

Student Material

Team learning: Top Tips for approaching interprofessional learning

We hope you will read this section prior to attending your first interprofessional education event and also revisit this page from time to time when preparing for interprofessional learning.

TIP 1

Present yourself professionally

Start the session as you mean to go on. Try and arrive on time and in a positive mind-set for learning. Remember we have already discussed that you show how you feel and display your attitude through your behaviour. It helps to join your interprofessional student group and introduce yourself to others and try and engage with those you will be learning with. After all this is how you can begin to demonstrate your professionalism.

TIP 2

Keep ground rules

Ground rules are often known as group norms or rules. In professional working lives teams should set out a vision for how they want to work together and/or rules e.g. a professional football team or a successful business team. In health and social care we are often slow to develop norms, rules or vision. When you are next on a ward or in a health or social care setting ask about norms and rules for their teams. Many health and social care organisations set visions which can include principles for working together.

Some students do not feel comfortable when facilitators ask groups to set ground rules because they feel they are adults who now know how to behave with one another. However, establishing how you want to work together sets a baseline for conduct and any concerns later can be referred back to the ground rules. In this way they can be a vital tool to help manage how you work together and without them you will have no means to refer your team to your concerns when things go wrong. For example, you might have a ground rule which says, 'we will all take an equal part in

the team's produced work outputs', only to find that you are left doing all the work. You can stop and reflect on what is happening and take the whole group back to this ground rule which will help you ensure equal distribution of the workload.

Some ground rules maybe non-negotiable and be set by your facilitator e.g. use of mobile phones. Your facilitator should help with setting ground rules and also explain their role in the learning to you.

Examples of ground rules:

- *Everyone has a right to express his or her views*
- *Everyone has a right to not be interrupted when they speak*

Can you think of more?

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TIP 3

Know and fulfil your role

You need to keep to the role that is delegated to you. For example, if you are working on problem based learning your group will be asked to set roles for each group member. These are normally negotiated and rotated when you work together on several occasions. These roles might include:

- *Group scribe*
- *Group researcher*
- *Group time keeper*
- *Group record keeper or recorder of information*
- *Group reflector whose role is to ensure key agreements are understood by the whole groups as they reflect what is agreed back to the group for agreement*
- *Group leader*
- *Group enabler, or ensure all views are heard and everyone has been included.*

Can you think of other roles that might be given to a team completing some problem based learning?

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On other events you might be asked to play a role in a group role play, or you may have to work as a team to produce a presentation. In these situations again you will have a role to play and you should try and fulfil this for the best outcome of the team.

Can you think of other roles you might have to take on?

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TIP 4

Keep group interprofessional dynamics

You should ask yourself what good qualities I bring to this interprofessional student team. Ensure you use your individual cultural, professional differences for the benefit of the group outputs.

Ask yourself what are my personal preferences? For example, you might be quiet by nature or you might be an extrovert. Be honest with your groups about how you like to work so that you can take on roles that benefit the team. It might be that you wish to practice being a leader and can ask the group if this is possible. Consider how Belbin has described different team roles and discuss how you prefer to work.

Try and ensure your group reflects on how they are working. For example, ask questions like:

- *What have we achieved?*
- *How can we improve?*
- *Are we working effectively together?*

TIP 5

Offer positive contributions

In interprofessional learning you will be required to learn through group discussions relating to the tasks set. Try to ensure you ask open ended questions and pose positive questions that will help the group move on. Try not to become too lost in the detail of issues that as a group you fail to see the big picture.

Possibilities

- *Have you considered that there might be another way of looking at this?*
- *Maybe we can consider another approach as this is helpful but we might have other consideration because.....?*
- *Thank you for this contribution I can see this viewpoint. I wonder what would happen if....?*
- *This is a helpful reflection I wonder can you explain further why this is the case here.*

Can you think of positively phrased open ended questions?

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TIP 6

Be a motivated learner

Interprofessional learning can give you the opportunity to be a motivated learner who demonstrates a desire to learn from others and enable the group to work effectively to complete set tasks.

Try to ensure:

- *You speak up and ask questions when you are a little bit lost*

- *Clarify situations that are developing which you feel might take you off the task*
- *Be a critical reflector*
- *Try and motivate everyone to participate*
- *Set group goals and check you are working towards them.*

TIP 7

Make use of the interprofessional facilitator

Many teams simply get stuck. There is no problem with this but try and ensure you do not grind to a halt. Suggest the team ask the facilitator to help. They can be invited to join in with your debates and discussions and asked to reflect on where you appear to be stuck. Facilitator feedback can be most helpful to move you on and to confirm that you have reached your goal. You may also want to check out if you are on the right path.

TIP 8

Employ critical reflection

Being in an interprofessional student learning team is a wonderful opportunity to practice reflection. Reflection is all about improving your learning and completing in-depth understandings about your future practice.

To achieve reflection in your discussions and thinking try and ensure:

- Debate rather than arguments
- Focus on the learning issues not personal issues
- Enable a team culture that ensures everyone contributes
- Evaluate accuracy through synthesizing the information
- Give careful analysis of complex issues as in team working there are often several approaches to any problem
- Before making decisions ensure you have thought about the evidence and weighed up the evidence for and against your stance

- Consider changing your attitude based on new learning.

TIP 9

Be collaborative

This is all about improving group performance and depends upon establishing a culture of trust. To achieve this you must:

- Listen attentively to others
- Ask questions for clarification
- Consider using 'we' not 'I'
- Interact with the others throughout the learning period e.g. don't go off for coffee with others from your professions try and stay within your mixed group
- Share information openly with everyone
- Do not pass judgmental comments
- Care about including all your team members
- Create a supportive environment.

TIP 10

Celebrate team success

Once you have achieved your task and had positive feedback then take this back to the group and try and ensure your learning together is completed on a positive note. Many facilitators leave time for group final reflections so make the most of this. Many student learning teams may not meet up again during training while others find themselves working together again further on in your training or even when qualified. It will be important to reflect back to a positive prior learning experience.

Consider the qualities of a winning team:

- Focus on the learning issues not personal factors
- All members contribute
- Members of the team communicate effectively

- The group monitors its progress throughout
- The group knows its strengths and weaknesses
- The team is committed to making the most of their learning
- The group sets meaningful and useful ground rules
- Use feedback positively.