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