

# Step <sup>By</sup> Step

## *Guide to Effective Study Groups*

Everything you need to get started —

**inviting members,  
establishing guidelines,  
ensuring effective sessions  
learning strategies.**

*Franky Chernin, Coordinator Student Success*



**Adapted from:**

[www.utexas.edu/student/utlc](http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc)

[www.colorado.edu/SACS/tips/misc/studygroups.html](http://www.colorado.edu/SACS/tips/misc/studygroups.html)

[www.unbc.ca/lsc/index.html](http://www.unbc.ca/lsc/index.html)

# Card one

## What a study group can do for you

Reduce the amount of time you spend studying:

**Review** material from class; **share notes**

**Exchange ideas**

to gain new perspectives on learning.

**Explain concepts**

to each other; **share examples.**

**Prepare** for tests, exams, presentations.

Form **social ties** with students in your program — know what's going on — **feel connected** be in the right place at the right time.



# Card two

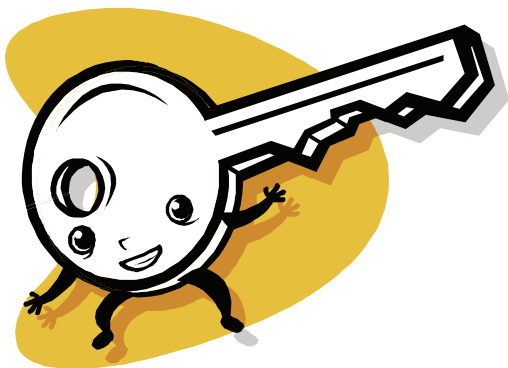
## Key Features of a Study Group:

Ideal size: **4 – 5 people**

**Regularly scheduled** meeting times

Plan for **working together**

**Preparation** lecture notes, questions, readings  
examples



# Card three

## Inviting members

**You could:**

**Approach** individual students who you think might be interested

Ask your teacher for a few minutes of class time and make your **pitch to the whole class.**  
See Card four for ideas

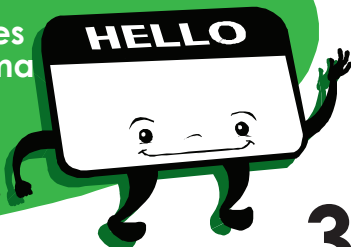
**Post** through your WebCT site or other on line options available to you.

**Post** at the PAL Centre or TLC.

**PAL Centre** is your "go to" place for questions & help about learning.

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**TLC** is where Peer Tutoring happens.



# Card four

## “Script” ideas to generate interest

**You can use any or all of the following to generate interest and invite students to start a group with you.**

I want to be part of a study group so that I can better use my study time. Did you know that research shows that studying together is way more effective than studying alone —can be as much as a 3 to 1 difference — 1 hour of working together can equal 3 hours of working on your own.

This makes sense because if I don't have some information or some answers, someone else in the study group probably will or if we need to find it —we can do it more quickly together.

Also, if I do know and I share it with my study group, then I have done my reinforcement and review — which saves me time. They say that we remember 95% of what we learn when we teach it to someone else.

I am hoping you will want to be a part of our group. We can get together after our \_\_\_\_\_ class in \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

You would be acting as the Host for the first meeting.

I have a Start a Study Group Tool Box that we can use to get organized. Is there anyone who you think would be good for us to invite to our group.

We want 4-5 people in total so that we can all get the most out of it.



**If you get more than 5 people — have others start a new group.**

# Card five

## Bottom Line for Study Group Members

### Each Participant:

1. Is a **dedicated student** — goes to class, pays attention (might include asking questions, taking notes, actively participating in discussion)
2. **Wants to** participate in the study group
3. **Can meet at a common time.**

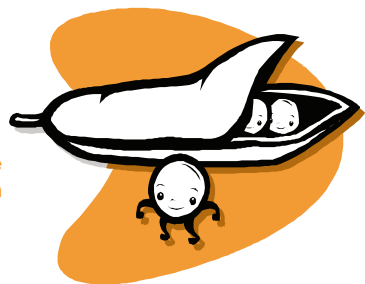


# Card six

## First Meeting

1. **Participants share** what they want to get from the study group — keeping up with the course work, prep for tests, exams, support...
2. **Choose the time(s)** (once or twice weekly) that works for everyone and that everyone can commit to
3. **Choose a place** or places that you know will be available (the same place if possible — avoids confusion)
4. **Share Contact Information** and how each member would prefer to be contacted.

