

# Study Skills 1

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# Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to :

- set academic goals, apply effective learning strategies, and demonstrate achievement in their courses.
- demonstrate independent learning skills and apply critical thinking in academic and real-life contexts.
- develop and apply reading, writing, and research methodology skills effectively.

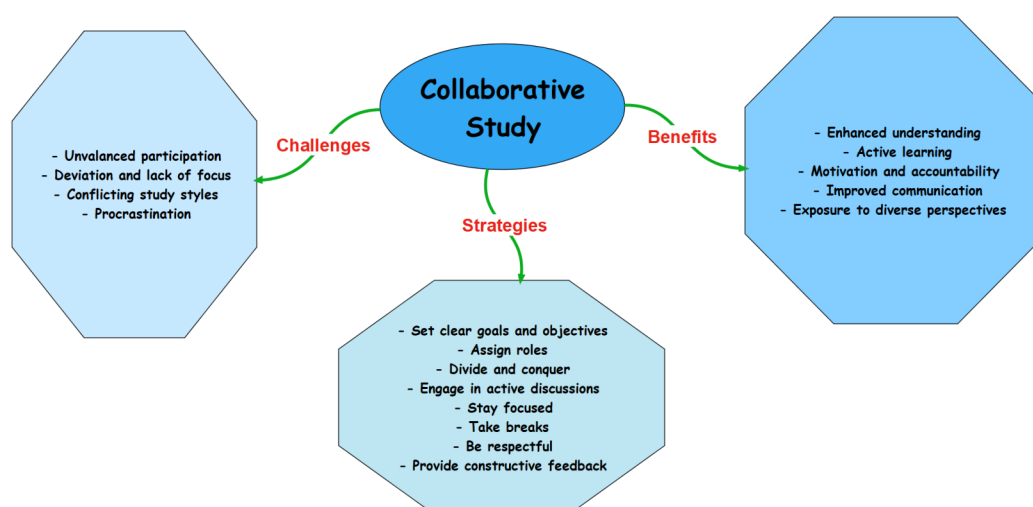
# Chapter 04 : People Skills

I

## 1. Lesson 01 : Collaborative Study

**Objectives :** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to :

- Understand the value of being able to work effectively with others.
- Engage in collaborative study activities.



### 1.1. What is Collaborative Study ?

#### Definition

Collaborative study refers to the practice of students working together in a group to achieve shared learning goals. It involves pooling resources, discussing ideas, solving problems together, and teaching each other in a cooperative environment. This method can enhance understanding, foster new perspectives, and improve retention by engaging multiple senses and learning styles.

### 1.2. The Benefits of Collaborative Study

#### 1. Enhanced Understanding

- By discussing topics with peers, students can clarify doubts, reinforce knowledge, and share different perspectives that they might not have considered on their own.

## 2. Active Learning

- Collaborative study encourages students to actively engage with the material instead of passively reading or listening. This leads to better retention and comprehension.

## 3. Motivation and Accountability

- Study groups provide mutual support and encouragement. The group dynamic helps individuals stay motivated and accountable for their learning.

## 4. Improved Communication Skills

- Collaborative study allows students to practice explaining concepts and ideas, enhancing both verbal and written communication skills.

## 5. Exposure to Diverse Perspectives

- Working with peers from different backgrounds and with different learning styles can lead to a more well-rounded understanding of the material.

# 1.3. Effective Collaborative Study Strategies

## 1. Set Clear Goals and Objectives

- Before starting a study session, the group should agree on what they want to accomplish. This could be reviewing a certain number of chapters, practicing problems, or preparing for an exam.

- **Example:** "Today, we will review Chapters 4 and 5 of Biology and discuss key concepts for the upcoming quiz."

## 2. Assign Roles

- Each member can be assigned a specific role or responsibility to ensure that everyone is actively involved and that no one is left out.

### • Example Roles:

o **Leader:** Keeps the group on track and ensures that the study session stays focused.

o **Note-taker:** Records important points, summaries, and questions during discussions.

o **Presenter:** Explains key concepts or leads a specific topic discussion.

o **Timekeeper:** Ensures that the group follows the study schedule and takes breaks at the appropriate times.

