



CAMBRIDGE

Collaboration

Introductory guide for teachers
and educational managers



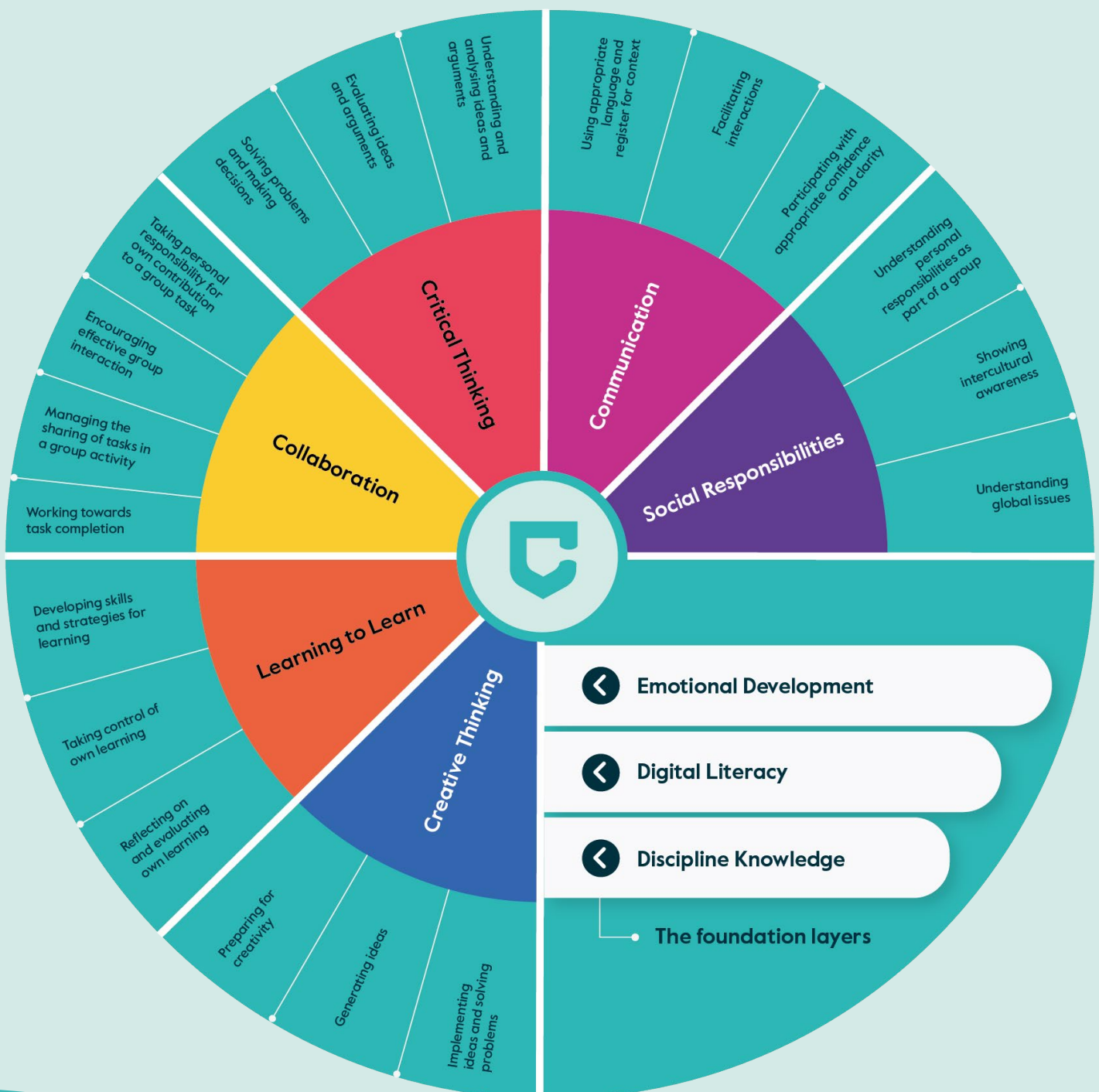
Cambridge
Life Competencies

Why teach Life Competencies?

