laid down ground rules and agreed to oversee the entire process while getting himself deep into the task.

Teamwork entails the whole team working together, with all heads accounted for. No ifs and buts, just why nots.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is your concept of teamwork?
2. Do you think that receiving the same rating as another team member is justifiable? Why or why not?
3. If you had worked really hard on a team project but saw another team member having it easy, what would you do?
4. What do you think breaks a team apart?
5. What are the distinct advantages of working within a team? Are there any disadvantages that come to mind?



## WHAT MAKES TEAMS FALL?

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Have you ever worked in a team where individual commitment seems to be difficult to come by? Where the leader's vision is not shared by all the other team members simply because the leader tends to be overbearing? Or where the team members consistently grumble about the work they have to do because everything is not evenly distributed?

The concept of teamwork in our younger years was much simpler than that of today. Back then, a leader was assigned in order to tell other members to bring this or that material, a member who was skilled to do so was assigned to do illustrations as needed, another was assigned to buy this or that. It was always the leader who ended up with the heaviest workload and the biggest blame come crunch time. But those were our earliest exposures to working within a team. One great thing that those experiences taught us was they made us see how effective teamwork went-or didn't go-into progress. Success was measured by the beauty of a project or the grade we had gotten. Then the leader ended up getting chosen over and over again to head other groups.

I, for one, have been and will always be a follower. I am prepared to work with the team, sharing whatever talents and skills I have to get closer to the goal or to make the objective more achievable. One astute reading characterizes my personality as bordering between the phlegmatic and the melancholic, the types that thrive more on observation, and yes, doing as we're told and required. I shine best when given directions but fail miserably at giving them. I guess you could say I shun responsibility because strategizing can be a genuinely big challenge for me. I work well within a team because I perform as expected and can even give inputs from time to time. But don't expect me to be astute about progress, because I easily find my comfort zone and easily embrace it. Sanguine personalities shine socially, choleric ones have the propensity to direct and lead. I fall neither into one or the other of those two latter personalities.

In a team, personalities need to mesh in order to have work done well. We can't all be leaders; some of us have to be crew members. Can you just imagine the kind of ruckus that a group with everyone aspiring to be the leader creates? Potentially no clear objective in sight, such groups are doomed to fail, or fall, whichever way you want to look at it!

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Can you give examples of famous teams that failed? Why do you think they failed?
2. Can you give examples of famous teams that were successful? Why do you think such teams succeeded?
3. Which is better, a team with a great leader but lousy members, or a team with a lousy leader but great members? Justify your answer.
4. What are qualities that each team member, including the leader, must possess in order to succeed in team efforts?
5. Do you think you can be a great leader? Why or why not?



## THE DYNAMICS OF TEAMWORK

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The world we live in was designed to be social. We live, eat, breathe and work with many other people around us. We might not do things in exactly the same way, but we share the same environment and even the same ideologies with others.

Working within a team is great. One gets to participate in a group effort, expending time and energy towards the realization of a common objective. It allows every team member to contribute to a singular goal, no matter how infinitesimal the contribution may be.

There's always safety in numbers. One wouldn't have to carry all the blame should anything go wrong. It's a lot of fun, to say the least, to exchange ideas and do brainstorming. Frankly speaking, brainstorming when one is alone is just plain profound thinking. Whatever ideas you throw around are just your own. Brainstorming with a group of people brings out novel ideas that are not necessarily one's own. That's definitely more interesting.

According to <http://www.team-building-bonanza.com/history-of-teamwork.html>, the very concept of teamwork dates back 80 years ago (probably more than that, considering the time the article was filed), and began from simple experiments primarily targeted for studying the association that exists between two factors: work output and how things are in the workplace. The said experiments gave many conclusions, one of the most essential of which was, "worker productivity increased with the psychological stimulus of being shown individual attention, feeling involved, and being made to feel important."

This just goes to show that individuals have a greater proclivity to perform better when they know that they are involved in a common purpose, a goal, a key result area if you will. We feel that we can contribute to a group and are thus encouraged to participate in any way we can, no matter how small our role may be. But the key to effective teamwork is an effective leader, one who can incite interest in a project, get everyone involved and make every member feel important. Without a motivational leader to head a group, the team will crumble. Cut off the head, and the body will die--or flounder, if we take Dean Winchester's word in Supernatural Season 7 Episode 22. But getting back....a team will only be as strong as its leader.

As we go about our work within our own teams, let us remember that the strength of our team also lies within each of us. The direction and control may be delegated to a select few, but the cooperation we give counts a whole lot in our team's success. Let us shine in our own way with the team's objective firmly in our minds. Then, we can proudly declare that we have worked with the best team there is!

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define teamwork.
2. Do you currently belong to a team, club, or organization? Was joining the group of your own choosing? If yes, what made you decide to be part of that group?
3. What do you like about your team? Be as specific as you want.
4. What are the advantages of being a member of any team? Are there any disadvantages?
5. Is there any other team/group that you'd like to be a member of? Why would you want to be part of that team?



