



# SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

LEVEL 3 PROJECT



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# INTRODUCTION



Collaboration is the ability to work productively with others toward a common goal. In many environments, collaborating with a team is the primary method for completing projects and reaching goals. Understanding the benefits of successfully collaborating will add to your overall success in many areas.

In this project, you will come to understand the benefit of collaboration, recognize the personal strengths you bring to a collaborative group, place value on the strengths of other members of the group, and build an environment of trust within the group.

You will learn how to encourage creative, passionate debate from all members of the group, remove hierarchy to allow all members to have a voice in the decision-making process, and understand the scale of collaboration from a non-collaborative to a fully collaborative environment.

# YOUR ASSIGNMENT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to introduce or review strategies for working in a collaborative group.

**Overview:** Work with a small team and collaborate to make decisions. Your goal is to apply the collaboration strategies you learned to a small-scale project, such as planning a club meeting. Deliver a 5- to 7-minute speech at a club meeting about your experience with the collaboration process. Your speech is not a report on the content of this project. This speech is about you, your learning, and your perceptions of the experience.

**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 13.**

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Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



**Video:** Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



**Interactive Activity:** Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



**Resource:** Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

# ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

**5**  
EXEMPLARY

**4**  
EXCEL

**3**  
ACCOMPLISHED

**2**  
EMERGING

**1**  
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project	Statement	Post-Project
5 4 3 2 1	I understand the benefit of collaboration.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I know the strengths I bring to a group.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I recognize and acknowledge the strengths of other members within a group.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I withhold judgment when listening to others.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I foster an environment of trust within a group.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I allow all members to have a voice in the decision-making process.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5 4 3 2 1

# COMPETENCIES

**The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.**

- Understand the benefit of collaboration.
- Recognize the personal strengths you bring to a collaborative group.
- Place value on the strengths of other members of the group.
- Build an environment of trust within the group.
- Encourage creative, passionate debate from all members of the group.
- Allow all members to have a voice in the decision-making process.

## THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Since the beginning of civilization, people have collaborated to solve problems. When groups work together, they accomplish more, have a higher level of innovation, and achieve more satisfaction. The most important way collaborative groups innovate is by developing solutions to problems that are better than the solutions each individual would achieve independently.

Collaboration comes naturally for some individuals; they are drawn to others to solve problems. For others, sharing goals and responsibilities is challenging.

### KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

When you work with a collaborative group, it is important to know what you can contribute. Some people may be highly confident about the skills they bring to a group, but others may be less secure. As a leader, it is important to know your skills and abilities so you can help members of your team recognize their strengths.

A skill is something learned, like riding a bicycle. An ability is often innate or developed over time, like communication.

Before you organize your team, take a moment to write down the skills and abilities you would like to share. Look at your experience through a broad lens; consider skills you are confident about and the skills you may not have used in a while. For example, you may be a great cook. Though this may not seem valuable at the outset, you may discover that your understanding of food preparation will help your team make good decisions about the food to serve at an open house or honorary dinner.

By looking at your skills in this way, you prepare yourself to help your team view their own skills in a broader context.

## THE BASICS OF COLLABORATION

### Value the Strengths of Others

The most important rule for any collaborative group is to recognize the value of every member of the team.

### Understand Full Collaboration

In a fully collaborative environment—a group without a defined leader or established roles—everyone would be seen as capable, regardless of their level of expertise.

### Assign Tasks

Tasks are assigned based on the day, the goal, and the person's willingness to accomplish the assignment. Though most teams do not function at this level of collaboration, it is important to understand the philosophy behind the process.

### Avoid Assumptions

Each team member brings their unique experience and skills. Making assumptions based on age or what you know of the person's expertise may limit what you delegate to a particular team member.

### Focus on Potential

By considering each member based not only on what they have proven, but on their potential, you open the possibility of learning something new and allowing another to succeed in a new way.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A TEAM

By definition, collaboration is a team activity. It follows then that successful collaboration is dependent on successful team building, interaction, and communication.

When you organize a team, do your best to select members who have a strong connection to your project and its outcome. Whenever possible, consider the skills, experience, motivations, and compatibility of the people you invite to participate.

You may have a strong sense of your selected team members' skills and abilities, but it is also helpful to ask them to identify those things they value in themselves.

For instance, you may choose a team member who is an accountant by trade and could therefore help you with any budgetary concerns that arise. However, that member really would prefer to leave accounting activities at work and contribute her ability to motivate others to your project.

Successful team members:

- Share similar or complementary goals that contribute to the overall synergy of the group
- Are capable of working well with others in a collaborative environment and recognize their part in the group while valuing the contributions of others
- Have the skills and expertise needed for a successful outcome
- Are committed to the goals established by you and your team

Depending upon the nature of your objectives, you may select like-minded participants or people with a variety of perspectives to be on your team.

