**GROUP DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES**

**Tuckman's Stages model**

[Bruce Tuckman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Tuckman) reviewed about fifty studies of group development (including [Bales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_F._Bales)' model) in the mid-sixties and synthesized their commonalities in one of the most frequently cited models of group development (Tuckman, 1965). [Tuckman's model of group development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckman%27s_stages_of_group_development) describes four linear stages (forming, storming, norming, and performing) that a group will go through in its unitary sequence of decision making. A fifth stage (adjourning) was added in 1977 when a new set of studies were reviewed (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

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| **Forming:** | Group members learn about each other and the task at hand. Indicators of this stage might include: Unclear objectives, Uninvolvement, Uncommitted members, Confusion, Low morale, Hidden feelings, Poor listening, etc. A leadership strategy to help groups that are forming is to act as a "coordinator" by helping to "set the stage" (i.e., purposefully pick the team, facilitate group goals, and create a team shared mental model) (Manges et al., 2016).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_development#cite_note-:0-1) |
| **Storming:** | As group members continue to work, they will engage each other in arguments about the structure of the group which often are significantly emotional and illustrate a struggle for status in the group. These activities mark the storming phase: Lack of cohesion, Subjectivity, Hidden agendas, Conflicts, Confrontation, Volatility, Resentment, anger, Inconsistency, Failure. A leadership strategy to help groups that are storming is to act as a "coach" by helping to "resolve conflict and tension" (i.e., act as a resource, develop mutual trust, calm the work environment) (Manges et al., 2016).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_development#cite_note-:0-1) |
| **Norming:** | Group members establish implicit or explicit rules about how they will achieve their goal. They address the types of communication that will or will not help with the task. Indicators include: Questioning performance, Reviewing/clarifying objectives, Changing/confirming roles, Opening risky issues, Assertiveness, Listening, Testing new ground, Identifying strengths and weaknesses. A leadership strategy to help groups that are norming and performing is to "empower" to help the team "successfully implement and sustain projects" (i.e., (allow for the transfer of leadership, seek feedback from staff, set time aside for planning and engaging the team) (Manges et al., 2016).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_development#cite_note-:0-1) |
| **Performing:** | Groups reach a conclusion and implement the solution to their issue. Indicators include: Creativity, Initiative, Flexibility, Open relationships, Pride, Concern for people, Learning, Confidence, High morale, Success, etc. |
| **Adjourning:** | As the group project ends, the group disbands in the adjournment phase. This phase was added when Tuckman and Jensen's updated their original review of the literature in 1977. During the adjourning stage, the leader should transition into a supporting role in order to expand the initiative (i.e., create future leadership opportunities for the group members) (Manges et al., 2016).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_development#cite_note-:0-1) |

Each of the five stages in the [Forming-storming-norming-performing-adjourning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forming-storming-norming-performing) model proposed by Tuckman involves two aspects: *interpersonal relationships* and *task behaviors*. Such a distinction is similar to Bales' (1950) equilibrium model which states that a group continuously divides its attention between instrumental (task-related) and expressive (socioemotional) needs.

As Gersick (1988) has pointed out, some later models followed similar sequential patterns. Examples include: define the situation, develop new skills, develop appropriate roles, carry out the work (Hare, 1976); orientation, dissatisfaction, resolution, production, termination (LaCoursiere, 1980); and generate plans, ideas, and goals; choose & agree on alternatives, goals, and policies; resolve conflicts and develop norms; perform action tasks and maintain cohesion (McGrath, 1984).

### FORMING

The team meets and learns about the opportunities and challenges, and then agrees on goals and begins to tackle the tasks. Team members tend to behave quite independently. They may be motivated but are usually relatively uninformed of the issues and objectives of the team. Team members are usually on their best behavior but very focused on themselves. Mature team members begin to model appropriate behavior even at this early phase. The meeting environment also plays an important role to model the initial behavior of each individual. The major task functions also concern orientation. Members attempt to become oriented to the tasks as well as to one another. Discussion centers on defining the scope of the task, how to approach it, and similar concerns. To grow from this stage to the next, each member must relinquish the comfort of non-threatening topics and risk the possibility of conflict.

### STORMING

This is the second stage of team development, where the group starts to sort itself out and gain each other’s trust. This stage often starts when they voice their opinions and, as a result of this, a conflict may arise between team members as power and status are assigned. When the group members start to work with each other they start to learn about individual working styles and what it is like to work with each other as a team, it also identifies different hierarchy of status of positions in the group. At this stage there is a positive and polite atmosphere and people are pleasant to each other and they have different feelings of excitement, eagerness and costiveness and others may have feelings of suspicion, fear and anxiety. The leader of the team will then describes the tasks to the group, describe the different behaviors to the group and how to deal and handle complaints. In this stage "...participants form opinions about the character and integrity of the other participants and feel compelled to voice these opinions if they find someone shirking responsibility or attempting to dominate. Sometimes participants question the actions or decision of the leader as the expedition grows harder...". Disagreements and personality clashes must be resolved before the team can progress out of this stage, and so some teams may never emerge from "storming" or re-enter that phase if new challenges or disputes arise. In Tuckman's 1965 paper, only 50% of the studies identified a stage of intragroup conflict, and some of the remaining studies jumped directly from stage 1 to stage 3. Some groups may avoid the phase altogether, but for those who do not; the duration, intensity and destructiveness of the "storms" can be varied. Tolerance of each team member and their differences should be emphasized; without tolerance and patience the team will fail.

This phase can become destructive to the team and will lower motivation if allowed to get out of control. Some teams will never develop past this stage; however, disagreements within the team can make members stronger, more versatile, and able to work more effectively as a team. Supervisors of the team during this phase may be more accessible, but tend to remain directive in their guidance of decision-making and professional behavior. The team members will therefore resolve their differences and members will be able to participate with one another more comfortably. The ideal is that they will not feel that they are being judged, and will therefore share their opinions and views. Normally tension, struggle and sometimes arguments occur. This stage can also be upsetting.

### NORMING

"Resolved disagreements and personality clashes result in greater intimacy, and a spirit of co-operation emerges."[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckman%27s_stages_of_group_development#cite_note-ReferenceA-2) This happens when the team is aware of competition and they share a common goal. In this stage, all team members take the responsibility and have the ambition to work for the success of the team's goals. They start tolerating the whims and fancies of the other team members. They accept others as they are and make an effort to move on. The danger here is that members may be so focused on preventing conflict that they are reluctant to share controversial ideas.

### PERFORMING

"With group norms and roles established, group members focus on achieving common goals, often reaching an unexpectedly high level of success." By this time, they are motivated and knowledgeable. The team members are now competent, autonomous and able to handle the decision-making process without supervision. Dissent is expected and allowed as long as it is channelled through means acceptable to the team.

Supervisors of the team during this phase are almost always participating. The team will make most of the necessary decisions. Even the most high-performing teams will revert to earlier stages in certain circumstances. Many long-standing teams go through these cycles many times as they react to changing circumstances. For example, a change in leadership may cause the team to revert to storming as the new people challenge the existing norms and dynamics of the team.