Our world is changing fast, and we need to prepare our students with skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language.

We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, and to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world.

We understand that the engaging and collaborative nature of the language classroom is the perfect place to develop and embed these key qualities and the Life Competencies framework supports teachers in this challenging area.



What is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework?

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework has been created in response to educators who have asked for a way to understand how life skills, or 21st century skills, can be integrated into English language programmes. It is made up of six **Competencies** that describe how these essential skills develop and vary across different stages of education, as learners grow and change.

Creative Thinking	Learners actively participate in creative activities, generate new ideas and use them to solve problems.
Learning to Learn	Learners develop practical skills to support and take control of their learning and reflect on their own progress.
Collaboration	Learners work well together in groups through actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems.
Critical Thinking	Learners identify patterns and relationships, evaluate ideas and use these skills to solve problems.
Communication	Learners choose the most appropriate language to use in different situations, manage conversations effectively and express themselves clearly and confidently.
Social Responsibilities	Learners recognise and describe different roles and responsibilities in a variety of groups and understand cultural and global issues.

In addition, there are three **Foundation layers**. Foundation layers are not separate competencies. Instead, they act as underlying dimensions that support and strengthen every other competency. They provide the essential capacities that allow learners to develop and apply all other life competencies effectively.

Emotional Development	Learners identify and understand emotions, manage their own emotions as well as develop empathy and relationship skills.
Digital Literacy	Learners create content, share and interact with others online and maintain their safety and wellbeing while using technology.
Discipline Knowledge	Learners' knowledge of the English language, as well as of other subjects, supports and strengthens their competency development.

The learning journey

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports learners at all stages of their learning journey, from very young pre-primary learners right through to adults in education and at work. The framework maps out how learner behaviours typically found within each competency can change and develop as learners encounter new situations and circumstances in their lives, both within and beyond the classroom.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework allows us to support learners throughout their education and into the careers of the future.

- Pre-Primary
- Primary
- Secondary
- Higher Education
- At Work

How the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework aligns with key themes in ELT

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework consists of competencies that are strongly related to key themes in ELT such as:

AI Literacy **Global Citizenship** **Mediation and Translanguaging** **Oracy** **Sustainability** **Wellbeing**

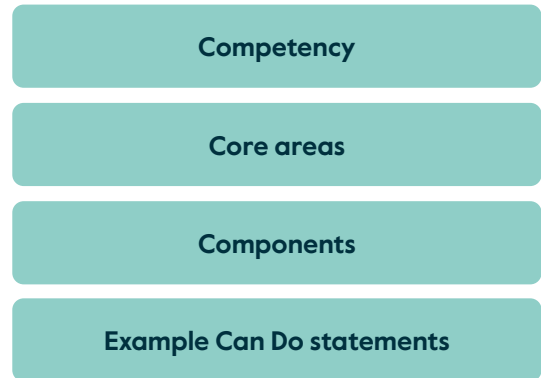
By developing the competencies in the framework, learners are also developing much of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to develop in the above areas.

This booklet will outline how the Collaboration competency aligns with these themes. To find out more about any of the themes, see our series of mini booklets.



Understanding the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is made up of six **Competencies** – **Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Learning to Learn, Communication, Collaboration** and **Social Responsibilities**. Each broad competency is broken down into **Core areas** that describe these competencies in more detail. These are then analysed further into **Components** that, along with example **Can Do statements**, describe the observable behaviours that learners are likely to be able to demonstrate by the end of each stage of learning if they have had the opportunity to develop in these areas.



Linked to the competencies are the three foundation layers of the framework – **Emotional Development, Digital Literacy** and **Discipline Knowledge**. Development of skills in these foundation layers underpins all other competencies.

Along with this structured breakdown, we provide **example language** that learners may use to express the actions and behaviours found in each of the Core areas at each stage of learning. These have been informed by both our Functional Language Phrase Bank, a collection of spoken data from expert speakers of English from children to adults, and input from experienced ELT practitioners from around the world. See this example for one Core Area within Collaboration at the Primary stage:

Competency	Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Collaboration	Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task	Shares ideas and suggestions about familiar and unfamiliar topics during tasks.	We could ...
		Taking on different roles	Identifies how their own sub-task contributes to the aim of the task.	I'm going to ...

