

Study Groups Guidelines

In the saying of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab ؓ there occurs, "... **Until Jibreel came to the Prophet ﷺ and he put his two knees against his two knees and he placed his hands upon his thighs**" In this there is a proof for obligation of respecting the gatherings of knowledge and for sitting in front of and with the people of knowledge, in a way showing manners and humility.¹

The Taabi'een gave respect to the scholars and their Gatherings.² This was due to the fact that knowledge in their understanding was something practical, and something which changed the manners of a person and led him towards good. Knowledge was not just a case with them of gathering facts in order to compete with the foolish people, debate with the scholars, to show off in front of the common people and to attain the head of gatherings.³

A study group does the following:

1. Reinforces, clarifies, and deepens your learning by providing the opportunity to teach. (Research indicates that many students improve their grades by supplementing individual study with group study.)
2. Provides feedback -- before the test -- on how well you are learning the material.
3. Provides practical advice which adheres to the Qur'aan and Sunnah on which Books and Tapes to take from or avoid.
4. Provides a "support group." All students feel discouraged at times, but a study group can "refuel" your motivation and make studying more fun.
5. Helps you overcome shyness about discussing issues in class.
6. Helps you become motivated to study, because you know your study group is depending upon your preparation.

¹ The Manners of the Scholars and the Students of knowledge page 39

² The Manners of Scholars and the Students of Knowledge page 43

³ The Manners of Scholars and the Students of Knowledge page 44

Getting Started⁴

1. Get to know your classmates by talking before class, during breaks, and after class. **Determine which students are serious about their studies** and have a personality that would mesh with your own.
2. Invite 1 to 4 students to meet with you to study. If you are uncomfortable about this, ask the organizer of the class to send around a sign-up sheet or to announce that interested students should stay after class.
3. An alternative way to find study partners is to study in a location where you are likely to see students from your class. Then, ask a classmate a question about the subject matter and begin chatting.
4. To avoid a situation of "the blind leading the blind," make sure that at least some members of the group are knowledgeable about the Subject Matter.
5. Each person should study individually before the group meets.

Study Agenda

1. Some groups begin their session by comparing lecture notes.
2. Most groups use their lecture notes, a lecture handout, or a study guide written as an outline to guide the order of topics to discuss. If you are a student in the Aqeedah, Fiqh, and Qur'aan review is often effective.
3. IF YOU PREFER A FORMAL GROUP: At the end of each session write an agenda for the next session, with each group member assigned to prepare/present specific material. Volunteer to be the presenter in the area you find most difficult. Research this area thoroughly and become an expert. Develop five questions to ask the others.
4. IF YOU PREFER INFORMALITY: Decide at the beginning of the session **what** topics you will study and how you will study. You might assign topics/single lectures to each other and then work independently for a time to come up with 5 to 10 questions on each topic or lecture.
5. Create and Xerox summary sheets and charts to share.
6. Have each member write a practice test and give these tests to each other.
7. List your group's remaining areas of confusion and go to someone of Knowledge for clarification.

Where to Meet with Your Study Group

⁴ How to Study by Ron Fry

1. Only study in a public area like a cafeteria if the group members are able to keep focused.
2. **Do** find a place with comfortable chairs. Also, you may want a room with a blackboard.
3. Try one of the following locations: an sisters house, a group study room online in [**via Yahoo Messenger**] the library, the sisters side of the Masjid or over the phone

Pitfalls & Problems

1. If your group begins to deteriorate into merely a social group, use a strict agenda and a strong convener. Or, simply ask, "Will that be on the test?" when group members get off track. Many groups report that most of their time wasting occurs during late night sessions. Decide ahead of time when you will stop studying for the evening. Also, to stay focused schedule regular breaks.
2. Don't allow group members to attend unprepared. To keep members who are failing to do their fair share is to enable and encourage irresponsibility. Remember, you are not providing free tutoring.
3. Don't allow lengthy complaints about courses or professors during group time; do this afterwards if you must.
4. Encourage members to reveal their weaknesses so that they can strengthen them. This will only happen if members refrain from critical comments about one another.

Remember, effective study groups require that members develop skills in group dynamics. If at first you don't succeed, discuss the problems with your group and try again. If all else fails, you might try again with another group of students.