

Tips for Forming Study Groups

- **Become Aware of Your Study Group Expectations.** Before you join or form a study group, consider what you hope to get from the experience. People join study groups for different reasons. Your reason for joining a study group should guide decisions as to the composition and goals of the group.
- **Become Aware of the Benefits of Study Groups.** These benefits include better understanding and retention of information, opportunity to learn from and teach peers, receiving support from peers, and increases in confidence in academic abilities.
- **Study Groups Are Not Necessarily For Everyone.** Think about whether you have had positive study group experiences or have participated in successful group projects in the past. If you have not had productive study group experiences, consider whether you can alter your approach before you decide that study groups are not for you.
- **Set an Optimal Group Size.** The size of the group is important. It can involve as few as two individuals, but an optimal group size is about three or four people. This group size will allow participation and discussion, yet also allow the group to function if one member cannot attend a meeting.
- **Establish a Schedule of Meetings and Assignments.** Having weekly meetings and following a regular schedule will allow you to keep up with the course material. This will also prevent cramming for tests because there will be consistent outside-the-classroom studying and review. It is also important to agree on guidelines for meetings.
- **Select a Location for Meetings.** Avoid meeting in places that are too comfortable or full of disturbances that can be distracting to the group.
- **Establish Study Group Goals.** A study group should be formed by students who have similar goals. The existence of different goals among members of a study group can lead to confusion, anxiety, and tension. In addition, an agenda should be established for each meeting so that time is not wasted trying to figure out what the group should be doing.
- **Prepare for the Meetings.** A study group is not a substitute for doing your own work. A study group is most beneficial when members are prepared with topics to discuss, points of confusion, or important questions. Study groups should be used to review material and to test understanding of that material. Additionally, time should be set aside during each group meeting to discuss material that students do not understand.
- **Evaluate the Group.** If the study group is not meeting your goals, discuss your concerns with the group and try to come up with suggestions for improvement. If you decide to leave the group, do not leave your colleagues in a bind (by dropping out the week it is your turn to lead a group meeting, for example).