



Study Groups

A study group can be helpful when you are trying to learn information and concepts and preparing for class discussions and tests. Read to learn about the benefits of a study group. Then read on to learn about how to start a study group and the characteristics of a successful study group. Finally, be sure to read about the possible pitfalls of a study group.

Benefits of a Study Group

A study group can be beneficial in many ways. Here are the most important benefits:

- 1. A support group can “pick you up” when you find that your motivation to study is slipping. The other group members can be a source of encouragement.**
- 2. You may be reluctant to ask a question in class. You will find it easier to do so in a small study group.**
- 3. You may become more committed to study because the group members are depending on your presentation and participation. You will not want to let them down.**
- 4. Group members will listen and discuss information and concepts during the study sessions. These activities add a strong auditory dimension to your learning experience.**
- 5. One or more group members are likely to understand something you do not. They may bring up ideas you never considered.**
- 6. You can learn valuable new study habits from the other group members.**
- 7. You can compare your class notes with those of the other group members to clarify your notes and fill in any gaps.**
- 8. Teaching/explaining information and concepts to the other group members will help you reinforce your mastery of the information and concepts.**



- 9. Let's face it – studying can sometimes be boring. Interacting with the other group members can make studying enjoyable.**

Getting a Study Group Started

Study groups don't just happen. Here is what you should do to get a study group started:

- 1. Get to know your classmates by talking with them before class, during breaks, and after class. When selecting a classmate to join your study group, you should be able to answer YES for each of the following questions:**
 - **Is this classmate motivated to do well?**
 - **Does this classmate understand the subject matter?**
 - **Is this classmate dependable?**
 - **Would this classmate be tolerant of the ideas of others?**
 - **Would you like to work with this classmate?**
- 2. Invite enough of these classmates to work with you in a study group until you have formed a group of three to five. A larger group may allow some members to avoid responsibility, may lead to cliques, and may make group management more of an issue than learning.**
- 3. Decide how often and for how long you will meet. Meeting two or three times a week is probably best. If you plan a long study session, make sure you include time for breaks. A study session of about 60 to 90 minutes is usually best.**
- 4. Decide where you will meet. Select a meeting place that is available and is free from distractions. An empty classroom or a group study room in the library are possibilities.**
- 5. Decide on the goals of the study group. Goals can include comparing and updating notes, discussing readings, and preparing for exams.**

- 6. Decide who the leader will be for the first study session. Also decide whether it will be the same person each session or whether there will be a rotating leader. The leader of a study session should be responsible for meeting the goals of that study session.**
- 7. Clearly decide the agenda for the first study session and the responsibilities of each group member for that session.**
- 8. Develop a list of all group members that includes their names, telephone numbers, and email addresses. Make sure each group member has this list and update the list as needed.**

Characteristics of a Successful Study Group

Once started, a study group should possess the following characteristics to be successful:

- 1. Each group member contributes to discussions.**
- 2. Group members actively listen to each other without interrupting. Only one group member speaks at a time.**
- 3. The other group members work collaboratively to resolve any concern raised by a group member.**
- 4. Group members are prompt and come prepared to work.**
- 5. The group stays on task with respect to its agenda.**
- 6. Group members show respect for each other.**
- 7. Group members feel free to criticize each other but keep their criticisms constructive. This can encourage group members to reveal their weaknesses so that they can strengthen them.**
- 8. Group members feel free to ask questions of each other.**
- 9. At the end of each study session, an agenda including specific group member responsibilities is prepared for the next session.**
- 10. Above all, the positive attitude that "we can do this together" is maintained.**



CAUTION

Possible Pitfalls of a Study Group

A study group can be a very positive learning experience. However, there are pitfalls to be avoided. Here are some cautions:

- 1. Do not let the study group get distracted from its agenda and goals.**
- 2. Do not let the study group become a social group. You can always socialize at other times.**
- 3. Do not allow group members to attend unprepared. To stay in the group, members should be required to do their fair share.**
- 4. Do not let the session become a negative forum for complaining about teachers and courses.**
- 5. Do not allow one or two group members to dominate the group. It is important that all members have an equal opportunity to participate.**

The information you just read will help you decide when a study group is appropriate for you and will help ensure its success.