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**Group time management exercise**

**This exercise can be modified for any upcoming essay assignment or project. I recommend doing it about a week before the due date, not sooner. If you do it too far ahead, it loses some urgency. Of course, you’ve probably given out the assignment details long before, but now students are more ready to start the work.**

**Step I**

Form small groups and give students copies of the main steps needed to complete the upcoming essay assignment. *See my sample steps below*. (You can also let students generate the main steps, if you have time). People in the group discuss how long each step will take, and come up with a group estimate.

Write the steps on the board and call on each group to report their estimates for each. (If an especially high or low estimate is reported, ask a few questions about it. That often illuminates some interesting stuff and helps other people think through what each step actually entails.) Write down the range of time reported for each step reported. Then, write the total time estimated from all steps. A typical range for a short essay *might* be 4 ½ to 6 hours—but whatever it is, don’t override anything. Just let the group wisdom prevail.

***Sample steps from one of my assignments:***

1. Review the essay assignment sheet and decide on the pair of essays you’ll write about. \_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Re-read the two essays and take notes on material you can use. \_\_\_\_
3. Read the outline I provided, and make your own simple outline. \_\_\_\_
4. Write a first draft. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Revise and make changes. \_\_\_\_
6. Proofread the essay out loud, make corrections, and print. \_\_\_\_

**Step II (important):**

Each individual does this step on his/her own. Ask each student to write down the total time needed to complete the essay. Then, reminding them of the due date, ask them to think about their work schedule and other class work, etc., and complete the following statement:

*Between today and the due date, here are the days and times I will do the work:*