## 3. Divide and Conquer

- Break the material into smaller sections and assign each group member a portion to study and present to the rest of the group. This way, everyone becomes an expert on a specific topic and shares their knowledge with others.

- **Example:** In a history study group, one person could cover World War I, another person covers World War II, and a third covers the Cold War. Each person then explains their topic to the group.

## 4. Engage in Active Discussion

- Collaborative study should not just be about reading notes together. Engage in discussions, ask each other questions, and challenge each other's ideas. This deepens understanding.

- **Example:** After discussing a topic, ask each member to summarize what they learned and provide an explanation to the others.

### 5. Use Collaborative Tools

- Leverage technology to facilitate group work. Tools like Google Docs, shared Trello boards, or apps like Quizlet can help store and share notes, create flashcards, and track group progress.
- **Example:** Use Google Docs to take notes collaboratively, where each member adds their points and comments on the material.

## 1.4. Tips for Successful Collaborative Study

### Method

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#### 1. Stay Focused

- Avoid distractions by keeping the study session on-topic. Set boundaries for chatting or socializing to ensure productivity.
- Tip: Set a time limit for each topic to prevent spending too much time on one subject.

#### 2. Create a Positive and Supportive Environment

- The group should be encouraging and respectful of each other's ideas and learning styles. A positive atmosphere makes the study sessions more effective and enjoyable

#### 3. Be Open to Different Learning Styles

- Each group member may have different strengths and learning styles. Some may be visual learners, while others may be auditory or kinesthetic learners. Encourage everyone to share their unique approach to studying.

#### 4. Take Breaks

- Studying for long periods without breaks can lead to burnout. Schedule regular breaks to refresh and recharge.
- Tip: Use the Pomodoro Technique—study for 25 minutes and then take a 5-minute break. After four sessions, take a longer break (15–30 minutes).

#### 5. Be Respectful of Each Other's Time

- Make sure to start and end study sessions on time. If someone is running late, be understanding, but ensure that the study session remains efficient and productive.
- Tip: Set up a regular study schedule to help everyone stay committed to the group.

## 1.5. Common Challenges in Collaborative Study and How to Overcome Them

### 1. Unbalanced Participation

- **Problem:** Some group members may dominate the discussion while others remain passive.
- **Solution:** Assign roles and make sure everyone contributes. Encourage quieter members to share their thoughts and ideas.

### 2. Distractions and Lack of Focus

- **Problem:** Study groups may sometimes drift off-topic or get distracted by unrelated conversations.
- **Solution:** Set clear goals for each session and use a timekeeper to ensure that the group stays focused on the task at hand.

### 3. Conflicting Study Styles

- **Problem:** Differences in how people study (e.g., visual vs. auditory learning) can create challenges in collaboration.
- **Solution:** Discuss everyone's learning preferences and find ways to incorporate different methods, such as using diagrams, videos, and summaries.

### 4. Procrastination

- **Problem:** Some members might not complete their assigned tasks or fail to prepare before group sessions.
- **Solution:** Establish a system of accountability and encourage members to share their progress. Regular check-ins and deadlines can help prevent procrastination.

## 1.6. Best Practices for Successful Group Work

### Advice

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#### 1. Be Respectful of Diverse Perspectives

- Acknowledge that each group member may have a unique approach to problem-solving, which can enrich the group's overall output. Respecting different views fosters a positive and inclusive environment.

#### 2. Emphasize Collaboration Over Competition

- Group work is about achieving a shared goal rather than competing against each other. Encourage cooperation, not rivalry, to ensure that everyone feels valued and motivated.

#### 3. Provide Constructive Feedback

- Giving and receiving feedback is a key part of group work. When providing feedback, be specific, respectful, and solution-oriented. Constructive feedback helps improve the project and allows everyone to grow.

#### 4. Stay Flexible and Adaptable

- Be open to changes and unexpected challenges that may arise during the project. Flexibility helps the group navigate obstacles and adapt to new ideas or directions.

#### 5. Celebrate Achievements Together

- Acknowledge the group's success when the project is complete. Celebrating achievements fosters a sense of accomplishment and strengthens group dynamics for future collaborations.

