Create A High-Achieving Group

‘Plotting Your Preferences’ is a simple activity that helps students to pinpoint strengths, identify possible future directions, and perhaps learn a bit more about themselves. The activities listed in each square may be related to their field of study or they may be more general in nature. This resource works well in helping students form effective groups.

There are two student handouts for this activity. On the first, for the lower right square titled ‘Things I struggle to do and don’t like’ ask students to consider things they must do even if these are not an especially good fit for them (not just things they could avoid entirely).

Start by asking students to call out something they would include in the bottom right quadrant, and ask who else might take those things on. Public speaking generally finds its way into all four quadrants for different students, and is a fairly safe bet to get the ball rolling. Have students work with the people who will be in their project teams, starting with an individual attempt to place three things in each quadrant before comparing responses with their teammates.

Ask students to think about the task set for their team and to think about some of the things they may need to know and do. Who will devise the timeline? Present for the group? Schedule the meetings? Edit or write a report? Take the lead on the stats?

The second handout enables students to analyse their responses. This may be something students take away as a personal reflection. I often ask students to target one or two things in the lower quadrants as personal development challenges they will tackle over the next semester. Some students have taken a copy to a work placement, adding text as they experience new things. Keywords in the top quadrants have later been built into their capacity statements.
### PLOTTING YOUR PREFERENCES

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<th>Things I like and do well:</th>
<th>Things I don’t like but do well:</th>
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<th>Things I like but find difficult to do:</th>
<th>Things I don’t like and struggle to do:</th>
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**Things to think about:**

- Imagine the group project. What skills are required?
- How does this unit fit within your current commitments?
- In light of these, what roles can you contribute to the group?
- Which things would you prefer not to do?
ANALYSING THE RESULTS

Things I like and do well
The upper left quadrant, ‘Things I like and do well’, obviously identifies activities in life that are a very good fit, and ideally could be the focus of future career activities.

- Can these activities generate sufficient income to sustain you?
- How can you move in that direction and how will you fill in the gaps in the meantime?

Things I don’t like but do well
The upper right, ‘Things I don’t like but do well’, is one of life’s interesting conundrums. Perhaps you are very good at organising events, just not that interested in doing so. Or perhaps you got excellent grades in maths, but are just not that intrigued by the subject. You could, however, consider items in this square when thinking about a possible ‘day-job’ to make money. Activities you are adept at tend not to be energy drains and may be tasks that others are willing to pay you to do. Bingo! Ideal day-job. You can work, make some money, and still have energy left to pursue your true passions.

Things I like but find difficult to do
The lower left box can be more problematic. ‘Things I like, but find difficult to do’ can present real challenges in our lives—something to strive toward and improve on, or perhaps something you just find frustrating. What will you do with the items in that box?

Things I don’t like and struggle to do
Finally, the lower right, ‘Things I don’t like and don’t do well’. The activities in this box can take up considerable time and energy in our lives. One solution? There may be tasks on this list that you can hire others to do for you. It could be worthwhile to hire someone to clean your apartment, do your taxes, or shovel snow off your sidewalk. Some of those skills may land in that person’s upper right square, after all. You may even be able to trade or barter services, using your skills to help someone else.