

PEER STUDY GROUPS

Study groups, typically comprised of four to six students, are considered to be rather important in college due to the overwhelming workload of assignments. The study group environment offers students the opportunity to engage in a more in-depth discussion with peers, sharing information and knowledge about a course they are collectively enrolled in. Being a member of a study group where everyone actively strives to learn and remain on task can be very advantageous toward one's academic success. Listed below are a number of benefits that a study group has to offer...

7 STUDY GROUP ADVANTAGES

- 1. Helps with Procrastination:** Many students tend to cram for tests/exams on the night before or begin projects with very limited time before the due date. When in a study group, meeting at scheduled times can keep the active participants from procrastinating. In addition, individuals in study groups are less likely to delay or put-off assignments because they understand that other people are relying on them.
- 2. Understand/Absorb Information More Efficiently:** Students tend to learn faster working within a group versus working alone. If a student was working on his/her own, there would be a lot of time wasted puzzling over the difficulty. However, when students work in groups, they have the opportunity to explain concepts, review material, exchange ideas, and disagree/reason with one another about why one person's answer differs from another. Thus, one can seek clarification and learn faster working in a group setting while gaining personal skills.
- 3. Different Perspectives:** Each group member has different qualities/ideas to offer to the study group. Studying by yourself will always get you one perspective; yet, in groups, you may receive various viewpoints which can assist in helping you reach your own conclusions. Listening and asking questions will provide more food for thought developing your critical skills.
- 4. Improve/Develop New Study Skills:** There are always ways to enhance your studying methods/techniques in your study skills. Joining a study group will provide you the opportunity to observe a wide variety of study methods and incorporate them into your regimen. Note-taking and organization skills are two major study components that continue to be improved through study groups.
- 5. Good Company:** Studying by yourself can get boring and monotonous. A study group brings on a positive social aspect. Talking it over with a group can help that and make it a little more enjoyable.
- 6. Minimizes Test Anxiety:** Test anxiety is an uneasiness experienced before, during, or after an examination because of concern, worry, or fear. Some students find that anxiety interferes with their learning and test taking to such an extent that their grades are seriously affected. Being in a study group with motivated classmates is often helpful. Instructors agree that study groups improve student performance on tests and in classroom discussions.
- 7. Enhance your personal/professional skills:** Study groups can help you develop as a student, person, and professional. Study groups encourage members to think creatively and build strong communication skills. It has been proven that those who participate in study groups feel more confident and comfortable about reaching their academic goals. Overall, most professional careers require collaboration with colleagues on projects, so study groups are excellent practice in preparation for the work world.

How to Establish a Study Group?

- **Choose Participants Wisely:** Look for students who seem to show an interest in learning and achieving high academic success. These students are the ones who actively participate in class, ask questions, take good notes, and attend class regularly. Be careful about studying with friends whom you mostly socialize and do not share your academic goals. They may serve as a distraction rather than a good study partner.
- **Limit the Number of Members in Your Group:** The size of your study group should range from about 4-6 members. Once the group exceeds 6 people, the effectiveness of the group may drop and the group may turn more into a social gathering than a study group.
- **Exchange contact information:** Determine how you will communicate with each other just in case of an emergency, change in the meeting time, concerns/questions, etc. Exchange names, e-mail addresses, and/or contact numbers.
- **Select a Group Facilitator:** Select a group facilitator or leader that will be in charge of the basic organization and function of the study group. The group leader will be responsible for tasks such as creating a basic agenda for the following meetings, contacting members about the meeting time and location, etc. Each week a new group leader should be assigned, so no one gets overwhelmed.
- **Establish a Meeting Schedule/Location:** Establish a meeting time for each session that accommodates all group members. Try to choose the same time and day of the week to form a routine. Attempt to limit the length of the meeting to 1-2 hours. This will help to ensure members are focused and will have time to attend. Also, be sure to select a neutral meeting place that holds a sufficient amount of space for your study group members and materials.

Guidelines/Rules for Study Groups

Respect Different Viewpoints: Each person brings a unique set of experiences/background that can add an important dimension to the group discussion. It is vital that each member listen and consider input from all members and avoid quickly dismissing an idea. If members feel that their ideas are being attacked, they may stop participating or attending. Be respectful and give everybody a chance to be a contributor.

Expect Members to Be Prepared: All members must bring the materials needed for each session (notes, textbooks, problem sets, etc.). To elevate the work load, the group can also choose the options of assigning each member a task, such as reviewing a certain section or creating an outline. With all group members working together and being fully prepared, everything should run smoothly.

Avoid Allowing One or Two People to Dominate the Group: Groups can address this before it becomes a problem by setting guidelines when they form the group. The group can decide a specific time limit for each person to speak to ensure that all members' voices are heard. The group facilitator may also guide the discussion to keep the group on task and obtain feedback from all members.

Always Review Information: During the last 5-10 minutes of a study session, briefly review the concepts discussed during the session. Remember, the best way to grasp information is to rethink, recite, and review.