Fun ways to group students

Tips for dividing into groups.

Picture Cards:
Hand out cards with images on such as strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and other such groups of things. Then get them to find someone with the card that ‘goes’ with their card. Two of the same for groups of two, three of the same for groups of three etc.

Give each participant a card with a different kind of ball or sporting equipment picture on it. Participants find the person(s) with the equipment that matches theirs. You can use any category (i.e., dogs, cars, birds).

Socks:
Use a bag of clean (washed) socks – each picks one then finds their pair. For larger groups pairs join other pairs by size or colour to form larger sub-groups.

Ask a question:
Those who say yes to one end of the room, those who say no, to the other.

Body Decisions:
Have everyone cross their arms across their chest. Amazingly, it almost always works out to about 50% cross right over left, and the other 50% cross left over right.

Have students close their eyes and then put their hands together so their fingers are interlocking and their palms are touching each other. Have them open their eyes and look down at their hands. If their right thumb is on top, then they are one team and if their left thumb is on top then they go to the other team.

Have students close either their left eye or right eye and keep it closed. Find three other people who have the same eye closed.

Clusters:
Have students group themselves according to attributes—type of toothpaste used, favorite foods, type of vacation preferred. The sillier and more personal the categories, the better.

Pick a Number:
Ask everyone to pick a number between 1 and (choose the upper number depending on the size of your group). Line them up according to which number they picked. The two people at the end of the line become partners, the next two become partners, etc. Those who picked the same number become partners. If only one person chooses a particular number, ask them to choose another number.
Hat Sort:
Drawing teams out of a hat: give each team a name, put the names on slips of paper and put them into a hat. Have each learner pull a team name from a hat. Learners join the teams whose names they pulled.

Variation: Drawing team associations out of a hat as above, but each slip of paper has a word associated with the team name. For example, one team might be "fruit", another might be "vegetable," and another might be a "sport." Slips of paper will have words like: "apples," "oranges," and "carrots" written on them.

Picture Puzzles:
Cut pictures from a magazine (half as many pictures as members of the group). Cut each picture in half and mix them up in a hat. Each person takes one piece and partners are those whose pieces form a complete picture.

Laminate pictures of sports or sports figures, teams, fields, etc. and cut into 4 or more odd shaped pieces. The students with the matching pieces must find each other. I even have the kids come up with their own team name based on the puzzle.

Playing Cards:
Decide how many groups you want and what size. For example, if you would like to have 5 groups of 5 and you wanted to randomly put them into groups then get 5 Kings, 5 Aces, 5 2’s, 5 Jacks, and 5 Queens (of course you will need more than one deck of cards) and shuffle them up.

Deal out a deck of cards. Divide into two groups (red or Black), four groups (suits), three groups (face cards, odds, evens) or more.

Pass them out and match up the five who get the kings, Queens, etc.

Decks of Old Maid cards work well for dividing into partners.

Count Off With a Twist:
Decide how many groups you want. Divide the number of total girls by the number of groups you want and have them count off by that quotient (for example: you have 14 girls and want four groups. 12/4+3. Have the girls count off by 3). Have the girls get into groups so there is one of each number in the group (each of the four resulting groups in our example will have three students). The resulting group is their work group.

Double Simon Says:
Have the group play “Simon Says” as you normally would (Game leader says Simon Says do this and does some motion. Then occasionally the game leader just says “Do This” and if anyone does that action, they are out). However, instead of being “out” if a girl makes a mistake, she goes into a second circle. When the groups are fairly event, stop the game.
Famous Pairs:
For groups of 2 (pairs), put a slip on each person’s back with one of a famous pair: cricket bat and ball, football and boots, hot and cold, etc. Have a “cricket bat” find a “ball,” a “Football” find the “boots,” a “hot” find a “cold,” etc. Or, have people ask yes/no questions (no more than 2-3 per person) to find out what they are, and then find their pair.

Form a Band:
Tell the students to divide themselves into groups of four (if you want four groups – three if you want three groups, etc.). Each band must have a drummer, a guitar player, a keyboard player and singer (add more parts if you want more teams). Then they mime out their band. Then all of the drummers are in one group, all singers in another group, etc.
You can create as many band members as you need groups (above example gets you four groups). Or, you can do the same with a baseball (or any sports) team. For example, ask them to be pitchers, catchers, hitters, outfielders, and hot dog sales people. This gets five groups.

Stickers:
Use different types of stickers or colored stars or dots. Put the stickers on your students as they enter the classroom or do it right before the activity. For example, if you want five groups with five people per group, you would select five different types of stickers to put on five sets of students.
Instead of using stickers, use squares or strips of colored paper in a bag and have students reach inside the bag. Students holding the same colors would form the groups.

