

# Why

Meet others  
Make friends  
Learn more  
Save time  
Work as a team  
Expand your thinking  
Improve your leadership

## A STUDY GROUP?



### Why study in groups?

Most successful students at Cal use study groups. Most successful careers involve team work. Why not start now when you have the opportunity to work with people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse working and learning styles? Study groups can help you in classes with huge reading lists, multiple writing assignments, lots of course specific jargon, and long problem sets. Your instructors can help clarify what class work must be done individually and how they see group work as part of their course.

### Who should be in a study group?

Know your own strengths and weaknesses—what can you contribute to a study group? For a good study group, look for others who can balance out the group. Be open minded. If everyone you study with looks at material the same way you do, it's easy to miss out on creative ideas and approaches.

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*“Studying in groups... refreshes my memory on course material, makes me aware of information I missed during class or didn't quite understand, and gives me new ideas and perspectives on class topics.”*

—Fall 2005 undergraduate

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### What kinds of study groups are there?

There are many types of study groups. Most are course related, with students sometimes knowing each other, sometimes not. Some study groups are organized by the instructor, most are not. Some study groups are run by campus units like the Student Learning Center or Departments. Others are run by student organizations. Some spring up spontaneously when students meet at office hours or in class. Other study groups are based on location, for example many students use the Chavez Center atrium as a place for drop-in collaboration with classmates and tutors. Find a study group that fits your needs—or create your own.

### What if my study group frustrates me?

Participating in study groups can be both exhilarating and frustrating because of differences in learning and communication styles. Some students may need quiet. Some students may need to sound out their ideas with others. Others may be more comfortable listening and offering occasional suggestions.

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*“Throughout my three years in Berkeley, I have found that student-to-student support is the most academically and socially rewarding.”*

—SLC Study Strategies Peer Mentor

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It's helpful to recognize that everyone brings value to a group and to be aware of making assumptions or judgments. What you may initially perceive to be someone's weakness could actually be a strength, because the best groups are those with the most diversity among their participants. Everyone possesses different:

- Organizational skills
- Knowledge base
- Question-asking ability
- Note taking ability
- Personal attributes (age, gender, appearance, ethnicity)
- Cultural perspective
- Personal experience and background
- Points of view
- Life and school experience
- Class participation level and style
- Preparation thoroughness
- Verbal and written skills

Try to be in a study group with people who have different strengths from yours.

*“Those of us who lived in the dorms were first year freshman. We were all anxious about doing well, so we created a late night study group with people from different majors. We shared food, tested each other, and studied throughout the night. It really helped to have a supportive group of people who all wanted to do well.”*

—Social Welfare,  
African American Studies major

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## Successful Study Group Tips

### *How to form a successful study group*

- ❖ Form study groups early in the semester and meet regularly, based on calendar of course deadlines and exams.
- ❖ Agree upon and set written expectations and ground rules (e-mail them to each other):
  - Decide how often you'll meet.
  - Assign individual roles and responsibilities (note taker, facilitator, etc.).
  - Create a timeline.
  - Share contact information.
  - Agree on where you'll meet—possible campus study spaces include:
    - [slc.berkeley.edu](http://slc.berkeley.edu)
    - [www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/studyspaces.html#doe](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/studyspaces.html#doe)
    - [www.lib.berkeley.edu/BIOS/vtour/vgroup.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/BIOS/vtour/vgroup.html)
    - <http://academicservices.berkeley.edu>
- Agree upon and divide up tasks equally.
- Know and respect each other's time commitments.
- When speaking, be brief and make sure that what you say is relevant.

- Take advantage of group efficiency by sharing resources and splitting reading assignments (check with the instructor to see what is allowed).
- ❖ Be accepting of different studying/learning approaches. Sometimes the most “comfortable” groups are the ones that don't move forward.
- ❖ For large lecture classes with many discussion sections, try to include others in your study group who have different GSIs—GSIs have their strengths and weaknesses too.
- ❖ If a course is very competitive or the grading depends on how well other students in the class perform (on a curve), use the study group to:
  - Collaborate for mutual success.
  - Focus on everyone learning as much as he/she can (by doing so, you will too).
- ❖ If you feel excluded from a study group:
  - Persist. Remember that you have as much to contribute to the group as everyone else has.
  - Talk with your professor and GSI. They may have suggestions or alternatives.
  - Meet with professors, GSIs, or use other resources (such as staff in academic departments, student service units, or college offices) for ideas and advocacy.
  - Be innovative: study with another classmate or form your own study group. Or tape a class and discuss the tape with someone else. Use the situation to experiment with different studying techniques.

We want your comments and feedback about this flyer. Please e-mail us at: [npw@berkeley.edu](mailto:npw@berkeley.edu)

Division of  
**Undergraduate  
Education**

### **Research**

“Our analysis of small-group learning procedures suggests that greater time spent working in groups leads to more favorable attitudes among students in general and that even minimal group work can have positive effects on student achievement.” Springer, L., Stanne, M.E., Donovan, S.S., “Effects of Small-Group Learning on Undergraduates in Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology: A Meta-Analysis, Review of Educational Research, Spring 1999, Vol 69, No. 1, pp. 21-51.