Need help getting your group meeting times coordinated – free on line tools like Meeting Wizard can help [www.meetingwizard.com](http://www.meetingwizard.com)



# Card seven

## First Meeting

**Share** and **discuss** your **learning style** preferences and share **strategies** for each preference. (Learning Style Preference Inventory available in the PAL Centre, online or workshop

<http://www.georgebrown.ca/saffairs/counselling.aspx>

**Discuss Effective Learning strategies for:**

**Visual Preferences**

**Visual Reading Preferences**

**Auditory Preferences**

**Kinesthetic Preferences**

Want to know more...

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# Card eight

## First Meeting

Share and discuss the principles of Cooperative Learning:

**Positive Interdependence** — Contribution by all teammates is necessary for success

**Individual Accountability** — Individual 'public' performance (you are seen by the group as contributing)

**Equal Participation** — Participation is relatively equal (whole group monitors to ensure)

**Simultaneous Interaction** — Most of the group is actively involved most of the time (not one group member speaking, doing — the rest listening, taking direction, notes)

Kagan, Spencer (2008). **New Cooperative Learning, Multiple Intelligences, and Inclusion**. In, J.W. Putman (Ed.), *Cooperative Learning and Strategies for Inclusion* (pp.105-137). Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, Maryland

# Card nine

## First Meeting

### Decide and commit to group rules/contract which will include:

1. **Respect** — be on time, appreciate others concerns/points of view, listen, avoid judgment...
2. **Be prepared** — commit to group goals for each session: readings, notes, resources, questions
3. **Right to pass** — participation is voluntary: Group members have the right to occasionally choose not to contribute.

4. ?

5. ?





# Card ten

## First Meeting

**Establish** a common **goal** for the next several study group meetings:

**What will you focus on?**

**Review**

**Class / Test Prep**

**Assignment Organization**

**Presentation**

**Other**





# Card eleven

## Every Meeting

**Choose a Chairperson for the next meeting who leads the group in:**

1. Establishing an **agenda** for the next meeting.
2. Setting approximate **time limits** on agenda items
3. Ensuring there is time for a **group evaluation** at the end of the session
4. Confirming with group what **prep resources** are needed for the next meeting

## At the meeting, the Chair:

1. **Reviews the agenda** set at the end of the last meeting and the time lines
2. Ensures that there is a quick **stretch break & change** in focus about every 20 minutes

★ **Chair role changes with each session.**  
**The new Chair leads the group in deciding the agenda for the next meeting**



# Card twelve

## Every Meeting

### Choose a Host for the next meeting who:

1. **Emails** group to remind of session time and of any materials, resources that participants have agreed to bring, i.e. questions on a particular topic, examples of a concept or theory, practice test questions

2. **Facilitates a check-in** activity at the beginning of the session

for ideas, [www.georgebrown.ca/peerlearning/](http://www.georgebrown.ca/peerlearning/)

3. **Facilitates the evaluation** at the end of the session (Card thirteen)

★ **Host role changes with each session.**  
**The new Host works with the new Chair to take into account suggestions from the group evaluation.**





# Card thirteen

## Every Meeting

### Evaluation — Group

**Objective:** How did we operate well as a team at this Study Group Meeting?

1. What are **examples** of how we honoured the **principles** of **Cooperative Learning** (card eight)

**P**ositive Interdependence

**I**ndividual Accountability

**E**qual Participation

**S**imultaneous Interaction

2. What can we **add, watch out for, include** in our next meeting?

3. What outside **assistance, resources** do we need (may include PAL Centre, professor, counsellor, tutor)



# Card fourteen

## Every Meeting

### Evaluation — Individual

**Objective:** How did you operate as a team member at this Study Group Meeting?

How often did you do the following during the study group meeting? Rate your level of **participation & cooperation.**

1. I shared my knowledge and opinions.  
never rarely sometimes often
2. I “actively” listened to the other group members. (e.g. eye contact, open mind, respect)  
never rarely sometimes often
3. I encouraged others to participate.  
never rarely sometimes often

What can I do at the next meeting to **increase** my level of participation & cooperation —

### If host or chair

I fulfilled my role as decided by the group  
yes no

What I liked about my role —

What I found challenging in my role —



# Card fifteen

## Troubleshooting

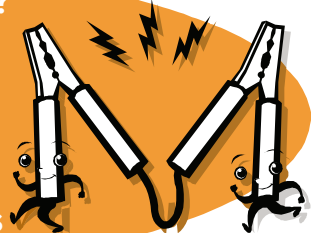
### 1. Group member misses meetings, is unprepared:

- Member is **contacted** by other members, as a group, to raise concern
- Group asks if there is anything they can do to **assist** the member to **reconnect** with the group and become an active participant
- Member **decides** action & commitment & time line
- If member is **unable to fulfill** the commitment in the agreed timeline they are deemed to have **resigned** from the group
- Group decides if they wish to invite a **new member**

Need help?

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to the  
PAL  
Centre!

