



Roles and Gambits

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These are roles that I frequently assign to students as facilitate their working together; it's certainly not an exhaustive list. I have borrowed ideas from many generous colleagues, especially Karl A. Smith, Darwyn E. Linder, Neil Davidson, and Spencer Kagan. Some roles facilitate the completion of the task; others enhance the functioning of the team. At first, I assign particular roles because the task somehow seems to suggest them. As my students become more skilled at teamwork, I often let them select the roles they think will be most useful.

I always give students suggestions for what the person playing the role might say (Kagan calls them gambits). I strongly believe that these gambits give students permission to say some things that they might want to say, or need to say, but somehow can't. Often they lack confidence, or just don't know how to get started. When they first use the roles, they repeat the gambits word-for-word in very artificial tones – and then look at me and laugh self-consciously. I don't mind at all, because, by the end of the semester, they use them naturally, in their own words, without even thinking about it.

Task Roles	Group Maintenance Roles
<p>Recorder/ Summarizer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall we say it this way? • Let me read this back to you to make sure it's right. • Let me sum up what we have decided. • Here's what we have accomplished so far – we have one section left to draft. <p>Taskmaster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's get back to the main point. • I think we need to move on to the next question. We only have three minutes left to get the job done. • Who is going to take responsibility for tracking down that information? • Do we all agree to meet have our preliminary reports on Thursday? <p>Devil's Advocate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you sure that this issue is important? • What if we didn't assume this is true? • How confident are you that it really works? • Can we make a distinction between these two categories? <p>Fact or Reference Checker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's look at Step 3 again. I don't think we've got it quite right. • This conflicts with the data presented in the other article. What shall we do? • I'm think we're violating the second constraint. • I think that we each need to bring in one more reference – I just don't think the literature review is comprehensive enough. 	<p>Consensus Checker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we all agree? • Is that answer okay with all of you? • Any final thoughts before the recorder writes that down? • I'm not convinced that everyone is all right with that decision. Can we do a quick poll? <p>Encourager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's think hard. I'm sure we can figure this out. • We're doing a wonderful job with this. • That's a great answer. • Let's give ourselves a hand for that! <p>Gatekeeper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We haven't heard from you yet. • Thanks for your input. Can we get another opinion now? • Before we jump into an open discussion, let's all write down our initial impressions. • Everyone each gets thirty seconds of uninterrupted time to advocate their position before we move on. <p>Facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This seems to be too big an issue to handle right now; let's put it off until next meeting. • Let's review our Code of Cooperation and see how we're doing. • I think we need to agree upon a decision-making strategy before we go any further. • How about doing a plus/delta at the end of each meeting?