



## Demonstrating the Value of Collaboration

Although human society is built upon collaboration, students need to learn and practice effective teamwork skills in order to work productively in groups. This easy exercise is a great way to demonstrate the value of collaboration to students of any grade level.

**Materials Required:** A black/white board and a timer. Please note that a guide entitled “Elements of Successful Collaboration” is included with this download. You may use this additional resource either before or after the exercise, as desired.

**Time Required:** 15-30 minutes

### Stronger Together

#### Step 1

Write the word ‘COLLABORATION’ on the board and then give your students 1 minute to see how many new words they can make from the letters in that word. After 1 minute, ask them to record their scores. For example, if Johnny comes up with: at, in, bat, lab and on, his score is 5.

#### Step 2

Next, put the students in pairs, and give them 20 seconds to combine their answers (and produce additional results, if time permits). Almost certainly, the students’ combined score will surpass the scores they had as individuals.

#### Step 3

Finally, put two pairs together, and allow 20 more seconds to combine answers and collaborate on additional ideas. Again, the students will collectively arrive at a better score – and prove that four heads are better than one!

The most effective groups may realize that if they *divide their tasks*, with one or two students focused on combining the original answers, and the others focused on producing additional *new* results, they will improve their scores even more.

You can use challenges in vocabulary, reading comprehension, math, or almost any subject to conduct this “collective brain power” exercise. You may want to increase the activity’s complexity for high school students. Give them a pop quiz on whatever subject you’re teaching. The students’ scores should improve when they put their heads together, utilizing the strengths that each group member brings to the table.



## **Elements of Successful Collaboration**

Without collaboration, there would have been no Industrial Revolution, no trips to the moon. Prior to any group project, it's beneficial to remind students of the elements that go into successful collaboration, and the skills they will acquire as a result.

**Listening** – Good listeners make eye contact, provide supportive comments and give each other time to speak.

**Creative and Critical Thinking** – Group assignments rarely have specific rules or guidelines. It's up to the group members to devise a collaborative plan for achieving the best results.

**Negotiation** – Disagreements or conflicting ideas are common “side-effects” of collaboration. Team members must learn to find shared ideas and areas of agreement, as well as to present persuasive reasons to move forward in one direction versus another.

**Trial and Error** – Since there is no single clear path to success, team members must be willing to experiment, assess effectiveness, and learn from mistakes.

**Leadership and Individual Roles** – Effective groups utilize the strengths of each member, dividing up tasks and assigning roles appropriately. Groups also need an effective leader, with guidelines regarding the leader's role and level of authority.