A typical study group happens when group members feel like getting together. Students agree to “study” a subject together, but it often ends up being a few people working silently in the same room. They may swap notes and ask questions but each person is still trying to learn on their own.

Study Groups that work have a major difference: they are intentional, focused, actively working groups. Groups take place on a scheduled basis, have clear leadership, and typically work from a plan or agenda. What’s more, they are deceptively simple to set up.

Forming Study Groups That Work

1. Limit groups to 5 or 6 people.
2. Work with people who have similar goals, not necessarily your friends.
3. Test the group before you commit.
4. Assign a leader.
5. Set an agenda for each and every meeting.

Getting Along with Each Other
- Learn and use group member’s names
- Allow for variety and diversity in learning and teaching styles
- Everyone can and should contribute to the group
- Rotate leadership and group roles

Setting Up a Group that Works

- Practice problem solving techniques
- Quiz each other
- Brainstorm exam questions
- Practice teaching and reviewing
- Take turns

Tips for Ongoing Success
- Limit socializing
- Set timelines and stick to them
- Drop dead weight – if someone isn’t contributing there is no reason to keep inviting them
- Don’t let one person dominate the group
- When in doubt, ask your instructor

Adapted University of Pennsylvania Department of Academic Support
Additional resources: