

How to Form Study Groups for General Studying and Exams

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Benefits of Study Groups

- According to Dr. Richard Light, from Brigham Young University, research has shown that study groups are a clear indicator of success in college.
- If study groups are done right, it can help people study well due to accountability and the sharing of different ideas.
- Study groups are beneficial, because it can allow someone to retain more information since the structure of a study group can give a deeper impression on the memory better than personal study.
- Even though personal study is essential, study groups can supplement personal study.
- Study groups can build on each of its participant's strengths.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbqOXodJTqo>



The Recommended Guidelines for Study Groups

- **How many people should study in one study group?**

3-5 people is the best amount of people to ensure an efficient and good study group. If a study group is too large, it can become a distraction and inefficient.

- **How often should a study group meet?**

College students often set up study groups only during exam time. However, it is recommended by Duke University's Academic Resource Center that a study group should meet once a week.

- **What preparation is needed for a study group?**

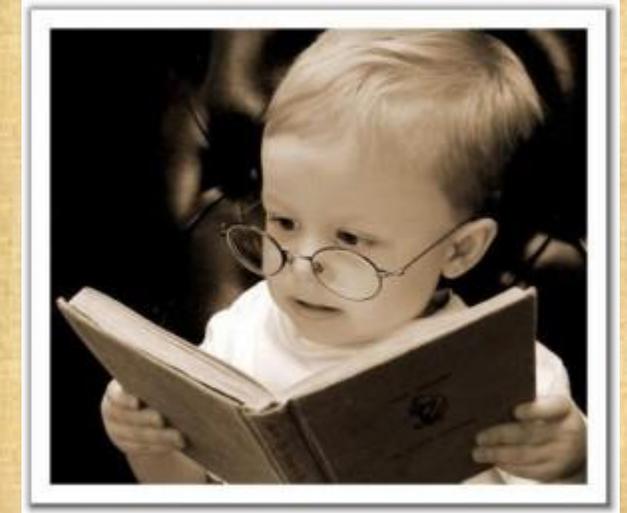
A study group needs to make a serious commitment to meet in a quiet room where there are no distractions. Those who participate in a study group need to bring notes, writing materials, relevant tools for the course (e.g. calculator) and relevant course books. Preparing what to study and when to study should be done in advance.

- **How long?**

For a general study group, it should be 2-3 hours. For exams, it can be longer, but if study groups are started earlier, study groups right before exams can become shorter. Study groups should take 15 minute breaks after one hour of studying. Breaks after one hour study periods can relieve stress and ensure concentration. All-nighters may be needed, but not recommended. As the old saying goes, "The best study session is a good night's sleep." This is why it is important to do study groups more often.

Basic Tips for Study Groups

- There should be a leader who presides over the study group. The leader's responsibility is to e-mail invitations, set up a time and place, keep a study group focused, and make suggestions on how and what to study.
- Establish rules and guidelines for the study group +
- Talk with the professor on what he is really looking for. Also ask him if he knows any way you can better study for exams.
- Study groups do not necessarily have to consist of friends. If you are distracted with friends, working with friends in a study group is not recommended. Working with people who can contribute to the study group is most important.
- Talking should be minimal and only necessary.
- Many academic resource centers from prominent universities such as Duke University and Brigham Young University recommend using study groups more frequently. This can ensure that study sessions a night before the exam are shorter. Often, many students only use study groups right before an exam. This leads to panicking, an overload on study material, and distraction.
- As stated before, working in quiet rooms free from distractions is a must.
- It is recommended that one needs to prepare the study content and subject of the study group in advance. This can be done either through e-mail, face-to-face conversation, or social media.
- Keep in mind that study groups are not for everyone. If you are better off studying individually, then stick with that.



Overall Structure of Study Groups

- “In the first ½ hour you could review and discuss the preceding week’s concepts. This allows members a chance to voice any confusion, issues or problems they are having with the material, and allows you to share knowledge as a group (often the best way to truly know that you know something is when you get the opportunity to teach/explain it to someone else).” (Duke University Academic Resource Center)

- “The rest of the time you could work on problems/questions. Before starting, decide in which order you want to address the problems or questions.” (Duke University Academic Resource Center)

If you are doing a last-minute exam prep study group, you can skip the first step and immediately decide how to study, and what to study.

