

Guidelines for Getting a Group Together

- **How many?** Limit the size of your group to 3-6 students. Too many students may add confusion and organizational problems. If there are more that are interested, form two groups and get together occasionally to share information and prepare for exams.
- **Who?** Don't base study partners on friendship; look for people who stay alert in class, take notes, ask questions, and respond to the teacher's questions.
- **Where?** Hold study group sessions in a place free of distractions with room to spread materials out.
- **How long?** Study groups should meet for *no more* than 2-3 hours at a time.
- **When?** If possible, try to meet on the same day(s) and time(s) each week. Treating the study session as you would a class helps you to keep to a schedule and ensures that everyone will attend.

Getting the Most Out of a Study Group Session

- **Set rules and guidelines from the start.** At your first meeting, make sure everyone has aligned expectations, and then establish some rules and guidelines. Decide ahead of time what to do about people who slack off—be clear and set boundaries so there is no confusion if the going gets rough.
- **State objectives or goals.** Knowing what you want to achieve at each session helps the group manage time and stay focused. At the end of each meeting, make a plan for the next meeting and allocate times for every task. Make sure you have an ending time. Stick to your plan.
- **Be prepared.** Before a session, be sure to finish your assigned reading, review notes, prepare any group assignments, and list topics/questions you want to review.
- **Communicate openly.** Don't be shy about asking for your peers' feedback: "Am I rambling too much?" or "Did I present your point of view correctly?" If reviewing reveals points of disagreement, confusion or misunderstanding that you cannot resolve as a group, record questions to ask your TAs in lab.
- **Stay on topic.** For each session, assign someone to steer group members back on topic if they begin to drift. Allow a short period at the beginning of each study session to socialize and check in with each other and schedule five-minute breaks into your study sessions after every half hour or hour of work; this allows all the group members to get off-topic chatting out of their systems.

What Do You Actually Do When You're Together?

- Assign people to teach and lead a discussion on each topic in your agenda. Make assignments at the end of each meeting for the *next* meeting so that each person can think about the best way to address the topic and prepare questions. (Note: Everybody must still prepare to discuss each topic on the agenda.)
- Have everyone create questions that test comprehension, application and memory of the material. Take turns asking, answering, and explaining *why* the correct answer is correct.
- Write exam questions that review each topic you discuss in your group. Collect the questions as you go, then take the cumulative practice exam you've created to prepare for the real exam.
- Role-play: You can act like a parent explaining the ideas to a child. Or how about becoming your professor and deducing what questions will be on the exam? Here's another interesting exercise you can use in your study groups: [the "Final Exam" procedure by Win Wenger of the Renaissance Project](#).
- Studies show that connecting knowledge to kinetic activity (characterized by movement), rhythm and music significantly helps retention. Create songs, movement, chants, etc. that will help your group remember key information/terms.
- It can also be very effective to have more than one study group get together to help each other study before a mid-term or a final exam.