

Study Group Handout

Why would you want to begin a study group?

There are several reasons why students should form study groups. First and foremost, study groups provide a support system to get through difficult classes by allowing you to vent about your course and the professor. Logistically speaking, study groups allow you to efficiently cover more material by dividing work among group members. In addition, explaining material to the students in the study group allow you to learn information that you don't know and contextualize or integrate the information that you already know. By explaining concepts to other students you can learn what your strengths and weaknesses are with the particular material.

How do I begin a study group?

Publicity: how do you advertise your study group?

1. You can **create a simple sign-up sheet** that asks for students name and email address. This sheet can be passed around during the lecture or discussion. This method works well for students who are shy and don't want to make an announcement during class or lecture. However, if you are passion out the sign-up sheet you are responsible for emailing the people on the sign-up sheet with the details of the study group (i.e. time, place).
2. Study groups can also be formed **with friends** that you know are taking the course or new friends that you make in the course. However, the drawback to having a study group that is composed only of friends makes it difficult to hold people accountable for their contribution to the study group.
3. **Announcements during lecture or discussion** also work well. You should provide your name and email (you can write it on the board) and let them know when you will be contacting them (i.e. today, tomorrow).
4. You can email your **professor or GSI** and ask them to **make the announcement** for you during lecture or discussion. You should let him/her know how students can contact you after the announcement (i.e. email or phone number).
5. **Logistics:** where, how often, time
6. **Room:** you need to decide with the group where you will be meeting. Some suggestions are the 2hr study rooms at the library (they can be scheduled online), lounges in the dorms, the Student Learning Center, apartments, or cafes.
7. **Time:** you need to set a time and date that the group will meet. You need to decide if it will be a weekly, biweekly, or one-time study group. The time you all decide on should work well for everyone in the study group if you will be sharing material.
8. **Material:** you need to ask that all study group members bring their lecture notes, reading, books, and scratch paper. You might also want access to a computer and Internet in case you need to look up definitions of terms.

Internal Dynamics of groups

Once you decide the frequency of the study group (weekly, biweekly, monthly) you must decide how the study group will function. Will you study have a leader or a moderator? How about a note taker? The following are some roles that you can use in the study group. These are only suggestions you can pick and choose which will work for your study group.

1. The **organizer** would take responsibility for scheduling the time, place, and future meetings.
2. The **moderator** would be responsible for keeping people on track. This person may receive emails for group member about confusing topics, terms, or concepts to create a schedule or outline of things that must be covered in the meeting.
3. The **notetaker** would be responsible for taking notes during discussions about terms, concepts, and answers to questions. However, all group members should also be responsible for taking their own notes. The function of the notetaker is providing an in-depth view of what was discussed during the study group.
4. The **members** of the study group are responsible for preparing question, reviewing the material before the study group, and asking for clarification. The members must show commitment to the study group by reviewing the material even if they don't understand the material.

The First Meeting

If this study group will meet more than once you must discuss several issues during your first meeting.

1. **What is the purpose of the study group?** Every study group needs a purpose. You must decide what type of study group you want. Will this study group focus on learning the unclear material or will it review the material presented in class or will it review excessive readings. For example, some study groups are formed to share the reading material for one class. Students may divide the reading material and create a one or two page summary of the reading material.
1. **How will group member be held accountable for the participation in the material?** This includes questions like "How many times can you miss the study group?" "What will happen to individuals who miss the study sessions?" and "How do you address poor quality work?" Accountability is very important in a study group. The group member should discuss the consequences that group members will receive should they not fully contribute to the study group. This might require a system of accountability.
2. **How does one demonstrate a commitment to the study group?** What does it look like? Sometime students have a different definition of what commitment means. Come up with a definition about commitment will facilitate any disputes. How many times can a person miss? What type of work quality is the group expecting from the group members? Who should be notified if you can't attend the study group. Commitment is especially important for groups that focus on creating handouts or review sheets.

Problems and Solutions of Study groups

1. **Lack of attendance:** people are failing to attend the regular meeting (weekly, biweekly, or monthly).
 - a. You might want to address the problem directly. You can ask the person why they are not attending the study group. You can ask them if they will be able to contribute to the study group. If the individual cannot commit to the study group it might be better if they drop the study group.
 - b. If scheduling is the issue you might want to reschedule your study group so more people can attend. This might mean that you would have to move to the evening or weekend. Should this occur would you can make the study group more fun to make up for the late night or weekend meeting (i.e. bring food, go out as a group afterwards).
 - c. Lastly, if you have addressed the problem and changes don't happen then you can find other people to study with.
2. **No preparation:** Members are not prepared for the study group.
 - a. Review before study group should be emphasized. When student show up without reviewing the material you should allow 15 minutes for review of lecture notes before the study group begins.
 - b. You might create projects that make student review their notes depending on the subject matter. For example, you might ask each student to create a five questions quiz for a certain lecture or lectures that the group can take.
3. **Concerns about the material:** the members of the study group are confused about a term, concept, or idea.
 - a. First, you might want to go over the lecture and reading to find a solution.
 - b. Then you might want to attend the GSI or professors Office Hours.
 - c. You can also ask other classmates who is not part of the study group.
 - d. You can use other resources like the Internet.
4. **Inconsistent information or knowledge:** there are two or more definitions about a topic, term, or concept.
 - a. Go to the GSI or Professor. When both the professor and GSI disagree you should go with the individual that is directly grading you.
5. **Waste of time:** the group members do not believe the study group is getting anything done.
 - a. You must have a meeting with the study group and assess why the group is not accomplishing their goal. There might be issues around commitment, accountability, or tangents.
6. **Lack of motivation:** people are not motivated to attend the study group, people are not participating during study group session.
 - a. If the study group is too strict you might want to loosen up by making the structure fluid.
 - b. You might want to change locations. For example, one week you meet at the library another week at a café.

This handout has been adapted from a UC Berkeley, Student Learning Center document.