SECTION III
Student Information: Working in Groups

WORKING WITH A PARTNER OR IN A GROUP:
SKILLS I WILL NEED

National History Day offers the opportunity for students to learn lifelong skills related to working in teams or groups. Since you’ve chosen to work in a small group of two to five students, you will experience the value of teamwork. Following are some important tips from NHD about making things go smoothly with partners.

- **Set specific work dates.** Actually schedule several partner or group “work days” on the calendar or choose one day every week or every other week when you will meet. When work days are scheduled ahead it will be easier for people to plan.

- **Work individually on things.** Recognize that you can have a quick two- or three-minute conversation to discuss who will work on what. Dividing the work can be efficient sometimes, and can provide you with some space from each other.

- **Be flexible.** Understand that things may come up and your partner or partners may not be able to meet as planned. (Hopefully the things that come up are not frivolous things.)

- **Communicate with each other about tasks.** Be clear and discuss who will do what. Always double-check with your partners. For example, say, “I just want to be clear on this now—I’m going to finish writing the script and you’re going to add the ten new sources to the bibliography. We’re going to meet on Thursday and we will have our parts done. Is that right?”

- **Keep a work log.** Keep a log of the tasks that are completed and who completes each task. Sometimes one partner does not realize what another partner is doing. This can keep the focus on the tasks that need to be completed.

- **Have fun.** Remember to have fun while working on your project with your partners. Obviously you need to get some serious work completed, but have fun doing it!

- **Make decisions together. Don’t be bossy.** Don’t tell your partner what he or she should do. Discuss tasks together—ask your partner what he or she would like to work on.

- **Discuss project costs and materials.** Always make sure that you discuss project purchases and costs with your partners and make sure everyone agrees before purchases are made.

- **Share the workloads.** Each partner should make contributions to the project. Partners should be doing some things that are different from the others, yet collaborating on some work (i.e., work together to put pictures and text on the exhibit board). All group members should feel a part of the group.

- **Share your feelings and opinions.** If problems arise, be honest with your partners about how you are feeling.

- **Take a break.** Take a break from the project every so often. This also means taking a break from your partners. When people work closely together, they sometimes need a short vacation from each other.

- **Compromise.** Whenever you work with another person, there will be some compromising that must take place. You will not agree on everything. When you compromise it means that each person gives in a little and agreements can be reached.

- **Be positive.** Stay positive with your partners. Compliment your partners. It’s sometimes easy to focus on the negative, but keep focused on the positive. No partner will be perfect. Ask yourself—What are the positive qualities of my partner? What are the strengths of my partner?

- **Get help from an adult.** If you and your partners are not able to reach agreements or you are having trouble with one partner not doing his or her share, get help from an unbiased adult (parent, teacher, or advisor). Do not wait until it’s time to turn your project in and then complain that you did all the work. At the end it is too late! Get help early on if you need it.

- **Celebrate your accomplishments together.** Have a little pizza party break or other small treat, and use the break time to pat each other—and yourself—on the back for solving problems together and making progress on your project!