

## How to Form and Participate in a Successful Study Group

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### 1. Forming the group:

- The ideal study group is comprised of 3 or 4 students. It's not recommended to form groups of 5 or more students.
- Determine ahead of time how long each study session will last and meet once weekly at a minimum.
- Every group member should be committed. In other words, they should show up on time, prepare for study sessions, and refrain from distracting the group when studying. Group members who are unprepared often do not contribute to study sessions.
- It's recommended to select a group leader to ensure sessions start on time, members remain focused, and all important concepts are covered. Each week a new leader could be assigned, so no one gets overwhelmed. The group leader should send emails to each member prior to study sessions with details about where sessions will be held, when they will begin, individual assignments, and other relevant information.

### 2. Preparing for sessions:

- Group members should work together when determining what concepts should be studied during sessions. Plans for upcoming study sessions can be discussed after sessions, in emails, and before or after class. Groups that meet on a weekly basis often cover concepts discussed in class during the week.
- Although homework problems are often worked on during sessions, it's important to cover basic concepts, so each member will have a better understanding of the underlying principles that must be understood to solve individual problems. The following are tips for maximizing group study efficiency:
- Assign each member to review key concepts covered during weekly lectures. Each member should develop a summary or outline to provide for all group members.
- At the beginning of each session, individual group members can teach other members about the concept they were responsible for summarizing, or the group can participate in a group discussion.
- Since group study sessions cannot last indefinitely, it's useful to select a few homework problems to review during subsequent sessions. Group members should work together to determine what problems to cover. This way, group members can work through problems by themselves and discuss insights with the group during sessions.

### 3. Session structure:

Organize structured sessions to maximize efficiency, cover large amounts of material, and keep the group focused. The following are helpful tips for organizing sessions:

- Decide in advance the length of study sessions and the day to hold them on.
- At the beginning of sessions, set time aside to review the previous week's session. During these brief reviews, group members can discuss confusing concepts and concerns, and members familiar with complex topics can explain them to confused members. In fact, one of the best ways to better grasp a concept is to teach others.
- During the remainder of the session, spend time reviewing new homework problems. Plan in advance the problems that will be covered.
- Group members should take turns leading discussions while working through problems. This is especially effective when some members better understand concepts than others.
- Those in classes without assigned homework problems should work through problems listed in the textbook. Most textbooks contain problems at the end of chapters. Review problems and decide which ones to work on during subsequent sessions.
- If there are not enough problems in the textbook, search the Internet for relevant ones. If you're unsure of a problem's relevancy, show it to the course instructor. Students familiar with the concepts can develop problems for the rest of the group to review.
- During the last 10 minutes of a study session, briefly review the concepts discussed during the session. Also take time to identify concepts and problems that need to be reviewed during subsequent sessions.

***Study tip: think about including the following things when answering questions:***

- Confirm that you understand what is being asked to solve in a homework problem.
- Jot down all the steps taken to solve a problem.
- Identify the main concepts underlying homework problems.
- Challenge yourself while working through homework problems. Create your own problems or alter ones you've solved to better understand the basic concepts.