By clearly defining these areas of development in a structured and detailed way, we can ensure that our teaching and learning materials take a systematic approach to delivering and developing these skills in our learners, as they progress. This means that teachers can be assured that our resources bring out the best in their students, without creating extra work.

It should be noted that the framework was developed primarily from research and frameworks that centred neurotypical expressions of Competencies, as neurodiversity and neurodivergence were less well understood when the framework was first created. Users of the framework should therefore adapt the framework flexibly, recognising that learners may demonstrate Competencies in diverse ways beyond those described in the framework. Further guidance on this will be published in due course.

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is often described as a key skill for 21st century education (NRC, 2011; OECD, 2018; ACER, 2020). Some advantages of collaboration over individual problem-solving are effective division of labour; use of information from multiple sources, perspectives and experiences; higher levels of creativity and better quality of solutions (OECD, 2013).

When people interact with each other, they are not simply sharing information but are supporting each other in collective thinking. This collaborative interaction allows participants to achieve more than they can alone.

We have identified three **Core areas** within Emotional Development:

Collaboration	Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task
	Encouraging effective group interaction
	Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity
	Working towards task completion

- **Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task** refers to a learner's ability to participate actively in group activities through taking on a variety of roles, to share their own ideas freely with others and demonstrate a willingness to provide explanations for their own contributions as required.
- **Encouraging effective group interaction** includes a learner's ability to listen carefully to others and to acknowledge their views, even when conflicting with their own. Learners are thus able to take turns appropriately in a group task, provide constructive feedback and also put forward their own solutions and ideas in a way that helps the group progress towards completing it. It also involves groups establishing effective ways of working together and offering mutual support to one another.
- **Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity** refers to a learner's ability to identify tasks and sub-tasks in a group activity and to share them fairly amongst group members.
- **Working towards task completion** is related to a learner's ability to ensure the group is making progress towards their goals. This might include evaluating multiple options and points of view during a group activity and recognising the most suitable solution for the resolution of the task. It also involves effectively identifying and resolving issues that may arise during the course of an activity.

Within these Core Areas we break things down further, defining the components that make up each Core Area:

Collaboration	Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task
		Taking on different roles
	Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully
		Establishing ways of working together
		Engaging and supporting others
	Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Agreeing what needs to be done
		Managing the distribution of tasks
	Working towards task completion	Ensuring progress towards a goal
		Identifying issues and challenges
		Resolving issues

How does Collaboration align with key themes in ELT?

Collaboration skills support the development of the following key themes in ELT:



AI literacy: Using principles of Collaboration can support learners in using AI as a collaborative partner rather than a tool for generating answers.



Oracy: Learners with strong Collaboration skills will be able to create the conditions needed to explore ideas together and have a productive discussion.



Global citizenship: Addressing global issues requires collaborative problem-solving and creating inclusive environments for cooperation.



Sustainability: Collaboration skills are essential for collaborative problem-solving and working together on sustainability projects to address global issues.



Mediation and translanguaging: The Collaboration skills of encouraging and supporting others are particularly important for effective mediation and translanguaging.



Wellbeing: Enhancing Collaboration skills is important for positive relationships and the building of social support networks which can support wellbeing.

See our series of mini booklets on these themes to find out more.

Spotlight on Mediation and translanguaging

Mediation and translanguaging skills help learners bridge communication gaps and help others understand better. As such, they are key to effective collaboration.

Mediation involves skills such as supporting group learning and collaboration, making new ideas understandable, and involving everyone in a group. These can involve learners using a mixture of the languages they know – in other words, translanguaging.

Mediation and translanguaging skills align particularly well with the **establishing ways of working together and engaging and supporting others** components of **Collaboration**.



We have highlighted some of the example **Can Do statements** from these areas of the framework that could be used to support Mediation and translanguaging. Look out for the following icon in the following pages:

To find out more about how the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework aligns with Mediation and translanguaging, and can support the development of these skills, see our mini booklet.



