

M4.1 Exercise: Strengths and Weaknesses Activity

Instructor note: This exercise asks students to understand how their own strengths can be used to contribute to their team. Students may be reluctant to share their own weaknesses, so it may be helpful to share your own. The goal is to get students to be reflective and open to how people approach work differently, and to encourage them to use these traits to make their team (and future teams) stronger.

Open this discussion with a conversation (or announcement) about their previous experiences working collaboratively—what worked and what didn't, and what can be done to make collaboration more productive. Move toward an acknowledgement that openness and honesty make communication in groups more effective, and emphasize the role of communication in successful collaborations.

For online classes, you may wish to make this exercise a group discussion.

Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses

We all have strengths and weaknesses. When working on a project, individually or as a group, some habits, skills and abilities help you accomplish your goals, and others require discipline to work through. In a group, open communication is key to successful collaboration and that includes being honest about your work habits--including your strengths and weaknesses.

Consider this table to help you get started thinking about your own skills and abilities. Notice how little difference there is between some strengths and weaknesses. It's a matter of degree and discipline.

Good organization skills	Not very organized
Detail-oriented	Micromanager
Good communicator	Reluctant to communicate
Good listener	Unresponsive
Consistent worker	Procrastinator

Strong writing skills	Not confident as a writer
Strong math skills	Not confident with math
Strong visual design skills	Not confident with visual design
Strong technological skills	Not confident with technology

This table just gets you started. Think about how you work and work hard to be honest. For this exercise, list five strengths and five weaknesses that are most characteristic of your work habits. Remember, be honest with yourself and with your team. Honesty at the start of the project sets the precedent of open communication and heads off misunderstanding later in the project.

Once you have submitted your list here, share it with your team members. This information goes a long way to helping ensure a successful collaboration. Once you know each other's work habits, you can set up expectations that accommodate all members to ensure that the work gets done well and on time.