EFFECTIVE STUDY GROUP FORMATION

What is a study group?

A study group is a small group of students with similar goals who meet regularly to review course material and prepare for exams.

Why should I form a study group?

- Research shows students learn more from teaching each other
- Maximize your time efficiency by dividing up large tasks into more manageable chunks
- Confirm your understanding and comprehension by explaining ideas to others
- Find answers to your questions from peers
- Avoid falling behind in class by regularly reviewing material
- Enhance your knowledge of the subject area Studying doesn’t have to be a boring, solitary activity.
- Make it fun and meet new people.

Making the most of your study group:

- Only include students who are fully willing to participate. Keep the group small (3-6 students is most effective)
- Plan to meet regularly—not just before exams
- Find a good location (classroom, meeting room at library, etc.) with helpful resources such a chalkboards and moveable furniture
- Hold each member accountable to prepare for study sessions ahead of time (assign each person to review certain material to teach)
- Make a list of questions your group has and meet with instructor for clarification
- Review of what you have learned at conclusion of study session
- At end of each study group, determine what you will review next session and assign each member a specific task to complete

Share Solutions  Goal-Oriented
Test Others  Respect Each Other
Unite for Success  Organize for Learning
Don’t Delay  Understand the Process
You Are Not Alone  Participate Often

What you can do with a Group:

Name Bounce

To help you and the group members know and use each other's names, conduct informal quizzes and "name games" during the first meetings. Then, once students have become somewhat familiar with each other's names, use the "name bounce" game described below to encourage group-centered, rather than leader-centered discussions and problem solving.

At some point during a session, call out "name bounce" and say the name of a student in the group. That student must then call on another by name, and that person must call on another, and so on. Repetition is OK, but try to
ensure that every one eventually gets called. Push students to go as fast as they can to create a sense of momentum and fun. Allow students to "cheat" by helping each other. This activity helps them look to each other for answers, instead of always looking at the group leader. You might have students "name bounce" each other to answer questions, quiz each other, or give opinions during group discussions. Or, crumple up a piece of paper and have students toss it to one another during a discussion or question-answer session. Whoever catches the wad must ask or answer a question.

**Index Card Questions**

At the beginning of the session, hand out index cards to each student and have them write down three questions that they have from the textbook chapter, from lecture notes, or from class handouts. Then, have them trade cards and answer each other’s questions as a whole group. You might break-up the material, and assign each individual or pair a specific topic. You can also make this into a game, or do it in pairs. This is a good technique to prepare for an exam.

**Scribe Notes**

At the beginning of each session, appoint (or ask for a volunteer) to take notes on the discussion. The notes can be informal, funny, or serious, and should include all the information the note-taker thinks is important. At the beginning of the next session, have the note-taker read his or her notes. This promotes "group memory" and helps connect current topics to previously covered material.

**Board Notes**

Try to make good use of the chalkboard or white board during discussions. Whenever possible, have a group member write or draw on the board to illustrate concepts. Seeing material displayed on the board helps visual learners, writing or drawing on the board helps kinesthetic learners, and the process of summarizing information models effective learning strategies.

**Team Debate/Quiz**

Divide the group into two teams and use a quiz or game show format to have team members ask and answer course-related questions posed by the opposing team. Have the teams consult for a few minutes to develop their list of questions before playing the game. Make sure everyone agrees on the rules and keep score.

**Free Writing**

Begin a session by having students write for three minutes on a topic related to course material. Potential topics include, how they applied specific learning strategies during the last week, their thoughts on a specific concept covered in lecture and readings, what questions they have for this session, or any other topic that might help focus their minds on the discussion to follow. Tell them to write as much as they can, as fast as they can, without worrying about grammar, spelling, or sentence structure. They do not have to share their writing unless they want to. The goal is to have students focus their energy and clear their minds so that they can concentrate better during the discussion.

**Rotating Leader**

When you begin to know the students in your group, invite one of them to lead the discussion. Point out that the most important role of a leader lies not in mastery of course content, but in the ability to include the whole group in a focused and productive discussion. You might want to sit down with the student leader for a few minutes before the session and help him or her think of some questions to guide the discussion. During the session, resist the urge to jump in; just sit back and let the group take over. A few minutes before the end of the session, stop the discussion and ask for feedback about how the session went.

Information adapted from Student Success Center-Eastern Illinois University