Collaboration across the learning journey

Core areas may be realised in different ways across the different stages of learning. In order to demonstrate this, each **Core area** and **Component** is contextualised by an example **Can Do statement**. This illustrates what kinds of behaviour students who are competent in this area might display by the end of each stage of learning. These example Can Do statements can be used as a starting point in the development of a curriculum, programme or assessment system and will vary in their suitability for learners in different contexts. The example language is provided for teachers to consider what kind of language they could encourage their students to use in these kinds of tasks.



Pre-primary

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task	Shares ideas about pictures, stories, and experiences.	Do you know the story about ... ?
	Taking on different roles	Identifies how they are going to contribute to the activity.	I've got to [count].
Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully	Builds on others' ideas (e.g. in a role-play activity).	And he [lives] ...
	Establishing ways of working together 	Establishes the rules of a game.	We take turns.
	Engaging and supporting others 	Makes sure everyone joins in by asking them to share their ideas.	Do/did you like ... ?
Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Agreeing what needs to be done	Explains the steps needed to complete an activity.	We're going to ...
	Managing the distribution of tasks	Suggests roles for group members.	Please can you ... ?
Working towards task completion	Ensuring progress towards a goal	Keeps the group focused on the goal despite distractions or obstacles.	Hurry up.
	Identifying issues and challenges	Recognises if own or another child's behaviour is causing a problem.	Don't fight.
	Resolving issues	Tries to resolve problems in the group (e.g. through finding a compromise).	Do you want to share?



Primary

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task	Shares ideas and suggestions about familiar and unfamiliar topics during tasks.	We could ...
	Taking on different roles	Identifies how their own sub-task contributes to the aim of the task.	I'm going to ...
Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully	Interrupts politely at appropriate moments in group talk.	Please can I speak now?
	Establishing ways of working together 	Contributes to establishing group rules.	Remember to ...
	Engaging and supporting others 	Encourages other members of the group who may be shy or less confident in speaking English (e.g. by using inclusive body language).	Go on.
Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Agreeing what needs to be done	Incorporates others' ideas about how to organise and carry out an activity when appropriate.	Let's do it [like Jane says].
	Managing the distribution of tasks	Suggests roles for group members.	[Name] writes well. Can he ... ?
Working towards task completion	Ensuring progress towards a goal	Keeps the group focused on the goal despite distractions or obstacles.	Hurry up.
	Identifying issues and challenges	Recognises when there are problems between group members.	She's fighting [with ...]
	Resolving issues	Decides how to work out problems so that the group can achieve their task.	Why don't we ... ?



Secondary

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task	Makes relevant suggestions based on the current topic of conversation.	I think we should ...
	Taking on different roles	Volunteers to take on a specific role.	I'm happy to [do this role].
Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully	Respectfully waits for their turn to speak.	That's a really good point. I'd also say ...
	Establishing ways of working together 	Sets expectations of how long each group member should take on their task.	We'll share what we find in [10 minutes].
	Engaging and supporting others 	Helps other students put their ideas across (e.g. by rephrasing their ideas or giving examples).	So, you're saying ... ?
Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Agreeing what needs to be done	Clearly explains the requirements of the task, asking other students for clarification when necessary.	It says we should ...
	Managing the distribution of tasks	Delegates to other students politely and respectfully.	Would you mind ... ing?
Working towards task completion	Ensuring progress towards a goal	Encourages other students to stay on task.	Don't forget ...
	Identifying issues and challenges	Identifies the reasons for disagreement.	The reason [for ...] is ...
	Resolving issues	Encourages other students to agree on a solution after a negotiation.	Is everyone happy with that?

