

Study Group Packet

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How to Conduct a Successful Study Group

Study groups can be one of the most effective methods of studying, but they can also be distracting and hard to work with. Here are some ideas about how to effectively use a group study session.

Have a goal – ‘I want to study for the test together’ is not a goal, and it’s a poor start to a study session. Decide what you want to study, how much you want to study, and how long it’s going to take. An example: I want to have the study guide over chapters 4 & 5 (What) completed in the next 2 hours (How long), with at least 2 sentences for every item in the guide (How much).

Come prepared – Come to the study group with your own goal in mind, it’s easier to choose between goals than it will be to come up with one as a group. Also have all your materials for the course before you arrive. Having them ready will help get the session off to a good start and will allow you to more effectively utilize the time when you have the most focus.

Have a focus – Have one person take on the role of teacher or study lead, and have them pose questions or problems to the group. Decide on the answer as a group. Once everyone understands move onto the next problem. After a few questions have the leader switch with someone else. If you disagree with your group’s answer or find it not compelling, make a note of it so that you can ask your professor or TA.

Quiz each other – Flashcards take a longtime to make, but a person sitting across from you with the textbook is just as effective. If they are struggling give them hints or clues. If they still don’t get it, explain it in your own words. This is far more effective than doing individual flashcards, because the clues and hints are often memorable and can trigger your brain to remember the correct answer.

Challenge each other! – Don’t accept every explanation or answer your group decides on, but challenge your group members to explain their reasoning and how they arrived at conclusions. The goal is not to prove your group mates wrong; it is to best understand the correct answer. Being able to defend a point means you have a very deep level of understanding over the material. (‘No you’re wrong’ or ‘the book says you’re wrong’ are not acceptable ways to defend a point).

Review – At the end of each study session, take 10 minutes to review what you went over and what areas you missed. Ask any questions about uncertainties you had. If the group as a whole struggled with certain concepts, figure out a time that you can go into office hours or find a way to bring it up in class.

So You're Starting a Study Group . . .

Questions to discuss as you develop expectations and norms for working together.

1. Based on what you've seen in the course so far, what do you see as a most useful approach for this group to take?
2. How often do we want to meet? (Recommend weekly if possible)
3. What do we want to do when we meet? (Handouts and information available below)
4. In what location and for how long? (Recommend no more than two hours at a time)
5. What do we want to agree on for expectations for the group? What will we do to prepare? What will we do if we get off track? How will we stay productive?
6. Do we want a convener? (it can rotate each time or be one person for a month or a term or perhaps you don't want one)
7. How do we want to contact each other outside of meeting times?
8. What have we not discussed that would be important for us to discuss before we get started?

Active Studying

Initial Learning	Review & Self-Test for Exam
Attend class and take notes on material covered.	Revisit your notes after class and recite concepts each week. Teach the concept to someone else (in a study group, or 1-on-1) or practice reciting aloud.
Read the textbook and take notes of main ideas while reading (use any note-taking style).	Practice summarizing concepts aloud or in writing. Describe connections between the main ideas, names, dates, vocabulary and other concepts and ideas.
Identify steps needed to solve problems in text book.	Work through practice problems without looking at the answer or process.
Focus some attention on the pictures, graphs and graphics in your text book or notes.	Redraw information from memory, or practice explaining the concept they illustrate.
Make up test questions from texts, class notes and other sources. What would you put on the exam if you were the instructor?	Answer questions, verify answers, and relearn information if you answer incorrectly. Did you get it right? Would you get full credit?
Create a concept map or comparison chart to map out ideas, information, and concepts.	Practice talking through concepts and their relationships to one another without looking.
Fill out existing study guide or create your own study guide.	Quiz yourself on study guide information (out loud or in your head)
Make up a practice exam based on sample problems and ideas from across all course materials and chapters.	Take the practice exam in test-like conditions, analyze your results & refocus on material you missed.
Make flashcards for key concepts, names, formulas, dates, etc.	Practice your flashcards until you know the information in both directions (Given side A, you can recite side B, and vice versa).

Each Week:

- Find connections between your textbook and the lecture/class discussion. What concepts overlap, connect, or seem most emphasized?
- Spend most of your time with the new material from that week, but also spend a bit of time revisiting prior week's problems, concepts, or topics. Regularly revisiting these will help you establish and retain them in your long term memory.
- Mix up ideas and concepts from different chapters when you review. This approach will more closely simulate a test scenario than if you review concepts in clumps.

Studying Activities for Study Groups

Many students are unclear about what to do with their time together as a study group. If students participate in Supplemental Instruction, they'll have a clear idea of how dynamic and interactive a group study session can be. Regardless, it may be useful to provide groups with a list of studying "activities" that help illustrate how they might approach their time together. When getting the group organized for the first time, bring copies of these handouts. Give the study group a chance to look them over, consider the content and expectations of the course they're taking, and identify some activities that make sense for their study group sessions.

