

Some Quick Cooperative Starters

Cooperation in the Classroom by Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1988

1. **Learning Partners:** Ask the students to turn to a neighbor and ask h/her something about the lesson; to explain a concept you've just taught; to explain the assignment; to explain how to do what you've just taught; to summarize the three most important points of the discussion; or whatever fits the lesson.
2. **Reading Groups:** Students read material together and answer the questions. One person is the Reader, another the Recorder, and the third the Checker (who checks to make certain everyone understands, agrees with, and can explain the answers). They must come up with three possible answers to each question and circle their favorite one. When finished, they sign the paper to certify that they all understand, agree on, and can explain the answers.
3. **Jigsaw.** Each person reads and studies part of a selection with a partner, practices teaching the section with a new partner (student studying same section from another group), then teaches what he or she has learned to the other members of the group. Each then quizzes the group members until satisfied that everyone knows all parts thoroughly.
4. **Bookends.** Before a film, lecture, or a reading, have groups of three students summarize together what they already know about the subject and come up with questions they have about it. Afterwards, the groups answer questions, discuss new information, and formulate new questions.
5. **Drill Partners.** Have students drill each other on the facts they need to know until they are certain both partners know and can remember them all. This works for spelling, vocabulary, math, grammar, test review, etc. Give bonus points on the test if all members score above a certain percentage.
6. **Reading Buddies.** In lower grades, have students read their stories to each other, getting help with words and discussing content with their partners. In upper grades, have students tell about their books and read their favorite parts to each other.
7. **Worksheet Checkmates.** Have two students, each with different jobs, do one worksheet. The Reader reads, then suggests an answer; the Writer either agrees or comes up with another answer. When they both understand and agree on an answer, the Writer can write it.
8. **Homework Checkers.** Have students compare homework answers, discuss any they have not answered similarly, then correct their papers and add the reason they changed an answer. They make certain everyone's answers agree, then staple the papers together. You grade one paper from each group and give group members that grade.
9. **Test Reviewers.** Have students prepare each other for a test. They get bonus points if every group member scores above a preset level.
10. **Composition Pairs.** Student A explains what s/he plans to write to Student B, while Student B takes notes or makes an outline. Together they plan the opening or the thesis statement. Then Student B explains while Student A writes. They exchange outlines, and use them in writing their papers.

11. **Board Workers.** Students go together to the chalkboard. One can be the Answer Suggester, one the Checker to see if everyone agrees, and one the Writer.
12. **Problem Solvers.** Give groups a problem to solve. Each student must contribute part of the solution. Groups can decide who does what, but they must show where all members contributed. Or, they can decide together, but each must be able to explain how to solve the problem.
13. **Computer Groups.** Students work together on the computer. They must agree on the input before it is typed in. One person is the Keyboard operator, another the Monitor Reader, a third the Verifier (who collects opinions on the input from the other two and makes the final decision). Roles are rotated daily so everyone get experience at all three jobs.
14. **Book Report Pairs.** Students interview each other on the books they read, then they report on their partner's book.
15. **Writing Response Groups.** Students read and respond to each other's papers three times:
 - a. They mark what they like with a star and put a question mark anywhere there is something they don't understand or think is weak. Then they discuss the paper as a whole with the writer.
 - b. They mark problems with grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, or format and discuss it with the author.
 - c. They proofread the final draft and point out any errors for the author to correct.

Teachers can assign questions for students to answer about their groups members' papers to help them focus on certain problems or skills.

16. **Skill Teachers/Concept Clarifiers.** Students work with each other on skills (like identifying adjectives in sentences or showing proof in algebra) and/or concepts (like "ecology" or "economics") until each can do or explain it easily.
17. **Report Groups.** Student research a topic together. Each one is responsible for checking at least one different source and writing at least three notecards of information. They write the report together; each person is responsible for seeing that h/her information is included. For oral reports, each must take a part and help others rehearse until they are at ease.
18. **Summary Pairs.** Have students alternate reading and orally summarizing paragraphs. One reads and summarizes while the other checks the paragraph for accuracy and adds anything left out. They alternate roles with each paragraph.
19. **Elaborating and Relating Pairs.** Have students elaborate on what they are reading and learning by relating it to what they already know about the subject. This can be done before and after reading a selection, listening to a lecture, or seeing a film.
20. **Playwrights.** Students write a play together, perhaps about a time period recently studied, practice, and perform it for the class.