Higher education

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task	Contributes relevant points and ideas throughout a discussion or group task.	As far as [...] is concerned ...
	Taking on different roles	Shows flexibility to take on different roles on different occasions.	OK, so what you need to do is ...
Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully	Responds in an open-minded way to different ideas, including those which represent an opposing point of view.	I see [what you're saying].
	Establishing ways of working together 	Discusses best ways of collaborating on the task.	What's next?
	Engaging and supporting others 	Invites others to share their ideas and opinions throughout a discussion.	What's your opinion on ... ?
Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Agreeing what needs to be done	Identifies the steps needed to complete a task.	What do we need to do [first]?
	Managing the distribution of tasks	Contributes to the fair and appropriate allocation of tasks (e.g. taking into account the skills of group members).	Has anyone done ... before?
Working towards task completion	Ensuring progress towards a goal	Stays focused on the main task and doesn't allow differences of opinion to divert attention.	Let's stick to the point.
	Identifying issues and challenges	Shows awareness of disagreements over views or approaches to a task within a group.	I'm not sure I/we agree.
	Resolving issues	Puts forward suggestions that might help resolve differences of opinion within a group in order to complete the task.	Instead of ... , we could try ...

At work

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task	Actively contributing to a task	Contributes relevant ideas and information on both familiar and unfamiliar topics.	It's a question of ...
	Taking on different roles	Identifies what they need to do in their role and how this contributes to completing the overall task.	So, I'll do [...] when you finish.
Encouraging effective group interaction	Listening and responding respectfully	Gives appropriate and constructive feedback to colleagues.	I especially like how you've ...
	Establishing ways of working together 	Helps establish group expectations.	How often should we update each other on our progress?
	Engaging and supporting others 	Invites others to share their ideas and opinions throughout a meeting or discussion.	What's your opinion on ... ?
Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity	Agreeing what needs to be done	Identifies the steps needed to complete a project.	What do we need to do [first/last]?
	Managing the distribution of tasks	Allocates appropriate roles and responsibilities to team members.	You're good at ... , could you do this part, please?
Working towards task completion	Ensuring progress towards a goal	Stays focused on the main objective and doesn't allow differences of opinion to divert attention.	Let's stick to the point.
	Identifying issues and challenges	Decides when it is necessary to find ways to resolve disagreement in order to achieve an overall objective.	Let's just agree to disagree on that part for now. The important bit we need to agree on is ...
	Resolving issues	Puts forward suggestions to resolve differences of opinion within a team.	Let's think of it another way.

Collaboration in the classroom

Many teachers of English around the world use a communicative approach, and course books generally include activities that encourage learners to work together. Merely asking learners to work together, however, is not enough. In order for learners of all ages to work together effectively, teachers need to be aware of how to establish collaborative practices. Teachers may need to scaffold the experience by initially introducing formal cooperative learning and make decisions about the objectives of a task, size and composition of groups, roles assigned to learners and the materials needed. By following some simple strategies, both teachers and learners can benefit from developing collaborative skills in the classroom.

Collaboration in the language classroom promotes not just language development but also crucial skills for teamwork and self-development. By encouraging learners to become part of a team working together, they can support each other in order to succeed in their learning goals. This is motivating and promotes authentic communication. It can also boost learners' self-esteem, as they become aware of the value of their contributions to their team and build relationships through helping each other to learn.

Other benefits of a collaborative learning environment include:

- It equips learners with useful language and interpersonal skills to take into further study and the workplace.
- All learners participate and feel involved in their learning.
- It links what they learn with how they are learning, as the process is transparent, presented by the teacher and discussed by the class.
- It allows learners to experience a different way of learning. For example, learners from contexts where collaboration is not usually encouraged can experience different ways of approaching problems, thinking, and co-operating with others.
- It creates a positive and dynamic learning environment, in contrast to competitive classrooms which can create divisions, isolation, and a sense of failure.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might develop this competency in the classroom and are not a definitive list.

General suggestions

Promoting a collaborative classroom

- Tasks should have clear goals and steps.
- By using the **Core areas** and **Components** when planning lessons, teachers can clearly focus their activities to specific aims and therefore be more confident; teachers need to select tasks which require collaboration and which will motivate their learners.
- The task should be at the appropriate level of challenge for the learners so that they do not become demotivated by the task or complete it too quickly.
- It is crucial for teachers to explain and discuss the need for collaboration within each task with their learners.
- Learners should understand the aim of what they are doing and how their own contributions fit into the whole task – that the success of the task is the responsibility of each member of the group.
- Teachers must monitor group work and give timely feedback. The teacher can also encourage peer feedback.
- Learners should be encouraged to celebrate the success of the task by reflecting on their own contributions and roles, as well as setting goals for improvement.

