

How to Form Effective Study Groups

Forming a study group can be a highly effective way of helping you learn and understand information in your classes. The key is organizing the meetings and choosing the right people so that you will get the most out of each session. The following is a list of procedures and things to keep in mind to help you form great study groups that will help boost your grades and improve your study skills.

1. **Notice who is in your class.** It is important to look for people who have excellent attendance and really seem to be paying attention during the class. It is also good if the people take notes, ask questions, and respond to the instructor's questions. You do NOT want to invite someone into your study group just because you think that you might want to be friends with or date the person.
2. **Identify 2, 3, or 4 interested students.** If your group becomes larger than this, often times it is more difficult to stay on task and some students may end up "slacking off" while others are doing most of the work.
3. **Contact the students to arrange a meeting time and place.** Email is great for this because you can email everyone at once to determine what dates and times work well for everyone and determine the meeting location.
4. **At the first session:**
 - a. Exchange names and phone numbers
 - b. Conduct an overview of the subject matter
 - c. Discuss each member's particular interest in a topic
 - d. Assign each member an equal number of text pages or notes to lead the discussion of each topic in the course. Each person needs to teach/lead a session.
 - e. Discuss possible test questions
5. **Before you end the first meeting:**
 - a. Make sure that every member has a clear set of goals for the next session
 - b. Be certain each member understands his or her particular assignment
 - c. Discuss any problems that occurred during the first session
6. **At the 2nd meeting, discuss the content and begin testing each other.** (Smaller groups may begin testing each other during the first meeting if they complete their planning over the phone or in person before the meeting.)
7. **Identify topics or sections of the content that the group had difficulty understanding.**
8. **Decide how the group members can obtain additional help, if needed.** For example, one group member may contact the instructor or teaching assistant to answer questions, another may decide to research a question in great depth.

Other Considerations

- **Have the meetings be between 2-3 hours at a time.** This will help keep the group focused better than having studying marathons.
- **Hold meetings where there are not a lot of distractions and there is room to spread out materials.**
- **Try to meet at the same day and time each week.** Treat the sessions like a regular class or appointment. This will make it less likely that people will forget.
- **Use your time to review and compare notes, work on questions/exercises, discuss readings/compare with lecture, create study sheets and organize information from notes and readings, ask each other questions where you are confused, and share methods you are using to study/learn the material.**

References

Dembo, Myron H. (2004). Motivation and learning strategies for college success: A self-management approach. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, New Jersey.

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