



# Tips for assigning tasks & setting deadlines

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## Assigning tasks

Assigning tasks can seem easy, but there are actually a few important things to consider.

- **Avoid domino effects**
  - As much as possible, divide the assignment into tasks that can be completed in parallel, rather than in sequence.
  - For some parts of the assignment, dependent tasks are unavoidable—but you can make these tasks collaborative or add touchpoints in between.
- **Collaborate**
  - Discussions, analyses, decisions... anything that relates to your overall argument, analysis, or assignment goal should, as much as possible, be done together as a team.
  - Build in time to come together as a team to review and assess progress, and make sure you all sign off on the final product.
- **Match strengths/weaknesses**
  - Use your Team Skills Audit to help you assign tasks. You can assign tasks based on strengths (what are you good at?) or areas for improvement (in which areas do you want to develop more?) If you opt for the latter, have someone who is stronger in this area do the review!
- **Mix strengths**
  - Having someone on your team who is a strong writer doesn't mean you should give them complete responsibility for writing. Creativity and insight can come from unexpected places and sharing tasks will help everyone build new skills.



- **Is the workload equal?**
  - Take into account not just the individual task weight or difficulty, but also other aspects, such as who is responsible for organizing meetings, sending out meeting minutes, or following up with everyone, which can end up being a lot more work than you anticipate.
- **Check for understanding**
  - When your team is assigning tasks, make sure you clearly understand exactly what you need to do, how to do it, and when you need to have it completed by. Ask questions if you're unsure. Check that every member of the team is clear on the next steps, make space for members to ask and answer questions, and follow up with an email detailing the action items for the next meeting.

## Setting deadlines

One of the biggest problems that students have is "dividing up the work" and then bringing it back together right before the deadline without leaving enough time for true collaboration or discussion. This is particularly problematic when you have tasks that are interdependent.

- Work backwards from the final deadline.
- Identify actionable tasks that can fit within the time allotted.
- Build in enough time for review.
- Set "soft deadlines" in advance of "hard deadlines."