- Active listening skills should be taught (making eye contact, showing empathy and understanding, not interrupting, summarising what the speaker has said, etc.) and the language of turn-taking introduced.
- Tasks should allow choice so that learners can choose to work to their strengths (for example, the best at drawing does the illustrating), or the opposite, in order for learners to be able to try things they are not confident at to develop new skills. Additionally, the learners that do have strengths in one particular area can coach others and support general upskilling.

Assessment

Both teachers and learners may have concerns about how collaborative work is assessed, especially in learning environments heavily influenced by the pressures of exam success. Learners may not be motivated to engage in tasks where there is no individual mark that adds to their final assessment, or the task 'is not in the exam'.

Teachers may be using traditional tests and exams in parallel with group work, so a fruitful strategy is to ask learners to reflect on how they think their test results were helped by the collaborative learning they were involved in and discuss how future group work could support exam success.

When introducing the collaborative learning approach, teachers can integrate self- and peer-assessment of both the achievement of the task as well as of the collaborative skills used, so that learners can understand how this way of working is beneficial.

Activity cards

For more ideas on integrating the development of Collaboration skills into your classroom, see our Cambridge Life Competencies **activity card** packs. We've created a pack of cards for each stage of learning, and each individual card tackles a component from one of the core Cambridge Life Competencies. The activities are designed for you to use together with your coursebook or teaching materials, to tweak or supplement tasks. Go to cambridge.org/clcf to download your free pack.



Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task

For a task such as coursebook projects, put learners in groups. Assign a role for each person in the group. Explain that they will work together to write a short 'job description' for

Teaching online?

Try asking learners to find examples online of brief job descriptions for different roles (such as leader, note-taker, time-keeper, etc.).

Adult

Primary

Developing collaborative skills with young learners can be challenging, as in the early years, children tend to be more egocentric and often do not find sharing natural. It is therefore important to lay the foundations for collaboration, starting in pre-primary classes, by creating positive class routines that steadily build up teamwork. Teachers can explain to their learners the merits of collaboration (if necessary, using the learners' mother tongue), and model the behaviour and appropriate language for collaborative tasks.

The following are examples of effective tasks/strategies for building collaboration skills:

Shared tasks

With support from the teacher, the learners take on different roles and collaborate, so that at the end they can see the result and understand that this was only achieved by working together. An example of an activity that would work well would be building a castle which will be used in a story-telling activity.

Games

Games require turn-taking, paying attention to classmates, and giving appropriate responses like 'well done' or 'never mind', which are all important aspects of collaboration.

Choral work

A good example of choral work would be action songs, where children have to follow not just the teacher, but also each other to be synchronised and feel part of the whole class. Learners could be grouped to take on different roles within the song, and will be responsible for singing and doing the actions at the relevant parts. Only by playing their part can the class get through the whole song – this can foster a sense of togetherness and responsibility among the learners. An example of a song that could work well is included here.

Throughout these activities, teachers can monitor and encourage good collaboration techniques, and reward members of the group demonstrating these skills. This could be done by taking photos or videos of group activities to show to the learners at the end of the task, as evidence of their collaboration.

I'm writing a new song,
I'm writing a new song.
At the beach, at the beach.

Suzy's getting a lot of shells,
Suzy's getting a lot of shells.
At the beach, at the beach.

Scott's swimming in the ocean,
Scott's swimming in the ocean.
At the beach, at the beach.


Dad's walking on the sand,
Dad's walking on the sand.
At the beach, at the beach.

Mom's reading in the sun,
Mom's reading in the sun.
At the beach, at the beach ...

Activity card idea

Why not try out this activity from our Young Learners activity card pack (page 53)? Learners take on specific 'helper' roles to ensure that their group is working effectively together to achieve the goal of a task. It is particularly well suited to project work. To download this and other activity cards, go to [cambridge.org/clcf](https://www.cambridge.org/clcf).