## TEAMWORK - WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS

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The importance of teamwork cannot be discounted, for it holds very true, like the saying of Henry Ford, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." It actually highlights the importance of working together as a team. When individuals have a common taste, preference, liking and attitude, they get together and form a team. They work together for a common goal and that is the sole reason why teams play a very important role in our personal lives as well as in organizations too. Employees are dependent on his fellow employees to work together and thus they prove to contribute and work efficiently as well.

In organizations, no employee can work alone; he needs his fellow employee so they can work together and contribute efficiently. Any employee needs the help of his colleague to accomplish something and come up with something at its best. This is reason why teamwork is essential to any organizations, for it generates a better output and it creates a better bonding among employees. Definitely in all organizations, tasks should not be pending for a long time because there is a certain time frame and targets to be met and it needs to generate revenues too. A single brain can't come up with solutions and decisions alone for he needs someone to discuss his ideas with to arrive at a conclusion.

In a team, every individual gains knowledge from each other. This is very true for each individual in a team has different ideas and different set of qualities. Not only that, they also get to share their workloads that imbue levels of specialization for the success of the team. As the saying goes, "Two heads are better than one," very well explains the true meaning of what teamwork is. Whether it is in the field of business or in your personal life, teamwork is of great importance. I am pretty sure that everyone knows how paramount the concept of teamwork is.

Teamwork and its importance were ingrained in us since our childhood days. Didn't our parents teach us that siblings should learn how to work and share with one another? In school, students are taught how to work in a project together or even win games together. Even in our marriage, the two parties should join hands and learn how to work as a team in raising their family. More importantly, in our workplaces, where we are expected to fit in work as a team, all of these connotes that teamwork is essential to our life.

Working together must be very taxing but it surely has its own rewards. What teamwork does is that it builds one's personal skills. It doesn't deal with "wins" alone but in focuses too to each and everyone's individual growth as a person per se. So we can ultimately say that teamwork is working together towards a goal, of being a success.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do you work as a team in your workplace? Describe it.
2. What is the importance of teamwork for you?
3. Have you experienced to work as a team and achieve your goal? How?
4. Do you think you can do without teamwork and just work alone all the time? Why or why not?
5. How frequent do you experience working as a team? Does it give you confidence? Explain your answer.



## SUCCESSFUL TEAMWORK - A CORNERSTONE OF EVERY TEAM

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Definitely a work group will become effective if it has a successful teamwork which is referred to be the cornerstone of every team. No team would like to be dysfunctional and for it to become a success means that there are factors needed to take place in both within the team and in the work environment the team needs to function and to achieve its goal. The team understands the goals and it is committed to attaining them. These are the essentials of an effective teamwork, that is, a clear direction and an agreement in its mission and purpose too.

In a team, members trust in each other and they are not punished for disagreeing in taking their positions. That is the very reason why they feel free to express their thoughts and opinions, leaving their communication open, honest and respectful. The team openly discusses team norms and whatever could be hindering their ability to move forward and what hinders their progress in the areas of forces, talent, and strategy. As for the team, the more they can bring out divergent points of view that can be fully presented and supported with facts, the better it would be.

The team members spend their work and thought time listening intently with each other instead of forming rebuttals while their teammate is speaking. They experience a strong and deep commitment to their group's decision and actions for they have that feeling of belonging to that group. Their sense of belonging is enhanced when the team finds time to develop its norms or relationship guidelines together. Actually, a team having a successful teamwork does not support member personality conflicts and clashes. Neither do they pick sides in disagreement but instead they work towards mutual resolutions.

Their purpose of developing their team is to take advantage of their differences. Team members are viewed as unique people having varied points of view, experiences, opinions and diversified ideas and knowledge. Inconsequentially, creativity, innovation and different viewpoints are highly expected and encouraged from each team members. Moreover, the team has agreed on the procedures of diagnosing, analyzing, resolving any teamwork problems and even conflicts for that matter. They see to it that members of the team make high quality decisions together. Members of the team have the support of their group and their commitment to carry out whatever decisions that they may come up with.

Participative leadership is practiced and carried out in leading the meetings, in assigning whatever tasks are needed, in recording the decisions and commitments made. That also holds true in assessing the progress of the team, holding the team members accountable for their actions and decisions, especially in providing the direction of the team. All of these important factors can assure success for a very rewarding sense of teamwork among team members. Therefore successful teamwork can be considered a cornerstone of every team that is trying all its best to make it a very fit and remarkable team to be with.

Questions for discussion:

1. How can you gauge if a team has successful teamwork?
2. Have you ever wondered why some work groups are very successful but others are not? Explain your answer.
3. How can you inspire your team members to display effective teamwork? Justify your answer.
4. What other tips can you give for a team to be successful? Elaborate on your answer.
5. In what organization or workplace have you experienced teamwork? Tell something about that experience.





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