



Forming a Study Group

Discussion with others can be helpful to your learning. A good idea is to form a study group. Ask some friends or a few students in your tutorial group to join you. Student Learning Development can even assist you to find a room to meet in.

Types of student study groups

- **Reading groups:** To discuss specific readings assigned by the lecturer.
- **Writing groups:** To discuss writing you are currently working on, to brainstorm and share ideas and give each other feedback.
- **Task groups:** To work on a specific task or assignment. It may be a group or individual project.
- **Exam groups:** To prepare for an upcoming test or an exam.
- **Research groups:** To discuss your current research, ideas and projects, or to provide each other with feedback and share resources.
- **Practise groups:** To practise specific skills such as a language or new skills for a particular subject.
- **Support groups:** Sometimes there are no specific tasks, but you wish to support each other, share problems and discuss issues.

You may wish to form a study group for one of the purposes listed above, a combination of these, or for completely different reasons. It is really important that all study group members are clear about what you are meeting for. This purpose does not need to be rigidly defined (for example, a writing group may want to spend some time preparing for an exam towards the end of the semester), but the group needs to have a focus. If you require help in starting a group, recruiting members, or improving your study group, Student Learning Development may be able to help.

How to form a study group

There are no rules about how one should, or should not, form a group. Often a group of friends, people in the same tutorial, or people in the same hall may decide to meet regularly. Other groups are formed more formally, perhaps by a lecturer, or by other people. No matter how it is formed, for the group to function well and stay together it is important to spend some time organising your group.

If you are having trouble finding people to study with, here are some ideas that may help:

- Put up some simple flyers near your lecture theatres or tutorial rooms, asking for people to join your group. (Remember. Be explicit about the purpose of your group.)
- Use social media: Search for your class on Facebook, often existing study groups or past students will have formed a group. If there isn't one, make one and invite your classmates.

- Blackboard has a ‘discussion’ tab for each of your classes. Start a discussion and find like-minded people for your group, or ask your lecturer to put up a notice on Blackboard for your group.

Structure / organisation

Some groups work better if they have an organiser/leader. This person is responsible for contacting members, booking a room, and perhaps running the session. You may prefer to have a set leader or swap the role around the members (e.g., take responsibility for one session each). This is important, because it ensures that things get done and your sessions run smoothly.

Expectations

For your group to function effectively, it is important that everyone in the group is clear about the expectations of the group. This may prevent future problems and conflict within the group. Some of the things that you need to discuss with your group are:

- What amount of work/preparation is required? (It can be very annoying if one person consistently isn’t prepared.)
- What the purpose of the group is.
- What topics you will cover.
- Attendance. Some groups will ask someone to leave if there have been two unexcused absences.
- Is the group open to new members?
- Do you want to invite guest speakers or tutors?
- How will possible problems or conflicts be addressed?

Tips for making your group work

- Is your group a social group or a study group? Although you may form friendships with other members, it is important to stay focused on the work, rather than gossiping or going off the topic. You can socialise after study, perhaps over a coffee.
- Keep your group to a reasonable size of consistent, reliable members. This will make it much easier to organise and everybody will be able to participate.
- Ensure that everybody is involved and has a voice. Some members may be more confident while others may be less willing to talk. Try to ensure no one person dominates.
- Spend some time organising the group and defining expectations. This will be worthwhile in the long run.
- Deal with problems early so that people don’t get disillusioned or annoyed with each other.
- Have fun and enjoy yourself. This is a great way of learning, meeting people and improving your study and life skills.