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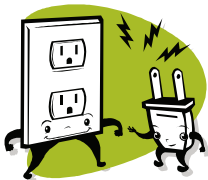


# Card sixteen

## Troubleshooting

2. Group was working really well but seems to be falling apart. Members need to come together and go back through the cards:

- What **contract, ground rules** did everybody agree upon — do they need to be **reintroduced** or **adjusted**
- Is the **Host** and **Chair role changing** for each meeting? Do all members understand the **responsibilities** of the role?
- Is the group taking time to complete the **evaluation** at the end of each meeting and incorporating **suggestions** in future meetings?
- Has the group sought **assistance** from Counselling, PAL Centre, other college resources?





# Card seventeen

## Strategies to Meet the Group Goals

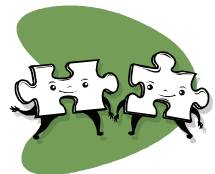
### Goal: Being Prepared for Class

Practice the first **P** of **PPR**

for full PPR: [www.peerlearning.ca](http://www.peerlearning.ca)

Pre — **before class:**

1. Check **course outline** for this week's topic and objectives
2. Preview your **text** and **other resources** — each group **member chooses** the **strategies** that **appeal** to them: **read** the summary, **look** at pictures, charts, diagrams, check for **key terms** and other words in bold, read **professors notes** (handouts or WebCT) check out case studies, examples, stories, 'google' the topic
3. **Group shares** their impressions of the topic and one thing they found interesting and/or confusing





# Card eighteen

## Strategies to Meet the Group's Goals

### Goal: Post Class Review *The second P of PPR*

**Discuss** what each person thinks are the **important points** from the lecture

**Share and compare class notes**

**Fill in** any missing **material**

**Discuss** confusing material, share understanding examples





# Card nineteen

## Strategies to Meet the Group's Goals

### Goal: Trigger Questions to promote discussion

1. What is our **understanding** of the assignment?
2. **Explain** \_\_\_\_\_ without looking at the text. What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean? What happens when \_\_\_\_\_ ?
3. My **understanding** of this part is \_\_\_\_\_  
What do you think?
4. How does \_\_\_\_\_ **relate** to what we did previously, to what we will be doing this week?

### The R of PPR - Relate

For more trigger questions,  
[www.georgebrown.ca/peerlearning/](http://www.georgebrown.ca/peerlearning/)





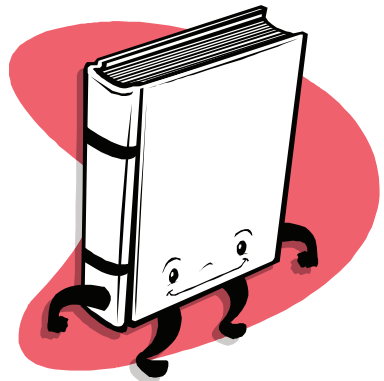
# Card twenty

## Strategies to Meet the Group's Goals

**Goal: Divide up readings or other work**

Each member presents a **written/visual summary** of a reading and **'teaches'** it to the group in detail

**Pair off** and do **interviews** of the **readings** — one person **summarizes** an assigned reading and the other person **interviews** them, asking **questions** that lead to **clarification** and **critical thinking**



# Card twenty one

## Strategies to Meet the Group's Goals

### Goal: Review for test, exam

Each member **brings** a certain number of test **questions**, photocopied; everyone tries to **answer** the questions **individually** or as a **group**; then the group **discusses** answers

Each member **'teaches'** an assigned topic. Everyone can do this at every meeting or one or two people can at each meeting

The group can **go through** lecture notes and **identify and discuss** difficult concepts and questions





# Card twenty two

## Strategies to Meet the Group's Goals

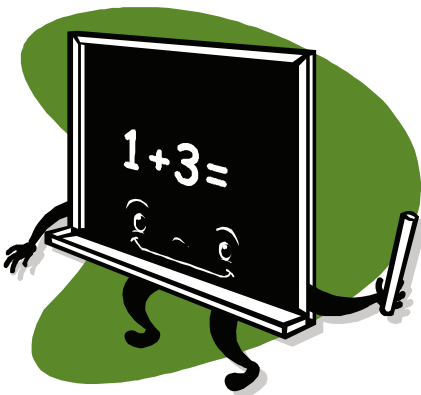
### Goal: Preparing for exams

**Plan** your study schedule, working backwards, preparing and reviewing for your last exam first means all courses get equal time

**Schedule** time to exercise, relax, eat and sleep

**Practice** group relaxation/breathing exercises

**Meet** for final review and pep talk before each exam



**5** things I have **learned** about **studying together:**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**3** strategies we have practiced to **study smarter** not longer:

1.

2.

3.

**1** thing I will **do differently** with my **next study group:**

1.