

## **Script: Freeloaders and Suckers**

A freeloader is someone who takes advantage of the other group members by taking a back seat and not contributing much, if at all. At the opposite end of the spectrum is a sucker who ends up doing everything for those who are not pulling their weight.

Freeloaders and suckers are one of the main reasons why so many students hate group work. It's unfair to everyone involved, and causes a lot of resentment and unhappiness in the group. It also leads to poor outcomes for the group because only some of the members feel committed and involved. But there are ways to stop freeloaders and suckers!

Imagine group work heaven, where everyone:

- has similar expectations about the outcomes of the group work
- works towards a common goal,
- and knows exactly what their responsibilities and accountabilities are.

It is so important for the group as a whole to agree on and establish common expectations and goals. For instance, if Tom just wants a Pass whereas Lin wants to get a Distinction, then Tom probably won't put in as much effort as Lin. But if all the group members agree on the grade they want to achieve, they are more likely to work together to reach that common goal.

Likewise, to ensure that everyone is on the same page in terms of responsibilities and accountabilities, the group needs to establish the dos and don'ts - a set of rules that all group members have agreed to abide by at the beginning. For instance, Tom comes and goes as he likes during group meetings; sometimes, he fails to show up without informing anyone. Consequently, he doesn't know what's going on most of the time, and doesn't complete his assigned tasks on time. This situation could have been avoided if the group had agreed on acceptable versus unacceptable behaviour, and the repercussions of unacceptable behaviour.

So, avoid the freeloaders and suckers problem from the start by sitting down as a group and discussing these issues. To help you establish the group goals, expectations, boundaries and plan, we have included a team charter template, a project plan template, and some other online resources.