0.1 Getting groups to work together

The pre-service teachers tend to work well together. The pre-calculus population is less accustomed to this, and groups will degenerate into a lot of individuals ignoring each other, or occasionally explaining to each other. You may at times need to tell them explicitly "Janet has found what she thinks is an answer but Steve and Brenda apparently don't understand what she did, so Janet, you're going to have to explain it and see if you can convince Steve and Brenda." However, you should try other things first, before being this explicit. Ask Brenda what her group has found so far, and don't let anyone else answer for her. If she says she's stuck, ask if her whole group is stuck, and if not, tell her you'll come back in 3 minutes and ask her again for a summary of what her group has done. **Make sure groups are sitting in a tight circle**, not a line or a disarrayed cluster.

Sometimes you can give them specific tasks: Jason, finish the calculation you're doing; meanwhile Ann will add up Rob's numbers and will then check to see if they agree with yours; if not, it's up to all of you to judge which method if either was correct and why. If a group really has bad chemistry, change it. I've had students say to me: I just can't work with Judy - she won't listen and hogs the discussion. In that case, put Judy in with someone smarter or more aggressive than she. When re-forming the groups, I usually randomize again, but if there are trouble students, sometimes I stack the deck so that they get put with students who can handle them.