

# Classroom Management



## Cooperative Roles



Make cooperative projects more fun and run more smoothly with roles. Avoid hogs and logs during open-ended team discussions. Develop students' teamwork skills and repertoire of social competencies. This SmartCard presents the 12 most essential cooperative roles and answers critical questions relating to cooperative roles: What is a cooperative role? When do I use roles? How do I assign roles? How do students learn their roles? Minimise management problems and maximise students' performance with cooperative learning roles.

### What Is a Cooperative Role?

Roles are parts students play in cooperative interactions related to the academic task. Cooperative roles are team-based. The teacher selects the most appropriate roles for the learning task, then assigns each student on each team one of the selected roles. For example, the student assigned the role of Recorder or Scribe is in charge of recording his or her team's answers or ideas.

### When Do I Use Cooperative Roles?

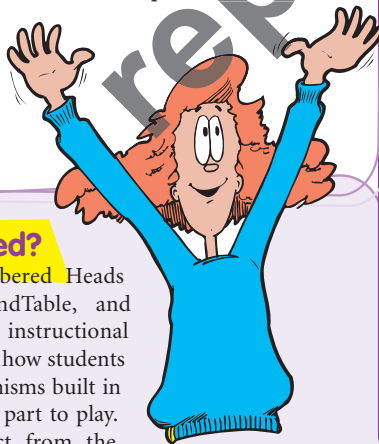
Cooperative roles are most useful when the team task is unstructured; that is, when the team is given a project or a discussion topic, but is not told exactly how to perform the project or discussion. Cooperative roles help ensure that students stay on track and work together effectively when the learning task is unstructured or loosely structured.

**Team Discussions.** Team discussions without roles often consist of one or two students talking most or all of the time. As a remedy, you might assign some of the following roles: Gatekeeper (who makes sure all participate), Taskmaster (who makes sure the team stays on the topic), Reflector (who makes sure the team occasionally reflects on its progress and its use of social skills) or a Cheerleader (who makes sure the group stops and celebrates its accomplishments).

**Team Projects.** Roles are important when teams work on projects. With no roles, given an interesting or challenging task, teams often run into the problem of "hogs and logs". Hogs take over and do the task for the team. Logs sit back and let teammates do the work. It is the job of the Gatekeeper to make sure all participate. If each student has his or her role, such as Checker, Recorder, Taskmaster and Cheerleader, it is more likely that all will participate and each will feel he or she has made a unique contribution to the project.

### When Are Roles Not Required?

Most Kagan Structures, such as Numbered Heads Together, Three-Step Interview, RoundTable, and RoundRobin, do not need roles. These instructional strategies are highly structured and script how students are to interact. They already have mechanisms built in so that each teammate has an important part to play. In fact, role assignment would detract from the effectiveness of these structures.



## Top 10 Helpful Hints

### For Using Cooperative Roles

- 1 Post the "Role of the Week" with associated gambits.
- 2 Introduce roles by modelling poor and skillful role fulfillment.
- 3 After modelling, have students derive the rationale for each role.
- 4 Have students generate and practice gambits for each new role.
- 5 Use structured role-plays to have students practise roles.
- 6 Compliment students publicly and privately on skillful role fulfillment.
- 7 Allow students to assimilate one role well before introducing the next role.
- 8 Use rotating roles (have students pass the role cards clockwise).
- 9 Keep a set of role cards in each team's material tub.
- 10 After a range of roles has been introduced, have teams decide which roles they will need for a given project.