



British International School Riyadh

The art of starting a study group

Starting a study group is a good way of getting fellow [students](#) to help you get a better degree than them. It allows you to check out the competition and to nick all their best ideas.

You therefore need to think carefully about who to include in your group. There is no point having people who are unwilling to share their thoughts, or don't have any thoughts worth sharing. Nor do you want someone who never shuts up, because having the chance to articulate and clarify your own thoughts is one of the main reasons for joining a study group. Also, if someone else becomes too dominant, others may forget that it was your brilliant idea to start the group in the first place.

Don't feel you have to include friends, and never ask someone to join for romantic reasons. That cute way they wrinkle their nose when thinking could prove distracting. Once you've eliminated anyone too stupid, shy, overbearing, unreliable, unstable, smelly or irresistible, you should be down to about three or four people - the ideal study group size.

Next, you have to decide what you are all there for. Is it to help with revision for an exam, or to pool ideas about how to tackle a particular piece of coursework? Decide on your goals and write them down. Next, decide when and where you are going to meet and for how long. A daily 6am meeting is probably too demanding, while once a month in a 24-hour cafe after the pubs close would also be demanding, in a different way.

Now, decide who is going to be responsible for organising and chairing meetings. This doesn't have to be the same person. It could be someone different every time you get together, although the decision shouldn't take up more time than anything else you are discussing.

Then, decide on an agenda for the first meeting and identify a task everyone involved needs to carry out by the time you next meet. This could be getting hold of old exam papers, analysing an assignment question, identifying reasons why a rival study group won't be nearly as good as yours. Circulate a list of everyone's contact details.

At last, you should be ready to hold your first proper meeting. Allow everyone to report back on the task they have prepared and allow them to finish a point before you interrupt, even if they are talking rubbish. Showing mutual respect is vital. This isn't the same thing as saying "with respect" before completely trashing someone's views and personality. Also, make sure you don't spend the whole time trashing the views and personality of your tutor. One session should be enough.

You will have to keep a close eye on the group's goals to avoid it becoming a forum for moaning, gossiping or sampling cocktails. Even if it rarely offers any insights into what you are supposed to be studying, a study group will help you learn a lot about turning group dynamics to your advantage, even if everyone else in the group is there to learn that too.