

# Cooperation

## Short Lessons

- Teach the class fundamentals of team dynamics, such as choosing a team leader, writing team rules, and encouraging discussion from all members. Practice these principles by writing classroom rules.
- Discuss how to handle differences of opinion among team members. Ask students for their suggestions, then provide a list of options for handling a disagreement among the team.
- Brainstorm and create a list of attitudes needed to work effectively on a team, such as accepting suggestions, being friendly, compromising, and not being bossy.
- Discuss the concept that “None of us is as smart as all of us.” Is this true? Ask for examples of how cooperative effort has resulted in great discoveries.
- Give students a small cooperative project that can be completed in a short time period, such as building a tower of blocks or Legos . At the end of the time allotted, discuss any problems that occurred when working together. Did one or two members take over the project? How were differences handled?
- Have students work in small groups to develop a poster about character education at your school. Allow the students to be as creative as they want using the materials you provide. As the groups are working, walk around providing instruction on how to make decisions and resolve differences as a team.
- Give students a more complex assignment to complete, such as writing a group story or doing a group research project. Encourage students to divide the task into sections and have each person responsible for a certain section. Give only a group grade on the project.
- Have students work together in small groups to write skits about the school year, their upcoming summer vacation, or the character education program. Provide a period of time each day to work on the skits, and have the groups perform for each other on the last day of school.
- Discuss the importance of cooperation in family life. Ask students for examples from their families of how cooperation is needed.
- Introduce the concept of cooperation on a global scale with a discussion of the United Nations. Bring this concept down to the level of local government, perhaps by discussing an issue of local relevance in which parties are divided on the best decision.

- **What’s in the bag?**

Practice teamwork and cooperation while introducing a new theme or unit by playing this game. Place an object related to the theme in a paper grocery bag and close the top. Divide students into small groups. Give groups five minutes to think of several questions. Invite groups to ask a total of 20 “yes-or-no” questions to discover what is in the bag. Have each group rotate and ask questions, reminding students to avoid repeating questions from other groups. Have a volunteer tally the number of questions asked. When the class discovers the object’s identity, remove it from the bag and begin the unit.

- **Whisper the Message**

Have students form a circle sitting on the floor. Write a secret message on a slip of paper. Start by whispering the message into the ear of the student sitting to your right. Have the student whisper the message to the person to his or her right. Have students pass the message until everyone has a turn. Invite the last student to repeat the secret message aloud. Read the message written on the paper – it will most likely be quite different from the last student’s announcement! (To encourage students to listen, offer a class treat if the message is announced correctly.) Relate this activity to the open communication needed for cooperation and teamwork. Explain that, when working with a group, it is important for everyone to listen to each other and understand what other people are saying. Ask students to give examples of group situations in which all group members must listen carefully.

- **Strong as Our Weakest Link**

Have students form a circle and hold hands. Choose one student to lead the group through several actions (such as marching, tiptoeing, jogging, or skipping) as the rest of the class follows, without dropping hands. (Chances are, students will drop hands at least once.) After the first unsuccessful round of the game, discuss how the game relates to teamwork and cooperation. Explain that many endeavors in class will be unsuccessful if students do not work together. After a successful round, explain that when everyone works together, the whole class will be successful and strong while having fun.

- **No Clowning Around**

Help students work as a team while reinforcing knowledge in content areas. Enlarge Clancy the Clown on butcher paper and tape it to the floor. Divide the class into teams of four, assigning each team a name and each team member a number. Determine the order in which teams will play by rolling dice. Begin by asking a question. Give teams 20 to 30 seconds to conference and write down an answer on a slate. Call a number between one and four to determine which team members will show the slates. Invite each team to reveal their answer. If the answer is correct, that student tosses a beam bag at Clancy to earn points. After several rounds of play, tally points to determine a winning team.

- **Give Me Five**

Have the students discuss actions that help them become successful at school. Tell them about five self-disciplined actions to ensure school success. On the chalkboard, write:

1. *Eyes Watching*
2. *Ears Listening*
3. *Hands Still*
4. *Brain Thinking*
5. *Heart Caring*

Discuss the meaning of each action. Invite groups to make posters advertising the five actions and entitle the posters *Give Me Five*. Hang the posters throughout the school. Have groups write short commercials to explain their posters. Invite groups to read their commercials over the P A system or travel from class to class performing them.

- **Daily Goal**

At the beginning of the day, have students form a circle. Invite each student to name one goal he or she has for the day, such as complete all work neatly, use only kind words, or raise his or her hand before speaking. Write each student’s goal on an adhesive name tag. Invite students to place the name tags on their hands, shirts or desks for the day as a reminder of the goal. At the end of the day, discuss each child’s accomplishments and the self-discipline required to achieve goals.

- **Poster Idea**

Enlarge, decorate, and display the following poster to remind students to cooperate and work together.

In many cases, children learn best when they learn from each other. For children to work together and learn from their peers, they have to cooperate and work like a team. What are ways you need to cooperate on a team? “Team players” are children who:

- Listen

- Encourage their peers

- Allow and invite others to contribute their talents and skills

- Follow as well as lead

- Recognize their strengths and use them for the common good

- Treat others equitably

- Recognize the needs of the group

- Think before acting

- Communicate calmly

- Put competition aside.