

**UNIT 7:** Study Groups  
**ACTIVITY 1:** Why Study Groups Matter  
**GRADE:** 12

ramp-up to  
**READINESS™**

A significant body of research has found that forming effective study groups can be a powerful strategy for success – and sometimes for academic survival – in higher education. Through participation in this series of advisory sessions, students will understand the importance of study groups in many postsecondary programs, how to start them and how to operate them.

**Objective:** Students understand why study groups are important in higher education and when to form them.

**Resources Needed for this Activity:**

- None

**Opening: 5 minutes** - The advisor begins the class by asking students how many of them regularly use study groups outside of class to help complete or improve their work. Call on a few students who raise their hands to describe the subjects and times they have convened study groups. Then ask a few students who did not raise their hands why they have never or do not regularly use study groups.

**Activity: 20 minutes** - The advisor tells students that studies of college students have shown that forming study groups with other students is very important in higher education. Ask students to share their thoughts about why it is so important to know how to conduct an effective study group in college. Among the responses that the advisor seeks to surface through a group discussion are:

- **Tap strengths:** Everyone has different strengths, from the ability to figure out key concepts quickly to the ability to take great notes to excellent organizational skills to creativity. When you work in a study group, you can share those strengths with everyone you know.
- **Share the work:** In a study group, the members can divide up the labor on complex and difficult assignments.
- **Create a safe space:** College can be a very challenging place, and an effective study group can provide a safe place to receive support and encouragement.
- **Identify and address misunderstandings:** Because postsecondary instructors may not give frequent quizzes and assignments like many teachers do in high school, they may not know when a student misunderstands some aspect of the material until the student takes the midterm or the final exam, which is too late to improve the student's understanding. Also, the student him or herself may not know that he or she does not understand some aspect of the material. In a study group, the other students can help monitor each other's understanding of the material and can help students figure things out when that understanding is missing.
- **Points of view:** Working with other students can provide new points of view that the student might not have thought about if he or she were working alone.
- **Motivation:** Because students generally don't want to disappoint their friends and peers, a study group can help to keep some students engaged and on task.

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## Study Groups

The advisor asks students if there are times they can imagine it would *not* be good to join in a study group, and then calls on a few students to share their answers to this question. Highlight the fact that study groups can be very important and useful but that they are not all effective. Stress that, in fact, being in a bad study group may be worse than not being in any study group. That is because it can waste time, focus the student on the wrong content, and cause other problems.

Slides 2-4: The advisor can use the PowerPoint which contains the heading of each of the Ground Rules for Great Study Groups listed below.

### **Ground Rules for Great Study Groups**

**Pick the right people:** Try to work with people who meet these four criteria: (a) they take academic work seriously, (b) they are well prepared for class, (c) they know how to listen, (d) their schedule outside of class will work with yours.

**Get the size right:** Make the group big enough to generate good ideas but small enough to really talk to each other. Between 3-6 people is a good range.

**Require active involvement from all:** If somebody regularly doesn't complete the work for the group, that person should have to leave the group.

**Set a goal for every meeting:** Each time the group comes together, it should agree upon what it is going to achieve during that session.

**Stay focused:** During the study group time, don't be diverted from your goal for the meeting by socializing or getting off the subject and task you are working on.

**Avoid distractions:** Hold the study group sessions at a time and place where you will all be able to concentrate on the material.

**Stay polite:** Even when disagreements develop, members of the group should treat each other with respect.

**Don't let the group do your work for you:** Don't rely on other group members so much that you don't master the material yourself.

After going through these points, the advisor should ask students if they have any questions or comments to make in response to these ideas.

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