



Private Study Groups Guide

Why a study group?

- A study group offers extra support, networking, and encouragement as you work towards your exam.
- You can discuss issues in depth and gain deeper understanding of concepts. Contributions from others are highly valuable in giving a different meaning or solution to an issue that you may not have thought about if studying on your own.
- You become more committed to study because other group members are relying on your participation.
- Teaching/explaining information and ideas to other members of the group assists in reinforcing your own understanding.
- Gives you an opportunity to receive constructive feedback from your peers.
- Interaction with others can make studying more enjoyable.
- The following information will assist you to maximise the success of your study group.

Decisions to be made Recommendations

Where will you meet and how will you access resources?	Many groups choose to study at participant's homes, alternating between the group or choosing one most central location. Other groups choose libraries or gain after-hours access to their practice.
Who will be the group leader?	The leader should be willing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be a point of contact for the group• keep the group informed about times and locations of meetings• prepare a schedule for the study group (listing topics and facilitators and dates)
How many people?	We recommend 4-6 as an ideal group size.
How frequently will you meet?	Most study groups would elect to meet either weekly or fortnightly. Less frequent meetings may impact the momentum of group learning.
How long will the group meet for?	Usually study groups would meet for 1.5 - 2 hours at a time. If you come prepared and meet frequently, this amount of time is sufficient.
Will the group rotate the role of group facilitator?	This shares the load amongst the group and allows each participant to benefit from the extra learning associated with facilitating a topic.



Maximising your study group

In your first meeting:

- **Set objectives:** Set out objectives and goals as a group.
- **Ground rules:** At the first meeting, it is a good idea for groups to decide what the agreed expectations of group members will be. Some ideas might be:
 - that all group members would rotate the responsibility for facilitating the study group,
 - meetings would start on time,
 - that group members would come prepared – eg: if there was required pre-reading or bringing along a case for discussion.
- **Make a plan:** To maximise your time spent together it is valuable to identify the areas of need amongst the group and plan these into the schedule to ensure all areas are covered. While planning the areas that you would like covered, think about the format in which to conduct the sessions. Would you prefer to do a different topic at each meeting, focus on scenarios and role-play or just focus on general discussion. The format of your group is entirely up to the group.

For all sessions you should:

- **Appoint a facilitator:** A facilitator ensures the group stays focused, keeps to time and works productively – this is also each member's responsibility.
- **Be prepared:** For the group to run efficiently, be prepared, come with any resources that you may need and have all your preparation work done before you arrive.
- **Be willing to give and receive constructive feedback:** Feedback is a critical element of study groups to voice opinions, beliefs and knowledge. Keep feedback constructive and avoid getting personal or going outside of the feedback topic.

Make the most of your study group as a support system. Catching up on a more social level outside of study group hours for a coffee or meal after you have completed your exams is a great debriefing process.

Possible formats for study groups

Study groups find different formats of learning will work best for them. Some ideas are as follows:

- Topic based presentation and discussions
- Practice example questions (eg. MCQ, EMQ, KFP)
- Case discussions
- Pre-reading on a topic and group discussion
- Role plays (for clinical exams)