Lecture Review

Take the first 10-15 minutes to summarize the most recent lecture. Be sure to mention key terms and their definitions. Have some fun and play with prediction – where will the next lecture/s go based on the lectures that have already been? Work together to arrange terms from the lecture and text into a structured outline, and don't limit yourselves – review all previous lectures and readings and start making connections! Formulate potential exam questions, drawing from the lecture's main point/s. Then, use the lecture's notes to supply answers. At the end, engage in a summary of the session – what main idea/s did you cover? If it's easier, or more beneficial, have everyone write a paragraph summary.

Read Lecture Notes Aloud

Take turns reading aloud from your notes – both lecture and text. Establish some ground rules – anyone should speak-up if s/he feels something from the lecture has been missed in a peer's notes. However, everyone needs to engage with each other respectfully. Lectures can move quickly, and information can be missed. The purpose of this exercise is to be sure that everyone has the correct information needed in order to study successfully, not to single-out someone's note-taking skills. If someone feels a concept wasn't fully noted, or that a concept was missed, wait for the reader to finish before raising a hand and referencing notes/text for support. If a consensus can't be reached, work together to formulate questions to ask the instructor at your next class. If you reach the end of your session and haven't covered all the topics, determine what's left to cover so that you can do so individually or with partners.

Outline

Work together to create an outline from the lectures and the readings. It may be effective to initially create an outline from memory, then to go into your notes to flesh out what you've already listed, and finally to go into your text, to confirm and add to what you have.

The Matrix and Mind-Maps

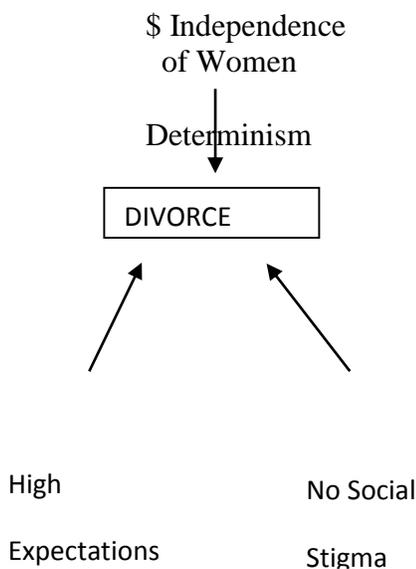
A **matrix** is an effective means of organization that shows relationships between similar categories of information. *Adapted from Onondaga Community College, Syracuse, New York*

Sample Vocabulary Matrix

Term	Paraphrased Definition	Example from Lecture	Example from Textbook	New Example
oligopoly	a market where a few firms produce all or most of the market supply of a good or service	airlines	soft drink manufacturers	domestic car makers (G.M.; Ford; Chrysler)
monopoly	a firm that produces the entire market supply of a good or service	Niagara Mohawk	none	New York telephone local service

Mind-mapping/picturing can help clarify lecture/text topics for those of you who learn better visually. Use arrows to link concepts and materials. Use colors, too, if these resonate with you. You are creating a guide by which to navigate from class/reading to successful test taking.

Mapping:



Picturing:

Positions of Theorists on Basic Assumptions

Freedom	<u>Maslow, Rogers, Freud, Skinner</u>	
Good	<u>Rogers, Maslow, Freud</u>	Evil
Holistic Atomistic	<u>Jung, Rogers, Maslow, Freud</u>	
Environment Hereditry	<u>Skinner, Erickson, Freud, Jung</u>	

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Adapted for Oregon State University, 2012

Write Practice-Test Questions and Do Sample Problems

Engaging in these two activities will not only bolster your understanding of the materials, but will also show you where you might still need extra review. Consider these options:

- Split your group into two and have each group create a set of test questions. Once you've finished this, exchange tests with the other group. Take your tests, and then discuss your answers. Investigate your notes and text if/when you disagree about an answer.
- If you decide that you have enough topics/terms for each person to write a test question about, do this. Then, have everyone ask his/her question, and all write down answers to the questions. If you don't know an answer, write down the question instead. Finally, discuss the answers and where you found them in the lecture/test, if there's disagreement.
- Select several sample problems from the back of the text. First, work independently, and then as a group, to answer the questions. Help explain to each other the steps that were taken and at what points in the process. If you can't determine an answer, formulate a question to ask your instructor next class.

Vocab Activities

1. Go through the text and your lecture notes and generate definitions – and examples – of key terms.
2. Create a matrix together. Use both the text and lecture notes, and then work together to create an original definition/example.
3. Spend the session creating vocab flashcards together. Share definitions/examples. Begin quizzing each other. Make it fun! Ask your ALA for supplies like colored pens/pencils if those will help with the project.
4. Look up Greek/Latin roots if they apply to your materials. Add these to your flashcards. Spend some time together generating a list of as many words as you can think of that hold that root.

Timelines

These not only allow for a better understanding of events and the order in which they've occurred, but when two timelines are made side-by-side, they become tools that allow/help you to create associations/see relationships between world events of the same time period, furthering your grasp of the material/s. From memory, write down the order of important events. Then go back into your lecture notes, and into your text, to verify/add/modify your timeline. Consider creating that secondary timeline to note world events of the same period, or be sure that your discussion addresses such events, in order to deepen your understanding of the material and its place within history.

Sources

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