Early Planning[*]

- choose a topic
- share initial ideas and brainstorm
- draft a research question and/or thesis statement
- decide how often your group will meet, when and where
  - you can use free tools like Doodle, whenisgood.net, and needtomeet.com poll so people can share availabilities and decide on dates
  - if you can't all meet in person, decide how will you share information (e.g. email, Google Docs, Dropbox)?
- make a list of the different sections you'll need in your paper and tasks that will need to be done
- decide who will do what:
  - some groups divide and assign work by tasks: e.g. someone finds sources, others read and summarize them, another analyzes data, still more create the bibliography or edit
  - other groups make each member responsible for all the thought, research and writing associated with a particular section of the paper: e.g. for an empirical study in psychology, this would mean assigning individuals to write the literature review (or sections within it), methods, results, discussion, and abstract
- make a timeline for your project: using your assignment deadline as a starting point, work backwards and decide when each section will need to be completed
  - set firm deadlines for different stages of the project
  - make sure you build in time for **all** the tasks, such as collecting data (e.g. performing interviews, carrying out an experiment), finding sources, reading, writing, and revising
  - keep in mind that some sections (e.g. those that describe problems) may need to be written and shared before others can be written (e.g. those that describe solutions), and that the introduction and conclusion often can't be written or finalized until the body is complete

Revising/Editing

- revising is absolutely necessary for group papers, which are especially prone to inconsistency and disunity because they tend to be written piecemeal by different people
- decide how writing will be revised:
  - is everyone expected to read and comment on the entire document? or will group members be swapping sections and reviewing one another's work, e.g. in pairs?
    - comments from different people can be added in Adobe Acrobat, Word, or Google Docs

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[*]Adapted from UNC Chapel Hill Writing Center "Group Writing" handout <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/group-writing/>.

- who decides which suggestions to accept or reject? the author, the commentator, or one editor?
- who is in charge of incorporating the feedback and making changes?
- if group members have written sections separately, assign specific people to do the following (more than one person is preferable, since this ends up being a big job):
  - assemble the different parts of the paper, in a logical order, into a single document
  - read through the document from start to finish, sending any last-minute questions that arise to the respective authors
  - add headings (if appropriate)
  - remove repetition
  - add transition sentences
  - make the voice consistent (e.g. make sure that terminology and pronouns are used consistently throughout the text)
  - edit grammar, punctuation, etc.
  - ensure all sources mentioned in the paper are cited properly and included in the bibliography

Suggested Ground Rules

- take responsibility for an appropriate share of the work. Volunteer for tasks early, especially those that play to your strengths and interests.
- show up to meetings on time
- respect your group members by sticking to mutually set deadlines:
  - realize that schedules involving several people and project stages are much less flexible than schedules for projects you work on alone: delays with one person can lead to a domino effect, adding extra pressure onto those working on later stages of the assignment
  - if deadlines need to be changed, give other group members as much notice as possible, and work with them to negotiate a new deadline that works for everyone
- listen to others carefully, and consider their point of view
- provide positive feedback and thank others for their contributions
- work together and with your professor to decide on protocols for handling disagreements or setbacks during the project: will members vote on the issue, with majority rule deciding on the course of action? will groups be able to look to the professor for guidance when settling disagreements? will group members be able to evaluate each other (anonymously) at the end? will this affect a portion of an individual's grade, or will each group member receive the same grade, regardless of their contribution?