

Study Groups in Action

“We remember best what we both say and do.” Edgar Dale

You have a number of considerations for each group study session that you are part of. These strategies give you options to create the best groups for your study purposes.

How many members in the group?

- 3-5 members will allow you to remain productive and to schedule sessions.
- If more people want to join form two or more groups.

Set Clear Goals at the Beginning of Each Session

The first order of business is that the group decides what the agenda areas are for each session. Pick 2 or 3 for each meeting. Example goals for a group study session:

- Review Learning Objectives from A-1 Apply Circuit Concepts
- Practise measuring and sizing for conductors
- Review vocabulary terms from units R-3 (Lighting Controls) and D1 (interpret plans, drawings and specifications)
- Review Unit Q1 – Install Conductors and Cables

Set Times for Each Goal

If you decide to spend 15 minutes on Goal 1, 30 minutes on Goal 2 and 20 minutes on Goal 3 of your session use timers and alarms to help you stay on track. You can always adjust as you progress, for example, you are all struggling with Goal 2, you get to the end of the predetermined 30 minutes and are still not comfortable with the concept. Have a discussion about whether it is best to take a break from that and move on to Goal 3, or adjust your schedule to accommodate a change.

Set Roles

- Timekeeper: monitors time during the study session
- Administrator: creates and shares agenda to group members to plan for the next study session, books meeting room, sends meeting invites (virtual).
- Tutor(s)/ Facilitator(s): leads the study session through agenda, consults with course instructor to receive clarity on topics covered, follows-up with the instructor on any problems.
- Notetaker: summarizes and shares notes for each agenda item with group.

Set Group Guidelines

Establishing group guidelines can help ensure your study group creates a positive learning environment. Here are some suggestions:

- Learn and use group members preferred names and pronouns.
- Provide opportunities for each member to speak.
- Engage in active and respectful listening.
- Be prepared to give and receive respectful and constructive feedback.
- Be open to diverse points of view.
- Discuss how your group will avoid academic integrity concerns

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Take Turns Explaining

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” Albert Einstein

Not all people are comfortable talking to people they don’t know well, however it is critical that you explain and develop this skill. Taking turns explaining will ensure each of you has the opportunity to speak to a small groups, but even more importantly, it will give you each the opportunity to work on “translating” your understanding into words and solutions.

- Rotate who explains each topic or problem. Make a schedule for how you will rotate turns.
- The rest of the group asks questions to make sure the explanation is clear. Try to think of the what an exam question for that learning point would be and present it to the group.
- Remember, this should be fun and not stressful to speak.

Practising with explanations will improve your ability to gather your thoughts for when you need to explain things on the job, to the client, the foreman, co-workers, and many others.

Use Flashcards and Other Visual Aids

- Quiz each other with cards. It is a tried and true learning process for each person to create their own set of flashcards and then continue to adapt and develop the definitions / examples / sketches, etc, on your cards based on your group interaction.
- Draw parts, plans, circuits. Bedazzle your flash cards. Use coloured pencil or felts and multi coloured highlighter pens to emphasize and organize. This all improves memory.
- Label and explain your flashcard notations and drawings to each other.
- Expand on the answer – explain it in your own words. This is called “translating” and your memory and recall are increased by sharing your own examples, stories, and experiences.
- Listen for accuracy and add detail when necessary to support you and your groups members.
- Ask questions – don’t be afraid to be honest if something is just not clicking – it happens to us all. “Can we look at that question again, I always seem to mix that up with....?”

Work Through Problems Together

- Use visual tools such as a white board or flip chart for working on math problems, diagrams, blueprint reading, and measurements.
- Compare answers and methods. Often it isn’t just a correct answer that is necessary, but how you obtained that answer is equally important, especially with formulas and calculations.
- Often breaking down complex procedures and writing them out on large spaces, such as a whiteboard, using coloured markers will help you recall the necessary steps.
- Ask each other: “How did you get that answer? Can we work through it step by step together?”

Brainstorm possible test and exam questions

- Refer to past tests and text materials and formats as you imagine what might be asked.
- Use these questions to practise your answers and to ask the instructor for clarification.

Remember: You’re practicing for real learning. Explaining clearly, listening carefully, and respecting each other are all job skills.