

Individual, Pairs, or Small Group?

In a more student-driven learning environment, students can choose whether to learn independently, in pairs, or in a small group. So, when planning your instructional materials, consider including activities that offer those options.

The best way to determine whether an activity should be individual, in pairs, or in small groups is to consider the purpose of the activity itself. Below are a few guidelines to help you determine the most effective approach. By considering these factors, you can create a learning environment that not only fosters an understanding of the content area, but cultivates collaboration and autonomy as well!

Individual

Best for . . .

- Activities that require focused concentration
- Learning/mastery of a new skill
- Personal reflection and growth

Pairs

Best for . . .

- Brainstorming ideas
- Tasks that require different skill sets
- Activities that would benefit from feedback and different perspectives
- Collaborative learning
- Practicing communication skills
- Practicing skills/concepts

Small Group

Best for . . .

- Activities that require a larger pool of knowledge
- Brainstorming
- Synthesizing ideas
- Collaborative learning
- Team building

Note that some activities can be adaptable to multiple formats. For example, you might . . .

- Have students first brainstorm ideas individually, and then come together to discuss them in partnerships.
- Give students a choice to practice a skill in partnerships (if they prefer more collaborative learning) or independently (if they prefer more focused concentration).
- Create a learning center that is designed for pairs or for small groups.

Use this guide to help you determine which activities on your [Scaffold for Learning](#) should be individual, pair, or small group.