



Cornell University Learning Strategies Center

420 CCC
Ithaca, NY 14853
t. 607.255.6310
f. 607.255.1562
www.lsc.cornell.edu

Form your own study group and work effectively in it by following these three steps:

1. Choose the right size and members.
 2. Establish group expectations or ground rules.
 3. Develop rotating roles.
1. **Choose the right size and members.**
 - a. **Size.** Research has shown that an effective group size is approximately 3-5 members.
 - b. **Members.** When selecting members, try not to choose students who all think and study in a similar manner. Having a variety of perspectives helps when you are struggling to gain a deeper understanding of a concept or problem. It's also helpful when preparing for an exam. Remember, the professor may process information similar to one of your group members, so it helps to gain this insight because the professor is the one creating and grading your assignment or exam.
 - c. **Time.** Make sure all of the study group members have similar times available to meet.
 2. **Establish group expectations or ground rules.** At your first meeting, share how members would like the group to function in reference to topics like: preparation prior to the meeting; attendance in group meetings; making sure everyone understands the assignment and approach; equal participation; and communicating frankly, but with respect when conflict arises, etc.

After consensus is reached on the topics of your choice, have each group member sign a document indicating acceptance of these expectations and intention to fulfill them. Including these types of expectations in your agreement can be helpful later. For example, if you find that one person is repeatedly talking and others are feeling like they do not have the opportunity to express their opinions, you can reference the document. It makes it less personal and provides you with an opportunity to discuss how the group as a whole had envisioned the study group process.

3. **Develop Rotating Roles.** The last thing you should do to get your study group off to a successful start is develop roles and rotate them at each meeting. For example, you could have a:
 1. **Discussion Leader**, who keeps conversation moving within the group and ensures that all participants are heard.
 2. **Lecturer Connector**, who links the conversation with the readings and when it goes off course, brings the group back to focus.
 3. **Reader Connector**, who links the conversation with the readings and when it goes off course, brings the group back to focus.
 4. **Recorder**, who records and distributes the content of the meeting.

These roles should be rotated each time you meet to maintain balance in the group through the semester.