

STUDY BUDDIES

Finding A Study Group to Suit Your Needs Can Help Your Reach Your Educational Goals

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Higher education can often seem like an overwhelmingly solitary pursuit, especially for veterans returning to school after a stint in the military. Finding – or forming – a study group can be a powerful antidote to the isolation that many students feel and can be a real lifeline for those struggling with complex concepts and new ways of learning.

According to educators at Harvard University, “Study groups can be an excellent way to strengthen your understanding of course material and build accountability into your week. Study groups are safe spaces where you can ask questions, practice participation, and get to know your classmates in a smaller setting.”

Harvard educators cite a number of benefits to joining or forming a study group, including providing support and encouragement to group members; helping students understand difficult concepts by having everyone explain them in different ways and in their own words; improving communications skills; and bolstering confidence in the subject matter and in sharing opinions. Study groups also discourage procrastination and encourage teamwork and responsibility.

Similarly, the education website [bestcolleges.com](https://www.bestcolleges.com), calls study groups “an integral part of any college student’s success,” and notes that “collaborating with others provides accountability and support, helping you stick to your goals,” ultimately leading to better grades and a higher degree of collegiate success.

There are many different types of study groups, including in-person groups that meet on a weekly basis to go over coursework; in-person groups that only meet prior to exams to give and take practice tests; quiet, reading-oriented study groups; debate and challenge study groups; and online study groups that meet via video calls and chatrooms.

In order to gain the maximum benefit, it is important to pick a study group that suits your particular needs and studying style. For example, ask yourself a few questions: Do you absorb course material best when you read it alone in silence, or when you discuss it out loud? Are you easily distracted by chatty peers? How often do you want to meet, and in what venue? What types of people do you relate to, and are they in your classes? Once you’ve answered these questions for yourself, talk to other students in your classes to see if there are existing study groups that you can join or, alternatively, form your own study group with like-minded individuals.



BestColleges.com offers these tips for forming your own study group:

- Understand your needs and study style
- Reach out to select classmates
- Set ground rules and group goals
- Create an agenda for meetings
- Put someone in charge of each session
- If you're prepping for an exam, use the professor's review sheet to structure your studying
- If you're brushing up on several chapters from a textbook, assign one to each member to present to the others
- Planning out your study sessions limits the chance you'll become a social group rather than a study group

Student veterans may want to form study groups with other students who are returning to college after a hiatus. For instance, military-friendly Golden Gate University recommends that veterans build social connections, discussion groups, and virtual communities to assist with the transition back to college. "Online study groups are a great way for student veterans to connect with peers," notes the GGU website. "These groups meet virtually to discuss coursework, prepare for exams, and complete group projects. Study groups offer a collaborative learning environment and provide a sense of belonging."

GGU recommends virtual communities and study groups for many veterans, noting that these groups provide a diversity of perspectives and continuous support networks. "One of the main benefits of virtual communities is accessibility," the website states. "Veterans can participate from

anywhere, balancing school, work, and family responsibilities more easily. Online platforms allow for flexible participation, ensuring that everyone can find a way to engage that suits their schedule."

Many colleges and universities have dedicated student veteran groups or a special veterans' departments on campus to help put student veterans in touch with one another. These groups can help student veterans form study groups and offer a sense of community and shared experience.

Another organization, Student Veterans of America (studentveterans.org), represents more than 750,000 student veterans through its network of nearly 1,600 on-campus chapters, all designed to ensure that student veterans and military-connected students achieve their greatest potential. "Student Veterans of America (SVA) elevates the academic, professional, and personal development of veterans in higher education through chapter programs and services, outcomes and impacts research, and advocacy at every level," notes a company spokesman. "With a mission focused on empowering student veterans, SVA is committed to providing an educational experience that goes beyond the classroom."

"SVA inspires yesterday's warriors by connecting student veterans with a community of dedicated chapter leaders," the spokesman adds. "Every day these passionate leaders work to provide the necessary resources, network support, and advocacy to ensure student veterans can effectively connect, expand their skills, and ultimately achieve their greatest potential. 