Collaboration

 Ensuring progress towards a goal

Group helpers

In longer group tasks such as coursebook projects, write the goal of the task on the board along with the following three statements:

- Everyone is listening
- Everyone is participating
- We are working towards the goal

Nominate three learners in each group to be 'helpers', and allocate each of the helpers one of the statements above. Explain that they are responsible for making sure that their statement is happening, and should remind group members to listen/participate/stay on task as necessary.

Teaching online?

Why not invite 'helpers' to add the word 'helper' to their screen-name in your online classroom.

Working towards task completion

Young

Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
 - When planning the activity, you may find the guidance above on 'Promoting a collaborative classroom' helpful.
 - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their collaboration skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could make these activities more collaborative.

Secondary

As learners move into secondary education, they will generally encounter more opportunities for collaboration, especially with increased project work. However, it is worth considering the problems that teens may face when working together. They can be sensitive about sharing their ideas with their peers and about being judged by others. It is not unusual for some teens to opt out of group work and refuse to work with some of their classmates. While it can be beneficial to mix groups up and get learners working with peers they would not normally work with, this may lead to conflict or silence. Allowing teens to work with their friends some of the time, and providing extra support to groups of learners who are working with others they wouldn't normally work with, can therefore be important. Giving learners a clear objective for the task can also lead to greater motivation and increased levels of collaboration.

The following are examples of effective tasks/strategies for building collaboration skills:

Project work

Project work can be an excellent vehicle for developing collaborative skills as the aims are often very clear and outlined at the very beginning. It is also important when doing projects to establish clear norms and roles.

Building a consensus of opinion

Include age-appropriate activities based on building a consensus, for example, planning an end-of-year party. These could have a time limit, so that consensus must be reached quickly. In the following example, the learners rank the qualities of teamwork based on their own opinions, but must then work with others and share ideas to decide on a final ranking.

1. Rank the following qualities in order of how important they are to be a good team player (1 = least important; 5 = most important).



being a good
team player



possessing strong
leadership skills



having a
small ego



liking your
teammates



respecting your
teammates

2. Think of and note down other important qualities and decide on your top five.
3. Speaking work in groups of four. Compare your ranking and agree on a new list of five.




To get the most out of such tasks:

- learners should understand the success criteria for a task;
- there should therefore be a sense of achievement once it's finished;
- the teacher should monitor and help as necessary;
- reasonable time should be allowed – start with short tasks with quick resolutions and work up.

Activity card idea

Why not try out this activity from our Teenage Learners activity card pack (page 52)? Learners discuss what makes a good leader and then nominate one member of the group to be the leader for a project or stage of a project. This gives learners valuable experience of leadership and managing the distribution of tasks in a group. To download this and other activity cards, go to [cambridge.org/clcf](https://www.cambridge.org/clcf).

Collaboration

   Managing the distribution of tasks

Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity

Today's leader

Elicit ideas about what makes a good leader and write these on the whiteboard as a reminder for learners. While groups work on a project, nominate a learner to be 'leader' of their group for the project. Explain that leaders should ensure that while the group carries out the project, tasks are shared equally between all the group members. Nominate different learners for different projects or stages of the project, so that everyone has the opportunity to take on the role of leader.

Teaching online?

Try inviting learners to research online to find ideas about what makes a good leader, and use breakout rooms for groups to work together.

Teen

Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
 - When planning the activity, you may find the guidance above on 'Promoting a collaborative classroom' helpful.
 - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their collaboration skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could make these activities more collaborative.

Adult

Adult learners will come to class with the background of their previous learning experiences and may have certain expectations about what their roles in the class are. For example, the teacher teaches and learners do what they are told to do. In this case, a teacher introducing collaborative teaching practices may face resistance and may lose the respect of their learners who may think the teacher doesn't know the answers that they are expected to find. It is thus important for teachers to introduce the reasons for collaborative learning from the outset and allow for questions and discussion throughout the process, so that learners feel secure and clear on the aims of this methodology.

