

Small Group Decision-Making Handout

Government is about how we make decisions. The same principles of decision-making at a government level also apply to small-groups. As a small group we need to decide how we're going to make decisions as a class. This shouldn't be a casual choice. Remember that we are trying to set up a system that everyone accepts and will give us to the **power to** achieve important things as individuals and as a group.

Rank your preferences for how we will make decisions as a class for the rest of the year. We'll rank these options at least twice over the next few days. We will try to achieve consensus as a class. The first decision we will use this system on is choosing the issue for our group project. Future decisions might involve rubrics, grading, and the schedule.

Method	Description	Rank 1st round	Rank 2nd round	Rank 3rd round
Delegate authority	You delegate the power to make decisions to one person, such as a teacher, or a panel of individuals. Pros: allows for expertise and consideration. Cons: you have no direct say in what happens			
Plurality vote	Whichever option gets the most votes win. Pros: simple. Cons: options with less than a majority of the group could win.			
Majority vote	Over fifty percent of class must approve of an action. Pros: simple. Cons: creates winners and losers in any decision.			
Super-majority vote	Over 60% (or 75% or 80%) of the class must approve of an action. Pros: shrinks the number who have to accept a decision they don't agree with. Cons: harder to achieve and you still might have people who hate the idea			
Scoring method	Everyone ranks or scores the options. You have the option with the highest average win or do multiple rounds to knock out low score options before a final scoring. Pros: allows choices everyone likes a little to rise to the top. Cons: can get complicated.			
Consensus	You discuss until everyone agrees or, if they don't agree are willing to go along. Pros: Gets everyone behind a decision. Cons: Can take a long time and one person is enough to "block" a proposal and force additional discussion and refinement			
Consensus w/ voting	You pursue consensus but cap discussion to a period of time. Once you reach the time limit, you use one of the voting methods to close debate. Pros: Gives consensus a chance to work Cons: hard to decide when to move to vote			