

STUDY @ HOME

HOW TO SET UP & MAINTAIN A VIRTUAL STUDY GROUP



Taking a class in a virtual format rather than onsite can be challenging. Forming a study group for a virtual class can help you to understand complex course material and improve your grades, even if you are not able to get together in person. A good virtual study group provides you with the opportunity to:

- Share class notes
- Create a support system
- Generate motivation
- Explore differing views
- Practice sharing your understanding of concepts with others
- Alleviate loneliness

HOW TO FORM A GOOD GROUP

The best study groups are made up of a variety of people who are not necessarily your friends outside of class time.

- Always be on the lookout for a couple of other students to create a group: If your professor uses “break out” rooms or discussion boards on Moodle, notice how others in your class share and participate. You are looking to work with people who are motivated and committed to learning well in the course
- Another strategy would be to write a message to the group chat “Hi, I am looking to form a study group; anyone interested?” If there are no takers, try again next week. Don’t be discouraged and don’t take it personally
- You could also ask the professor to encourage classmates to set up groups
- Aim for three or four people: a group larger than four can result in poor focus and wasted time. A pair can be effective, but if your partner isn’t available one week, you will be on your own.
- Be selective: do not try to include all A+ students! Study groups are only successful if all group members (yourself included) learn together and all members have a chance to teach some parts of the material. Teaching is part of learning; if one student in the group “lectures” most of the time, only that student is learning.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR GROUP

- Exchange contact information. Select a weekly meeting time and set up automatically recurring meetings. Zoom, for example, has an option to make regular meetings--consistency helps avoid the problem of having to renegotiate meeting times and helps all members plan their weekly schedules.
- Everyone needs to know what is expected of them and come to meetings prepared.
- Decide what work should be completed in time for each study group meeting.
- When you all arrive for the meeting, it will be natural to discuss non course-related topics for a few minutes. This is fine: socializing is an important part of group bonding. However, if the discussion goes on for too long, you will be wasting precious study time: someone needs to politely get the group focused!

HOW TO STUDY IN A GROUP

Ideally, create weekly tasks.

Possibilities:

- Go over the readings each week and integrate the PowerPoint slides from the corresponding lectures
- Go over the case studies or math practice problems at the end of each chapter
- Assign one group member to read an article and teach it to the rest of the group
- Divide up sections of content to review for a test –assign a topic to each person and report back
- Be very careful not to collaborate on graded assignments or exam questions without the explicit permission of your professor, NOTE: Concordia University's Academic Code of Conduct clearly states that any unauthorized collaboration on graded assignments, tests and exams is considered cheating and students caught collaborating are liable for sanctions

WHEN STUDY GROUPS GO BAD

You should consider leaving a group to form a NEW group if:

- You do not feel included in the discussions
- You feel like the other group member know so much more than you
- One or two people are always doing all the talking
- YOU are always doing all of the talking
- People are frequently late or cancel without warning
- You feel the group members are too competitive with each other
- There is too much discussion of "off subject topics"
- You are collaborating on graded assignments without the explicit permission of the professor (NOTE: Concordia University's Academic Code of Conduct clearly states that any unauthorized collaboration on graded assignments is considered cheating and students caught collaborating are liable for sanctions)



Know when to let go. Your study time is precious! If you feel your study group is not making a contribution to your learning, or they are engaging in unethical practices, be honest and tell the group you will no longer be able to attend the meetings and then go and form a new study group.

A well-formed and maintained study group can be a major asset to your learning. You will also be developing your academic and professional communication skills. If your group works really well, you should seriously consider planning your schedules in order to take future courses together.

For additional help with group projects, make a virtual appointment to see a Learning Specialist at the Student Success Centre. To book, call the receptionist at 514-848-2424 ext. 3921.

If you need help understanding Concordia's rules and regulations concerning academic integrity, or if you need assistance with any questions or difficult situations, contact the Student Advocacy Office at 514-848-2424, ext. 3992 or at studentadvocates@concordia.ca. They're there to help.