

Group Stages

Considering the **stage of a group** is important when determining what activity should be presented in your sequence. The following table describes the stages a group typically goes through, as it develops, according to Bruce Tuckman:

	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing
Phase:	Group Formation	Group Challenge	Group Support	Group Achievement

We can create an environment that encourages movement through the stages to move the group along toward greater achievement. All groups will go through these stages on their way to truly working well together; however, it can be difficult to recognize stages at times.

Forming is the stage when groups first come together. There is a general feeling of anxiety. Students wonder if they will be accepted. People are generally polite and unwilling to take risks. This is the time for **Get to Know You** and **Deinhibitizer** activities eventually working into **Trust activities**.

Storming happens once the students know each other, have developed trust, and feel safe to take risks. Conflicts will arise as interactions become more complex, and differences in style, opinion and perspective become evident. Conflicts are evidence that a group is moving along. **Group Problem Solving** activities help students enter and work through this stage. Class meetings can be useful here as well.

Norming is when the class has developed common ground, goals, and developing norms for behavior. Norms will be developed whether the group actually thinks about them or not. This is a good time to revisit the **Full Value Contract** and **Challenge by Choice** concept while *guiding the class into developing healthy norms* as they learn what it really means to be part of the class.

Performing happens once the students have practiced ways of working together and have arrived at a mutual understanding of what it means to be part of the class. They begin to work as a cohesive unit, people truly care about each other and will be much more comfortable taking learning risks!

NOTE: While groups may move through the stages in the order above, many, if not most, groups will regress at times moving back and forth through the stages. It is important to be aware of this as activity types and frames and debriefs will need to be adjusted accordingly. At times a group may appear to be functioning at the "Performing" stage, working well together to solve problems, and then something happens (a failure in an activity, the addition of a new student to the class, etc.) and the group falls back into the "Storming" stage. The activity type may be moved from group problem-solving to trust building again and so on.