The following activities can be set up at the beginning of the course/semester to foster collaborative practices among learners throughout the course:

Flipped classroom

In the flipped classroom model, learners can research different aspects of a topic and bring in what they have learnt to share with the class.

Online collaboration

Learners could create an online platform (such as on a learning management system [LMS], or use networking apps such as WhatsApp or Skype) to share research, problems, ideas, etc. in order to support each other's learning, prepare for lessons and do homework.

Task preparation

Before starting a task, learners formally present to the rest of the group what they are going to do, take questions and suggestions.

Reflection

After a task is complete, learners reflect on where they were most successful in the task, where collaboration broke down and how they can remedy that aspect in the future.


Peer-assessment

Peer-assessment can be a useful tool when developing collaboration. Learners are required to be active listeners during group tasks and take notes in order to provide others with constructive feedback and counter arguments.

Jigsaw activities

In these types of activity, each member of a group researches one aspect of the topic they are working on (such as famous women, as in the example below) and they have to listen to each other to complete a task. The task could be structured with a fill-in template designed by the teacher.



Work in groups of three. Each read about one woman and make notes.

 Tell each other about your famous woman. Decide together which women you admire most and give a reason.

Activity card idea

Why not try out this activity from our Adult Learners activity card pack (page 55)? Learners discuss common conflict resolution strategies before reflecting on their own strategies during group conflict or disagreements. To download this and other activity cards, go to cambridge.org/clcf.

Collaboration

  Resolving issues

Working towards task completion

Conflict resolution

Write the following conflict resolution strategies on the board, or print them out to give to your learners:

- **Avoiding:** one or both parties ignore or sidestep the conflict in the hope that it will resolve itself
- **Compromising:** each party gives up something of value but also gains something
- **Accommodating:** 'giving in' to the wishes or demands of another
- **Competing:** both parties try to 'win', one party 'loses'
- **Collaborating:** finding a solution that entirely satisfies all parties

Ask learners to discuss the pros and cons of each strategy, encouraging them to consider different contexts. After carrying out a longer collaborative group task such as a coursebook project, encourage groups to reflect and identify points in the task where there was disagreement or conflict. Ask them to reflect on the methods and approaches they used to resolve any disagreement, and whether they would do anything differently next time.

Teaching online?

Rather than providing the definitions, why not ask learners to use an online dictionary to find out the meaning of each of the conflict resolution strategies.

Adult

Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
 - When planning the activity, you may find the guidance above on 'Promoting a collaborative classroom' helpful.
 - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their collaboration skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could make these activities more collaborative.

Further reading

For more information on this topic, please see:

Cambridge University Press & Assessment (2022). *Mediation: What is it, how to teach it and how to assess it*. Cambridge Papers in ELT and Education. Available at: https://www.cambridge.org/gb/files/6116/7648/O472/CambridgePapersInELT_Mediation_2022_ONLINE.pdf

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Available at: www.coe.int/lang-cefr (see the *Mediation and Plurilingual* sections)

Dörnyei, Z. and Murphey, T. (2003). *Group dynamics in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hess, N. (2001). *Teaching large multilevel classes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

McCafferty, S., Jacobs, G. & DaSilva Iddings, A.C. (Eds). (2006). *Cooperative learning and second language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Mercer, N. (2000). *Words and minds: How we use language to think together*. London: Routledge.

NRC - National Research Council (2011) *Assessing 21st Century Skills: Summary of a Workshop*. J A Koenig, Rapporteur. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2017). *PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2015 results (volume V): Collaborative problem solving*. Paris: PISA, OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2018). *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030*. OECD Publishing.

Scoular, C., Duckworth, D., Heard, J., & Ramalingam, D. (2025). *Collaboration: Skill development framework*. 2nd edition. Australian Council for Educational Research.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.





Cambridge Life Competencies

You can find information about the other competencies and the foundation layers of the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework at cambridge.org/clcf

- ✓ Creative Thinking
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Learning to Learn
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Social Responsibilities
- ✓ Emotional Development
- ✓ Digital Literacy

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