## Stakeholders

Every person who has an interest in the outcome of your project is a stakeholder.

### Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders include teammates, project leads, volunteers, or anyone directly affected by the project.

### External Stakeholders

External stakeholders are those who do not work on your project, but are affected in some way, such as the community at large.

## LEARN ABOUT YOUR TEAM

Every team is unique and will have different characteristics. Your team may be new and you can personally select team members. You may have an organized team, but you are able to invite a few individuals to join the group. Alternatively, you may join a team that is already established.

All of these scenarios present both benefits and challenges when collaborating. The first step to building a successful team environment is to become acquainted with each member's expectations and expertise.

Truly successful collaboration requires all team members to be comfortable and willing to support and encourage each other. There are many activities you can complete as a team to facilitate building a rewarding collaborative environment. You may choose to meet socially or engage in team-building activities during a meeting to help lower communication barriers and encourage cooperation. If you choose to use team-building activities, create your own or refer to the Team-Building Activities resource on page 18 for suggestions.





# METHODS FOR COLLABORATING SUCCESSFULLY

## SET GOALS FOR YOUR PROJECT

The first step in any project is to set clear and attainable goals. In order to facilitate collaboration, your team members need to know you welcome their input on the goals of your project. You may have a few goals in mind, but allowing your team to contribute will set a tone of cooperation and collaboration.

Hold at least one meeting to discuss goals, tasks, and team responsibilities with your team. In a fully collaborative setting, every team member would have input into every decision. For most teams, that is not possible. However, encouraging as much input as possible by making time for conversation and member suggestions will support a high level of commitment to the project from every member.

### Make Time for Discussion

Collaboration requires discussion. When working with a collaborative group, each meeting must include an opportunity to discuss progress, successes, and concerns. At times, contradictory perspectives may lead to conflict.

### Manage Conflict

Conflict is experienced by most teams. In some cases the conflict is minor, but in others it can be a real challenge for leaders and team members. The goal of a collaborative group is to use conflict to enhance creativity.

### Find Creative Solutions

This constructive use of conflict is called creative conflict. Creative conflict is powerful and productive. It leads to fewer mistakes, more creative solutions, and a broadening of all parties' skills and understanding.

### Set Guidelines

When the team experiences conflict, set clear guidelines for discussion that include withholding judgment, active listening, and respectful responses to suggestions.

### Reward Openness

Reward openness and authenticity with admiration and encouragement. It is important to cultivate passionate conversation—and sometimes debate—as it can lead to a higher level of success as a collaborative group.



## **BUILDING TRUST THROUGH CREATIVE CONFLICT**

One of the most important ways team members build trust and healthy interdependence is through creative conflict. It falls to the leader of a collaborative group to set the standard for acceptable behavior during the resolution of a conflict.

Before you engage your team, be sure you are comfortable with the skills needed to lead them through a minor challenge. The assignment for this project is a small-scale collaboration, but it might be helpful to do your own research on creative conflict. You may also review the content of the “Active Listening” project you completed previously.

## **DEFINE ROLES**

Though most collaborative groups have fluid assignments, it is important to give team members roles that complement their skill level and expertise. Ensure that members of the team understand their responsibilities and the value of their contribution to the collaboration process and the project as a whole. Clear division of labor balances tasks and prevents individuals from taking on too many responsibilities. It also ensures that every task is assigned.

## **DEFINE A TIMELINE**

The goal of a collaborative group is to work together to make decisions, such as establishing timelines.

- Work with your team to set an appropriate pace for the completion of your project during one of your first meetings.
- If your project has a strict deadline, or date of completion that is set by external factors, be sure you make the limitation very clear at the outset.

For example, if your project is to plan a membership-building event for your Toastmasters club that coincides with a holiday, it would be ineffective to have a deadline set for after the holiday. Because the date of the holiday is non-negotiable, you have a strict or inflexible deadline. Even though the final deadline is established, the events and milestones leading up to the deadline can be decided by the group.

If there is flexibility in your timeline, make this known at the beginning of your process as well. Flexibility will allow for more input from your team to establish milestones and benchmarks. Maintain communication with your team members about any changes or adjustments in your timeline throughout the process of your project.

## COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION



Frequent, open communication between all members of the collaborative group is essential to maintaining a collective work environment.

Communicate frequently to track statuses, discuss the process, and have a better understanding of where your team members and their tasks are in relation to completion.

Be sure to share your preferred method of communication, and ensure team members are aware of each other's communication preferences, such as phone calls, email, or in-person meetings.

Regular communication supports the establishment of relationships that go beyond the team and the current project. The better your team communicates with you and each other, the stronger your collaboration will be and the more likely your team is to come together again for future projects.

Frequent and consistent interaction between team members can help your team effectively develop ideas and reach goals.

## REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- What is the value of looking at every skill a team member brings to the group, whether the skills apply to the current project or not?
- How does communication benefit a collaborative team?
- In what way does collaboration support innovation?
- What is the value of active listening in a collaborative team?

## COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT



Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

**Review:** Return to page 3 to review your assignment.



**Organize:** Use the Project Checklist on page 13 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

**Schedule:** Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.



**Prepare:** Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 15–17 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.

# PROJECT CHECKLIST

## Successful Collaboration

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to introduce or review strategies for working in a collaborative group.

**Overview:** Work with a small team and collaborate to make decisions. Your goal is to apply the collaboration strategies you learned to a small-scale project, such as planning a club meeting. Deliver a 5- to 7-minute speech at a club meeting about your experience with the collaboration process. Your speech is not a report on the content of this project. This speech is about you, your learning, and your perceptions of the experience.

**This project includes:**

- Working with a small team to make a collaborative decision for a small-scale event
- The Team-Building Activities resource
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Choose the challenge you will collaborate to solve. If you decide on a project that involves your club or club members, meet with the vice president education for approval and scheduling.

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Invite a small team to collaborate with you.

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Meet with your team to collaborate on your topic.

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Apply the decision to your small-scale project.

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Schedule your speech with the vice president education.

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Write your speech.

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Rehearse your speech.

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After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your speech, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

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**Additional Notes**

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# EVALUATION FORM

## Successful Collaboration

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Length: 5 – 7 minutes

**Speech Title** \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose Statements

- The purpose of this project is for the member to be introduced to or review strategies for working in a collaborative group.
- The purpose of this speech is for the member to share some aspect of his or her experience practicing collaboration with a small team.

### Notes for the Evaluator

The member completing this assignment has spent time practicing collaboration within a team or other small group.

About this speech:

- The member will deliver a well-organized speech about his or her collaborative experience.
- The speech may be humorous, informational, or any type the member chooses.
- The speech should not be a report on the content of the “Successful Collaboration” project.

### General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:



# EVALUATION FORM – Successful Collaboration

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	4 EXCELS	3 ACCOMPLISHED	2 EMERGING	1 DEVELOPING	
<b>Clarity:</b> Spoken language is clear and is easily understood					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Vocal Variety:</b> Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Eye Contact:</b> Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Gestures:</b> Uses physical gestures effectively					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Audience Awareness:</b> Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Comfort Level:</b> Appears comfortable with the audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Interest:</b> Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Topic:</b> Shares some aspect of experience collaborating with a group					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

## Successful Collaboration

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

### Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
  - 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
  - 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
  - 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
  - 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
  - 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
  - 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
  - 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

### Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

### Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

### Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

### Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs

### Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

### Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

### Topic

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech about some aspect of experience collaborating with a group
- 4 – Delivers an excellent speech about some aspect of experience collaborating with a group
- 3 – Shares some aspect of experience collaborating with a group
- 2 – Mentions some aspect of experience collaborating with a group, but does not fully address
- 1 – Delivers a speech on a topic other than experience collaborating with a group

# TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Following are a few examples of activities. You can choose to use one or more when meeting with a group for the first time. Record notes below each activity about how you may adapt the exercise to fit your needs.

## String Game

### Materials needed:

- Three to four skeins of different colored yarn
- Scissors

Before the activity takes place, cut the yarn into different lengths ranging from 12 inches to 30 inches. Each member of the group selects a piece of yarn without knowing the yarn's length. Then, when it is her turn, the member begins to wrap the yarn around her finger. The member must talk about herself for as long as it takes her to wrap the yarn around her finger.

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## Story Starter

### Materials needed:

- Index cards and pens

On each of the index cards, the facilitator writes a starter sentence. For example: "Once upon a time, I..." Make numerous cards with different first lines. Divide participants into groups, distribute one index card to each group, and instruct the groups to finish the story as a team. When groups finish writing, read all the stories aloud.

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## Two Truths and a Lie

Participants form a circle. One by one, participants tell two truths and one lie. These three statements must be relevant to the speaker's life. The group then works together to decide which two statements are true and which is a lie.

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## Mind Maps

### Materials needed:

- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or piece of paper
- Writing instruments

For this activity, you need a chalkboard, whiteboard, or piece of paper, as well as writing instruments. In the middle of the writing surface, write the central idea of your project or what it is you need to brainstorm. From there, draw lines that connect this idea to other ideas as your team generates them. Write down every idea without comment, encouraging members to be creative.

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## The One Question

For this exercise, you can assign one situation to the entire team or allocate a different situation to each member. The task is to answer the following: **"If you could ask only one question to discover a person's suitability for \_\_\_\_\_, what would it be?"**

(Choose one or create your own):

- Running a business together
- Being your personal assistant
- Supplying an important service
- Being your leader

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