

Tips for Writing the Paper

What is the purpose of the paper?

The paper is designed to give you an opportunity to demonstrate that you have read and understood the course concepts and to show that you can integrate these concepts with your group experience. Your paper is an analysis of your journal entries and all other observations you have concerning your group. You should not write length descriptions of different activities of particular group meetings. Instead, when you discuss a particular concepts, theory, or set of research findings, you should bring in examples and issues from various parts of your journal and/or reflections from group meetings and consider how they relate to the concept in question.

The primary purpose of the individual term paper is to apply course learning to the interactions of your team. A secondary purpose is to reinforce the learning of team skills. It is assumed that the participants, through their interactions and the writing of this paper, will enhance their own individual effectiveness in team skills and learn something about coaching others who are attempting to do the same.

What should you include?

There are many different concepts that you could discuss, although all of the following should **definitely** be included: group processes; leadership; communication; motivation; performance; perceptual differences; group norms; effectiveness. You should also address the following question: if this group were to continue, what could I do to improve my own effectiveness? You could also consider what the group as a whole could do to improve its effectiveness. Don't forget that your group has been developing (not necessarily always in a positive way) over the course of the semester. This idea of development relates to all of the topics and you may want to consider this as your discuss them.

Soon you will be doing Activity 15-4 (analyzing the team climate) and you may find this a useful source of information to incorporate into your journal. Of course, you are free to include any other aspects of the course content that are relevant to your group (e.g. what you learned about your own behavior in your group and other "insights").

Is there a particular structure to follow?

The short answer is "no". However, it may be useful to divide your paper into the different topics as outlined above. This may help you to organize your thoughts in a coherent manner and prevent you from rambling or straying off on to tangents. Additionally, dividing the paper up into sections may make it easier to read. However, you are free to use any structure you feel appropriate, as long as you keep within the guidelines as outlined here.

When have you finished?

Go back and review what you have written. Remember, we are looking for extensive application of course concepts. You may improve your grade by reading over your paper to check that it is analytical, coherent, and relevant.

Keeping a Journal:

Each of you will be a team member, but you will also be a participant observer of the interaction dynamics as your group evolves. A journal will allow you to keep record of your observations on each meeting. Both your class activities and your outside meetings will be good sources. Observation notes should be made immediately after the meetings. Your journal will provide the raw data from which you will later make your analyses for your term paper. What observations you make are entirely up to you. During your initial meetings you have studied only a few concepts that you can practice applying; as the course progresses you will have more tools in which to work. Starting with the possibly disorganized behaviors of your self-directed team should make you more aware of the need for the skills and tools to shape the group into greater effectiveness and operating proficiency.