Tools for collaborative working

## In this post we will explore how to choose the right collaborative tool for group work.

# Introduction

To complete any piece of group work you will need to use a range of collaborative tools. This may be to communicate between your face-to-face meetings. keep up to date with each other’s progress and to produce the work.

Choosing tools to help you with this will ensure issues that arise have minimal impact on the overall piece of work. Good tools will support group communication through functions such as chat or discussion boards. Tools should also be easy to access and use, and (ideally) already familiar to members of the group. For this reason and you may even decide to use a combination of tools such as setting up a [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com/) group for general chat and a cloud storage app like [Dropbox](https://www.dropbox.com/) or [Google Drive](https://www.google.com/drive/) for sharing, storing and commenting on tasks or documents.

# Choosing your tools

To help you decide on a tool make a list of the things you need it do and prioritise these by essential and desirable functions. You can put these into a table with the tools next to them to help you see at a glance which tool will work best for the group.

You may not need all of these things, it is likely to depend on the size of the group, complexity of the work and how long you will be working together. If you think a table like this would be useful you can [download it as an Excel spreadsheet.](https://education.library.manchester.ac.uk/downloads/handouts/project-tool-comparison.xlsx)

Remember the final decision(s) should be made as a group! Make it a priority for your first meeting and ask members to bring along their own suggestions. You can then complete the table together.

## Tools for meetings

Arranging group meetings when everyone is available can be challenging. Tools like [Doodle](https://doodle.com/en/) are useful as they allow you to propose a list of possible dates and times. You can then send an invite to the group so they can vote for their preference(s). Meaning you can choose the time and date that suits as many of the group as possible.

To arrange this first meeting one member of the group will need to gather together some individual’s contact details and preference for contact such as mobile or email. Once gathered you can find a time to meet (e.g. using a tool such as Doodle) and send out an introduction/welcome message requesting availability.

**💡 Tip:** Don’t forget whenever meetings are being arranged or tasks assigned, you are unlikely to get an instant response. So let people know when they need to respond by and keep deadlines reasonable. Everyone has other responsibilities and priorities to work around!