

Group Composition and Formation

Group Type	Random	Same-pace	Mixed-pace	Engineered	Friendship
Definition	<p>Pupils are grouped together without any specific criteria.</p> <p>This increases the chances that pupils work with others with whom they may or may not have worked before.</p>	<p>Pupils of same achievement level or pace of working in a subject are grouped together.</p> <p>The groups vary for different subjects because pupils' level or pace in different subject areas may differ. For example, a pupil may achieve highly in mathematics but at a middle level for language.</p>	<p>Pupils working at a high, middle or low achievement level or pace of working in a subject are grouped together.</p> <p>The groups vary for different subjects because pupils' level or pace in different subject areas may differ. For example, a pupil may achieve highly in mathematics but at a middle level for language.</p>	<p>Pupils' attributes such as sex, age, language proficiency, drawing proficiency, etc. are used for grouping.</p> <p>Groups can have same-attribute pupils such as, an all girls group OR Groups can have different-attribute pupils such as one pupil with language proficiency, one with drawing proficiency and one with presenting proficiency.</p> <p>A mixed age group is another example.</p>	<p>Pupils who enjoy working and playing together are grouped for the learning task.</p>
Advantage(s)	<p>Pupils learn social skills of negotiating and collaborating with new pupils.</p> <p>Reduces expectations that one group always performs better or lower than other groups.</p>	<p>Differentiated instruction can be provided to pupils according to their pace or achievement level.</p>	<p>Social labelling of pupils that can have a negative effect on achievement is avoided.</p> <p>It is more realistic because generally assessment is not differentiated for different pupils.</p>	<p>Uses pupils' strengths for group work.</p> <p>Discussion on certain topics may be more open in same-attribute groups.</p>	<p>Pupils can work in their comfort groups with less chance of conflict.</p> <p>Pupils can work out-of-school hours for completing the group work.</p>

<p>Ways of Forming Groups</p>	<p>All pupils stand in a queue. For forming four groups, each pupil says '1', '2', '3' or '4' at their turn. All '1s form Group1, all '2s form Group2 and so on.</p> <p>Write the name of each pupil on a slip of paper. Throw the slips into a container. To form groups with say five children in each group, pull out five names to form Group1. Pull out the next five names to form Group2 and so on.</p>	<p>Assess the <i>achievement</i> level of the pupils based on tests, observations of their classwork and homework, discussion with teachers who have previously taught them and discussion with parents.</p> <p>Categorise pupils into high, middle and low ability to form different groups.</p>	<p>Assess the <i>achievement</i> level of the pupils based on tests, observations of their classwork and homework, discussion with teachers who have previously taught them and discussion with parents.</p> <p>Categorise pupils into high, middle and low achievement. Then choose one or two pupils from each category to form Group1 and so on.</p> <p>Ask pupils about how <i>confident</i> they are about a specific topic - high middle or low confidence. Then randomly choose one or two pupils from each confidence group to form Group1 and so on.</p>	<p>Based on your knowledge of pupils' <i>attributes</i> and the topic you are teaching, decide in advance which pupils should be in different groups. Write the names on a chart and display so that pupils know which group they belong to, or announce the names in class.</p> <p>Ask pupils about how <i>confident</i> they are about a specific topic - high confidence, middle confidence or low confidence. Then randomly choose one or two pupils from each confidence group to form Group1 and so on.</p>	<p>Ask pupils to sit next to the person with whom they wish to work. Announce how many pupils should be in each group. When pupils have organised themselves assign group numbers: Group1 and so on.</p> <p>Announce the task and number of pupils required in each group. Then randomly ask one pupil to choose four other people for their group called Group1. Similarly ask another pupil to choose four other pupils for Group2 and so on.</p>
<p>(Homework) Write lesson objectives suitable for the group composition ...</p>					

GROUP TASKS

1. Given below are some lesson objectives to be achieved through group work. Discuss which group composition(s) you will use for achieving these objectives. Briefly write reasons for your choices.

Lesson Objective	Group composition?	Reasons?
To read a historical story and present the events as a time-line on a chart.		
To work out problems on division on a calculator and discuss instances when a remainder is left.		
To learn about changes in boys and girls during puberty.		
To identify examples of solids and liquids that can dissolve in water.		
To collect information about the average income from 20 families and present them as bar graphs.		

2. The other groups are working on different aspects of group work. For their benefit, prepare a presentation of about 3-5 minutes on 'group composition and formation' with examples of objectives that you can achieve through various compositions. Of course add reasons to your examples...!

(If you were not a member of the group working on *Group Composition and Formation*, you can use this space for writing your thoughts while watching the presentation.)

Reference for information about some group types:

Criticos, C., Long, R., Moletsane, R., Mthiyane, N., & Mays, T. (2009). *Getting practical about classroom-based teaching for the National Curriculum Statement*. South Africa: Oxford University Press.