

Peer-Group Learning Strategies

Forming Peer Groups

Students participating in group work is a key ingredient in student learning! Students can verbalize their ideas, listen to one another, collaborate, and learn from each other.

Below are some ideas for ways to form peer groups quickly and easily.

Group Heterogeneously

- **Use mixed strengths**—Group students so that each group has a mix of modality strengths such as an organizer/task-keeper, an artist, a speaker/communicator, a reader/wordsmith, and a tech-savvy student.
- **Use mixed levels**—Group students so that each group has an English Learner, a bilingual student, an adept reader, and a grade-level reader.

Group Randomly

- **Use sticks or names from a hat**—Write students' names on craft sticks, mix them up, and pick the number of names you want in each group.
- **Count off**—Count off by numbers and form groups.
- **Use different types of stickers or colored stars or dots**—Put the stickers on your students as they enter the classroom. For example, if you want five groups with five people in each group, you would select five different types (or colors) of stickers to put on five sets of students.
- **Use colored index cards**—Let students choose a colored index card from a stack, and group the students based on the colors they picked up.
- **Use a deck of cards**—Pass out cards and group students based on having similar suits or different suits, black or red cards, cards in a specific order, or the same numbers.
- **Use dice**—Have each student roll a die. Students who roll 1, 2, and 3 form a team, and those who roll 4, 5, and 6 form another team. Use a shoebox for the students to roll the dice to maintain control.
- **Use picture cards**—Hand out cards with images such as strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries or other such groups of things. Then, each student needs to find someone who matches his or her card.
- **By clusters**—Have students group themselves according to attributes, such as type of toothpaste used, favorite food, type of vacation preferred, etc.
- **Arrange desks**—Rearrange assigned desks before students arrive to create groups.
- **Birthday buddies**—Ask students to form groups based on shared birthday months.
- **Random name picker**—Use an online website to randomly pick names for groups.