

COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

ROUNDTABLE

Description: Roundtable is a technique that can be used for brainstorming, reviewing, or practicing a skill. Because no member of the group is allowed to skip a turn, this technique ensures that each group member remains involved in the activity.

Procedure: Three or more members of a group are seated in a circle and normally share a single writing surface, pen or pencil, and piece of paper. If however, the answers are long, groups are large, or several categories of ideas are to be addressed, more pieces of paper can be sent around at the same time (simultaneous roundtable). The leader announces the question or problem and each group member writes an answer on the sheet, and then passes the sheet to the left. Members of the group are not allowed to skip a turn and group members continue to add answers and circulate the sheet of paper until time is called (3 to 5 minutes depending on the task or number of rounds to be completed). To maximize the success of the technique, questions should be simple and have multiple answers. When time is called, results can be scored (if a contest was the goal) or shared by standing and sharing (if brainstorming was the goal).

Applications: Besides brainstorming answers or ideas related to a question, roundtables can be successfully used for team building. Select a question with multiple “right answers” and reward those teams that generate the most correct answers (or alternatively, the most unusual or creative answers). Ask teams to share with others the methods behind their success.