

Study Group Tips



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Many find that they can study more effectively and efficiently with a team. Study groups are helpful in engaging with specific course content and preparing for exams and other major assessments. Active engagement with course content results in deeper learning, increased motivation, greater self and group confidence, and academic success. The other added benefits include:

- improvement in your interpersonal and team skills;
- creation of a beneficial support system;
- an opportunity to share different perspectives;
- the ability to cover/review more course material;
- an increased understanding of course content and/or to fill in learning gaps; and
- a chance to make learning more interactive and fun.

Tips for Creating and Maintaining a Successful Study Group

- Ensure that the team members share mutual goals and expectations.
 - Invite group members who demonstrate regular class attendance and come prepared to learn. These characteristics, plus active participation, are key to group success as well.
 - While humans in general tend to surround themselves with those who are most like themselves. Do not exclude a potential member who demonstrates key characteristics but has a different perspective or approach to learning.
 - Make sure everyone is accountable for agreed upon deliverables (e.g., readings, test prep questions, notes or outlines).
- Limit the number of the study group to 4 to 6 members. Exceeding this number increases the likelihood of socializing *too much*, and membership less than this reduces efficiency and the ability to adequately cover course content.
- Prior to each study group session, set an agenda to keep the group focused. Select a group member to manage the session and keep the group on track.
- Meet regularly.
 - **Duration:** Study group sessions should average between 2 to 3 hours. This is a good balance of time that reduces the possibility of socializing too much as well as the need to rush through material.
 - **Location:** Choose a study environment that offers minimal distractions and allows members to communicate effectively.
 - **Frequency:** Try to meet at the same time each week so sessions become a part of each member's regular schedule.

- Proper preparation and participation are essential.
 - Ensure that each member understands his/her responsibilities for each session.
 - Complete relevant readings, complete and review notes, and identify key points.
 - Every member of the group is expected to be engaged and actively participate in each session.
 - Each member should instruct the group on the material or topic s/he was assigned for each session and follow, if appropriate, with some test prep questions. This increases retention of information and assessment of knowledge.

A Note of Caution:

- If the group is not benefitting your academic goals or success, **do not** be afraid to walk away. Here are a few reasons to separate yourself or an individual from the study group:
 - Study sessions are no longer productive.
 - A member is no longer accountable for their assignments (e.g., comes unprepared or fails to participate).
 - It is affecting your personal study time, confidence or test preparation.
- As a group, decide on the consequences for violating study group rules in advance.

Sources:

Downing, Skip. On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life. 2nd edition. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. Boston, MA. 2014.

Education Corner: Education that Matters. <https://www.educationcorner.com/studying-groups.html>.