



Group Discussion: basic roles of group members

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This should be read in conjunction with the Careers Centre presentation materials on group exercises.

To work efficiently, a group needs to have within it, a number of different types of characters - for example it is bad to have six very creative individuals, with no one to question and check through their ideas, or no-one to regulate the discussion so as to reach a decision. In the relatively straightforward categorisation below, the building and maintenance activities are regarded as good, the blocking ones as bad - make sure that your contributions are positive.

Building Contributions:

- suggests new or related ideas for discussion;
- proposes different approaches to problems;
- elaborates and builds on suggestions made by others;
- questions proposals made by others, to test their credibility;
- reviews progress of discussion, and suggests next step.

Maintenance Contributions:

- mediates differences of opinion and tries to reconcile different points of view;
- encourages everyone to contribute;
- relieves tension through, for example humour, call for short break, or by moving on the conversation;
- agrees to compromise rather than sticking stubbornly to a point.

Blocking Contributions:

- talks excessively;
- talks very little;
- acts cynically or nonchalantly;
- changes the topic regularly;
- boasts, tells funny stories or personal experiences;
- carries on private conversations within the group;
- shows aggressive behaviour, criticising group members;
- tries to take over the group without members' approval;
- stubbornly disagrees and rejects others' views.

For a more sophisticated description of group roles and behaviour, use the leaflet on Belbin characteristics.