Being a 6.042 Team Coach

The objective is to teach students to learn from each other. These are the best students in the world.

Team Learning

They are highly motivated, proven high achievers. They are a great resource for each other.

Team Problem Solving

The team focuses on writing problem solutions on their white board. Every team member should endorse and be ready to explain.
Team Problem Solving
Problems give focus for studying together

Team Studying
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Don’t let team rush to finish and leave.

Team Studying
Problems give focus for studying together
Don’t let team rush to finish and leave. Use extra time to review, critique, generalize

Team Dynamics
Focus on fostering teamwork. Observe who is
• not participating
• dominating the board
• being unpleasant
Focus on fostering teamwork. Observe who is
• unhappy
• bored
• already knows the material

Report your observations in staff meeting and get advice on managing. Notify instructors if urgent.

A good answer is one that a student from another team who wanted the solution could look at the board and say “of course.”
Team Solutions
Every team member should individually confirm readiness to defend solution by explicit "OK" or thumbs up

Team Solutions
Team indicates when done by checkmarking the soln. Then coach says what’s unclear or wrong. Let the team figure out fix.

Team Solutions
If checkmarked solution OK, then ask if everyone is ready to be called upon to explain every part. (Warn them you plan to call on the most worried looking 😊)

Team Solutions
If anyone doubtful, delete checkmark Let team (not you) resolve doubts & restore checkmark
If all are ready you can call on someone—not a volunteer—to explain some tricky part (or just identify the trickiest part).

**Coaching not Tutoring**

- Answer a question with a question: “Did you ask your teammates?”
  Watch out: students say “yes” when they mean they asked someone, not everyone.
  You can help by calling the team’s attention to the student and have him ask his question.

A little floundering is educational. Give students time to struggle. When they are stuck and struggle is no longer fruitful, provide just enough guidance to get them going—no more.
Coaching mistakes

1. Tutoring instead of coaching. During problem-solving, when you find yourself talking to your whole team a mental alarm should go off: “Why can’t I get a student to say what I’m saying?”

2. Talking to one student. The student should be getting answers from his teammates. Did he try? You should check and verify that no one could answer.

   In which case, you should answer the whole team, not the one student.

   *... unless it’s personal

3. Showing tricks & mental teasers. Usually a bad idea. Your students are already struggling with a lot of new material.

   We’re trying to teach them concepts not quick facility.

4. Stick to the class problems and info in the staff solutions.
Initial Review

Start session with short list of the main topics.
Ask for questions. See if team member can answer.

Initial Review

Check that team wants explanation. If mostly not, postpone answer till after class.
Review < 10 min

Discussion Questions

Some problems meant for discussion.
Usually worthwhile.
Don’t let students blow off.

Discussion Questions

Try to get team engaged.
Suggestions to stimulate discussion in staff solutions.
Participation Grades
Take attendance.
0 for absence.
1 for unprepared, read email, fell asleep, ...
2 satisfactory (90% of grades)

3 extraordinary contribution—better than staff solution.
Once or twice for a team during the term.

Email students for unexplained absence:
“I noticed you were absent today. Hope you are OK.
Look forward to seeing at next class.” cc instructors.

Tell students who get a 1:
“Given your team activity today, I’m not comfortable giving you full credit for participation.”
Participation Grades
Tell students who get a 1:
Follow up by email & cc the instructors.

Preparing yourself
Prepare yourself: look at all material (text & online) and ask in advance about anything you’re not sure of.

Coaching is satisfying
Most students appreciate the guidance of their coaches. Many are former students who want to return the favor.
It’s a satisfying role and a way to gain valuable leadership and communication skills.

And it should go w/o saying
You are in a supervisory position, perhaps for the first time. Do not abuse it. For example,
• no personal relationships with team members
• no bribes
• no undeserved “hardship” grading