

Study Group Prep for Online Study Groups

Study groups are a great opportunity to learn with and from your peers. Be prepared for your study session by planning ahead. Do this by setting up needed technology, prepping any shared documents you might reference, and identifying and naming study activities. Prepping will help your study group stay on track and make the most of your study session. Below are some tips to help your group get organized and maximize your success!

Develop understanding through naming, defining & identifying.

Identify the clearest and most confusing points for each concept from the past week. Then, clarify the confusing points.

As a group, list concepts from the past week. Then, have each person choose a concept to teach to the group.

Develop a list of key terms as a group. Divide up to identify definitions. Come back together to share notes.

Read a section of the textbook or watch a video and have each person describe it in their own words.

Have one group member work through steps of a practice problem; have another group member explain each step aloud. Then switch.

Have each person identify and share a real-world example of a concept.

Explain diagrams, processes, graphs or exam problems aloud to each other.

Fill in a table with key terms, definitions and examples.

On a shared document, combine notes to create a full outline of important topics from the past week.

Apply knowledge through elaboration, connection & retrieval practice.

Make connections between concepts on a shared document: outline, concept map, Venn diagram, etc.

Quiz each other using the book, homework or study guide. Pay attention to how everyone is doing, then determine where to focus more time and energy.

Work individually on the same practice problem. Then, compare each person's answer and problem-solving process, and ask each other questions.

Have each person teach a concept without notes. Listen carefully and help each other identify study areas to add depth to understanding.

Write out steps in a process. For each step, have someone explain the rationale for the step and its position in the sequence.

Have each person draw a diagram or visual. Then have a different person add detail and explain the visual.

Have one person speak/write a sentence about a concept. Go around the group, with each person adding a new sentence to elaborate on the concept (e.g., definitions, examples).

Demonstrate mastery through analysis, explanation & creation.

Have each person write or predict exam questions. Trade questions and practice answering them.

Create shared documents or quizzes. Put prompts on slides and answers in notes area. Mix up slides/questions from across the weeks for cumulative practice.

When answering questions, practice naming evidence and explaining why.

After each practice question/flashcard, answer the question, "I know because...?"

Don't just explain why an answer is correct; explain why other answers are incorrect.

Look at problems/case studies from all angles, changing variables. Ask and try to answer, "What would happen if...?"

List key concepts. For each, identify two ways you could demonstrate full understanding. Then, do the activities to confirm understanding.

Post-exam, list activities from past study sessions and evaluate effectiveness based on exam content and structure. Create a revised study plan for the next exam.

Academic Integrity: Know your Boundaries

When working in a group, the same academic integrity standards apply whether you're online or in a classroom setting. The distinction between the two settings is the increased importance of making sure the boundaries of group work are clear, since often there can be less communication in an online situation. As such, it is critical to understand and abide by each professor's standards. At the end of a semester, instructors are responsible for assigning a grade to each student that reflects what they have learned. When it comes to group work, each professor evaluates that level of learning differently. Therefore, be aware of how group work will be graded. Here are some important considerations:

- Is your instructor expecting one final product produced by all of you? If yes, be sure you pull your weight. If your name is on the assignment, you need to have contributed, or your group members can be charged with "aiding in academic dishonesty" and you can be charged with "cheating" since you are getting credit for work you didn't do. At the same time, you cannot do all the work yourself. As a group, carefully delineate who is responsible for what and hold each other accountable. Consider creating a chart that outlines who is in charge of which pieces of the project; that way all portions of the assignment will be clear to group members.
- Is your instructor expecting individual final products from each person in the group? If so, make sure your collaboration ends with the discussion of ideas or concepts. Don't turn in assignments that have the same pieces to them. Sometimes students like to divide up work (e.g., one person makes the charts, one person writes the introduction, one person does the bibliography). While this kind of division of labor is acceptable if you are all turning in one assignment together, it is definitely not permitted if you are each turning in separate work.
- And most importantly, if you are unsure of your instructor's intended and allowable level of collaboration, always ask for clarification. Never assume! Students sometimes find themselves in trouble for violating the academic integrity policy by accident. At UB, not knowing is not considered an excuse.