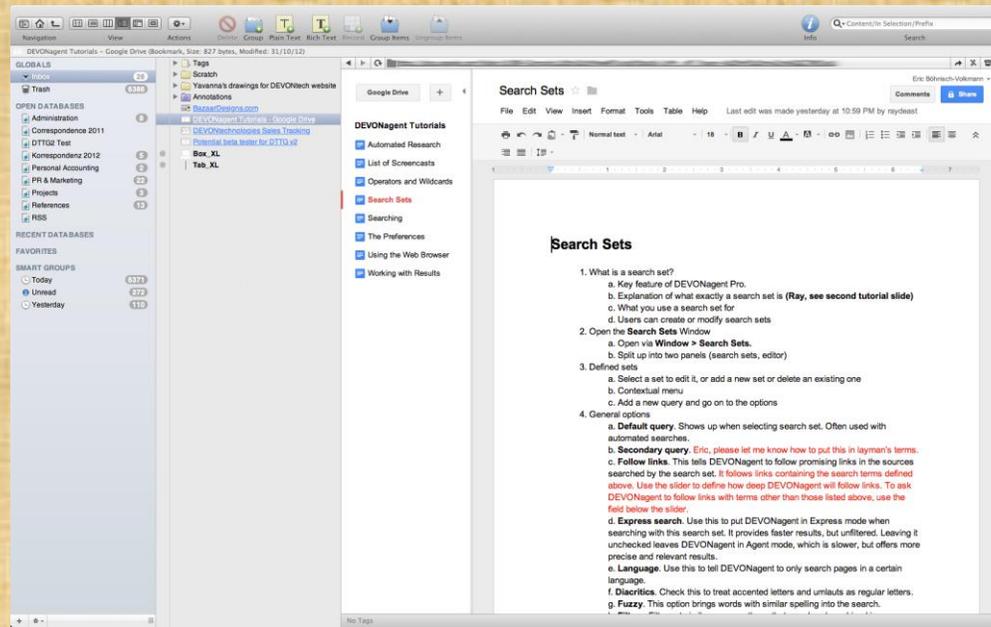
Different Ways to Study

- You can do a quiet study session, where people study together, but only talk when there is a question.
- There can be a more active study session, which can involve taking turns asking questions and problems that will be covered in exams. This can be done by using concepts and problems from a book, notes, or flash cards.
- People can take turns using the chalkboard to explain concepts covered in the exam. You can be creative, and do role-playing or make it into a game. You could also use acronyms, riddles, movements, or chants to better retain games
- You can have the study group leader go through concept by concept with the help of the study group and cover each objective briefly.
- You can also do a Google Drive study session. This is using Google Docs to combine notes and ideas into an organized study guide. Computers and a good Internet connection is needed for this study session.
- Keep in mind that the way a study group is conducted varies by course. For example, a math course may require more talking while a humanities course may not need as much talking.



Google Drive in Study Groups

- One way to ensure an efficient study group session is to have a plan beforehand on what to study and how to study. An excellent way to do this is using Google Docs. In Google Docs, one person can e-mail everyone in the study group to contribute their notes and anything from course books. One should do this at least a week to two days in advance, depending on the length of the material. However, one can also bring computers together and type up a study guide during the study group session, while answering questions that could end up on an exam. However, it is preferable to have a study guide mostly completed in advance.
- Demo: <https://drive.google.com/>



Eating and Drinking in Study Groups

- Everyone who participates in a study group needs to have a light, but full meal in advance. Vegetables, pasta, whole grains, and some meat is good. One needs a meal enough to be full, but not to gorge one's self. Overfilling with food can lead to drowsiness and a lack of focus during study sessions. However, not eating enough can become a distraction.
- Sweets, candy, and high-energy drinks should be avoided because they can cause crashes. Chips and junk food can become the subject of study groups. Also the jittery effect of high-energy drinks can cause distractions.
- If food and drink is necessary, bring fruit, whole-grain snacks (such as granola bars or crackers) or dry cereal trail mix. Water and juices are highly recommended. Soft drinks are not recommended due to its high caffeine content.



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