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Group Study: Some Guidelines

It is generally recognized that people can accomplish more by sharing their skills and resources than by working alone. We even have a saying ("Two heads are better than one") to demonstrate this phenomenon.

Often college is seen as a competitive place, so we tend to overlook the power of cooperation. The power of groups is widely accepted in the business world and can easily be used in your job as a student in the form of a study group.

Here are a few pointers for setting up a study group:

1. Select people who seem to share your desire to reach your academic goals.
2. Look for people who stay alert in class, who take notes, who ask questions, who respond to the professor's questions. (This may represent two or three different people, but that's good because you may also have different learning styles represented in your group).
3. Limit your group to four to six people (large groups get unwieldy and small groups can too easily get off track)
4. Schedule a meeting to "test the waters" and see how you get along together. Once the group seems to be doing well, try to schedule regular meetings.

How about some "principles" to follow in your group?

1. Question each other on the material assigned (Be sure to have all the readings and assignments done!)
2. Take turns "teaching" each other the material. Arthur Chickering, a student development researcher, says that often a student's "most important teacher is another student." If you have to teach a concept, you really have to know that concept, so you are not only helping the other group members, but also you are reinforcing your own knowledge.
3. Try to predict test questions. Write them down and begin to develop your own "test bank."
4. Make sure someone takes the role of the session leader to keep the session productive.
5. Compare notes. Maybe you need yours "filled in" or maybe you can help someone else "fill in" theirs.
6. Take a few minutes at the end of the session to evaluate what you've done. (Did everyone put in their full effort? Did we concentrate on too much on one topic? How can we improve our efforts?)
7. Plan the next meeting. Give the group assignments if appropriate.

Certainly these are not complete guidelines and principles of study groups, but it's a good start.

Most of the people working in the world today do not work in isolation. Why should college students be any different? Perhaps the image of the scholar sitting alone in his study is compelling, but it is not as realistic today as it was in the past.