

Study Groups That Work

Form your own study group and work effectively by following these three steps:

1. Choose the right size and members

- a. Size: Research has shown that an effective group size is 3-5 members.
- b. Members: Try to select members with a variety of perspectives and ways of processing information.
 - i. **Friends may not be the best choice** – study groups are not for socializing
 - ii. Having diverse perspectives helps you gain a deeper understanding of a concept and to prepare for exams – one of your group members may even think similar to the professor who is creating and grading assignments/exams.
- c. Time: Schedule a time that works for all members and specify the duration (e.g., 1.5 hours)

2. Establish group expectations or ground rules at the first meeting

- a. Topics to discuss: preparation for meetings; attendance; phone use; ensuring everyone understands the assignment and approach; equal effort; communicating respectfully, etc.
- b. After consensus is reached, have each member sign a document indicating acceptance of these expectations and intention to fulfill them.
 - i. This provides a concrete place to refer to if a member is not respecting group rules.
 - ii. It makes disputes less personal and provides an opportunity to discuss how the group as a whole had envisioned the study group process.

3. Develop rotating roles or responsibilities for group members

- a. Leader/facilitator – keeps the discussion moving and on-track; ensures that all participants are heard and have a chance to contribute.
- b. Scribe/organizer – creates a record of information/topics discussed in the session.
- c. Lecture connector – links the conversation with the ideas from lecture
- d. Reading connector –links the conversation with the readings, citing specific sections.

Caution: Do not allow the study group to become a complaining session – It is important that the conversation remains positive and constructive.

Adapted from Cornell University, Learning Strategies Center



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