

Creating a Study Group

Collaboration with fellow students is advantageous for learning and understanding class material. A successful study group will require commitment from all group members, a structured plan, and a list of common goals that the group hopes to achieve by meeting as a group.



Advantages of forming study groups

Opportunity to view the content from multiple perspectives
Emotional and academic support from peers
Develop a deeper understanding of the material

Increase your motivation to study
Accountability for preparation and staying on task
Prepares you for future work experiences

Organizing a study group

There are various details to consider when establishing a successful study group. An easy way to remember these considerations is by remembering the Five W's and 2 H's (5W2H).

Who? Choose your group participants mindfully. Look for individuals who are enthusiastic about learning, take notes in class, and share your academic goals. It's valuable to look for group members who have a better understanding of the material than you do so they can help you understand the content. It's equally important to look for others who need more clarification of the material so you may also explain difficult concepts to reinforce your own understanding.

What? A study group is a productive meeting time with peers to review material, view the content from many different perspectives, and clarify difficult concepts.

When? Choose a consistent date and time that fits into everyone's schedule. Treat the meeting as if it were a class obligation to ensure everyone attends.

Where? Choose a location for meetings that will stay consistent throughout the term to avoid confusion about where to meet. Find an area free of distractions that still allows group discussions without having to worry about keeping the noise level down. It would be valuable for the area to have a large table and a whiteboard for brainstorming and writing down ideas.

Why? Research has shown that we are able to learn material best through active learning processes. Actively engaging with a study group helps students to retain more information while collaborating with peers than simply reading the material or making summary notes.

How many? Four to six participants is the ideal number of peers for a study group. If the group becomes any larger, there is a risk that not all members will participate and scheduling becomes more difficult as the group becomes larger. In contrast, any smaller and it's likely that the group may get distracted and get off task.

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How Long? A meeting time of 1-2 hours is recommended since it allows enough time for a discussion to develop, questions to be asked, and participation from all group members. However, this detail may vary depending on upcoming exams, for example.

Guidelines for group members

It's recommended that you set aside some time during the first meeting to talk about goals of the group and how members want to see the group operate. This discussion can help create a set of group norms (e.g., communicate on a weekly basis or use of an online system for sharing documents) and expectations of group members (e.g., post summary of readings at least two days prior to group meetings). Common group norms and guidelines that help to ensure the group is effective include:

Be prepared for meeting sessions. Discuss with your group to determine what you will be doing. A few suggestions could include coming up with 5 possible test questions before a review session to create a question bank, choosing a difficult concept to explain to the group, reading chapters or sections of a textbook or other class readings, reviewing class notes, or a combination of the above suggestions.

Respect each other's opinions and ideas. The value of meeting as a group is the various perspectives and opinions of group members. Allow each member time to express his or her viewpoint before sharing your own. When you have a conflicting opinion, offer tactful comments; there may be times where you agree to disagree.

Be focused and attentive during meeting sessions. Discuss with your group and see if you can agree to keep cell phones on silent or put them away during a group meeting, for example.

Contribute to discussions. Participation from all group members enhances the value of discussions and understanding of the content. A couple of suggestions for avoiding 1 to 2 people from dominating the discussions is by setting a maximum discussion time or assigning group roles, such as group leader, that will change throughout the term.

Book a Study Room. Visit the Ontario Tech Library website ontariotechu.ca/library and 'Book a Study Room'.

Become an expert in an area and teach the group. Have each group member read and make notes from a different section of the course or chapter of a textbook. Once completed, exchange and share the various sections within the group.

Assign group members a discussion role. Continue the group discussion while assigning each person a responsibility that will change each session. Some potential roles could include Facilitator, Connector, Summarizer, and Elaborator.

Study with some buddies!

Student Learning Centre

Call: 905.721.8668 ext. 6578

Email: studentlearning@ontariotechu.ca

Website: ontariotechu.ca/studentlearning

Downtown Oshawa Location: Charles Hall

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