What Colour?:
Have students get into groups of four or five with others who are wearing at least one item of the same color as something they have on.

Odds and evens:
Ask students to count up the letters in their first name and determine if they have an odd number of letters or an even number of letters. Find three or four others who also have an even or odd number of letters in their name and form a group.

On go, have people hold up anywhere from one to ten fingers. All the people holding up an even number of fingers on one side, odd fingers on the other.

Magnetic strips
Use magnetic strips (Craft item) that I cut in 1 inch pieces to put students names on with labels. With this done I use sheet metal boards (mine were made by a shop teacher), and place students in groups or teams without continually rewriting their names. (color code the labels)
**Velcro letters**
Give each child a letter with velcro on the back of the piece. Have the students move around the space. Once all students have a piece ask them to locate a sign which has their letter. Each sign has a word dealing with the topic of the day. For example; in a soccer lesson sample signs might read: K I C K or G O A L or F O O T. Each child then sticks their letter on a sign. A letter can be used only once.

**Choose the teams myself**
When I want to have a round robin tournament that will be ongoing for several weeks. I simply go through my gradebook, and choose the teams myself. I know my kids very well, and the teams have always been very evenly matched.

**Slips of paper**
Another way of splitting a class into groups is by writing each student's name on a piece of paper and drawing names. This gives you the flexibility of forming small groups or large groups. You decide how big the groups will be. With so many different ways to split a class into groups or teams, there is absolutely no reason to use the "captain-choice method.
Another way to do slips of paper
Use the roll and place all students names on a sheet of paper. Leave room for cutting out names.
Then, cut out/off the names, fold, and place in an envelope. Just prior to starting the game, we ‘draw’. I actually pull names from the envelope, place in front of them on the desk. Making sure all see, I then "stir" these names, then begin picking names for teams. Students are then placed at specified areas around the floor. Of course, I make a big deal out the the names I ‘draw’

**Quotes puzzles**
Laminate famous quotes and cut into 4 or more odd shaped pieces. The students with the matching pieces must find each other.

**Index cards**
Use index cards with the students name on the card. I use these for taking roll also. Randomly draw the cards from the box for teams, partners, etc. If you wish to group boys and girls, use 2 boxes. You may even allow the students to draw the cards, although this takes longer.

*Another way to use index cards*
I have the large size index cards for each student. I use the index cards to keep personal records. These cards also come in handy for choosing teams. If I want to make fairly even teams in terms of ability, I pre-arrange the cards into teams, and then just call out the teams. Most of the time, I just mix up the cards in front of the students. I ask one student to tell me when to stop mixing. When he or she says stop. I call out the names in the order they came up

"*Put Your Foot Down"
I also sometimes just make everyone take off one shoe and I then throw shoes to
one side of the gym or the other (works well with 4 teams and the kids always seem to have a laugh watching me toss shoes around).

**Whistle Numbers**
During warm up activities, I would ask the children to move around the gym in various ways (skipping, low to the ground, high as they can, etc). Every few seconds blow your whistle- or which ever signal you choose- the number of times you want a group of children to be. Ex) 3 blasts, groups of three. After a few rounds of this make the groups bigger and... you have your teams already made. There may be a few stragglers, put them where you see fit. Or you could "add' groups together to get the desired number of students together. 2 groups of 3 make teams of 6.

**Dice are Nice**
Each student rolls a die. The 1,2,3 make a team, the 4,5,6 makes another team. Or any combination of numbers rolled. (I have used a box for them to roll the dice in to keep it under control.)

**Back to back splits**
I will sometimes tell them to stand back to back with a partner, and then one partner is on one team and the other partner is on the other team. Sometimes when I have them pair up I will split them down the middle so that they can be with their partner.

**Tongue depressors**
Tongue depressors or paddle popsticks on which I put numbers. I shuffle the sticks around and then hold them in my hand, hiding the numbers. Each student picks a stick and then I choose the numbers which make up each team. Sometimes I use "odd and even", sometimes 1-8 and 9-16, and other times call out random numbers. Some are not happy with this method, but do realize that even when the teams are not equal, it was the "luck of the draw" that caused the situation.

**Color Cards**
For my younger students, especially 1st grade, I use cards with the color words printed on them. This was an idea that the 1st grade teachers and I thought up together. The kids needed reinforcement of their reading of the color words. I made about 8 of each color (red, green, blue, yellow, orange, purple, black, brown) and laminated them. As students come into class, I hand them each one and they need to go to the cone that is the color of their word.