## 1.7. Practice

### Exercise

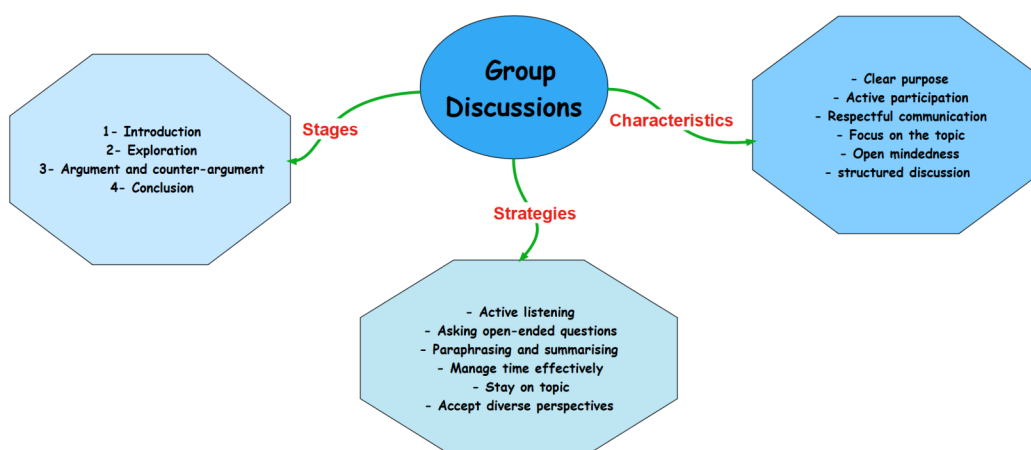
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Collaborative study refers to \_\_\_\_\_ of students working \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ to achieve \_\_\_\_\_ learning \_\_\_\_\_. It involves pooling resources, discussing ideas, solving problems together, and teaching each other in a cooperative environment. This method can enhance understanding, foster new perspectives, and improve retention by engaging multiple senses and learning styles.

## 2. Lesson 02 : Group Discussions

**Objectives :** By the end of the lesson, students will be able to :

- Discuss topics in groups
- Defend an opinion.
- Summarize a discussion points.



## 2.1. What is an Effective Group Discussion ?

### Definition

An effective group discussion is a collaborative exchange of ideas, thoughts, and opinions among a group of people with the goal of reaching a decision, understanding a topic in-depth, or solving a problem. It involves active listening, respectful communication, and the sharing of diverse perspectives to enhance understanding and generate creative solutions.



## 2.2. Key Characteristics of an Effective Group Discussion

### 1. Clear Purpose

- Every group discussion should have a clear objective, such as solving a problem, making a decision, or brainstorming ideas.
- Ensure that everyone understands the purpose of the discussion from the outset.

### 2. Active Participation

- All group members should contribute their ideas, thoughts, and questions. Active participation leads to a more dynamic and engaging discussion.
- Encourage quieter members to speak up and share their perspectives.

### 3. Respectful Communication

- Respectful communication means listening attentively to others without interrupting and offering constructive feedback.
- Disagreements should be handled with respect and professionalism, fostering an environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their views.

### 4. Focus on the Topic

- Keep the discussion focused on the topic at hand. Tangents can disrupt the flow and prevent the group from reaching a conclusion.
- A facilitator or leader can help steer the discussion back to the topic if it starts to stray.

### 5. Open-Mindedness

- Group members should remain open to other people's ideas and be willing to adapt their viewpoints when presented with strong arguments or new perspectives.
- A group that embraces diverse opinions is more likely to come up with innovative solutions.

### 6. Structured Discussion

- A well-organized discussion is more efficient and productive. Structured discussions allow everyone to contribute and ensure that all viewpoints are heard.
- A leader or facilitator can set ground rules, allocate time for each person to speak, and guide the discussion through different phases (e.g., introduction, exploration, conclusion).

## 2.3. Stages of an Effective Group Discussion

### 1. Introduction

- In this phase, the topic is introduced, and the purpose of the discussion is clarified. Group members should briefly outline their knowledge or initial thoughts on the topic.
- **Example:** "Today, we are discussing the impact of social media on mental health. Let's start by briefly sharing our thoughts or experiences related to this topic."

### 2. Exploration

- This is the heart of the discussion, where group members engage in active dialogue, express their opinions, ask questions, and explore ideas in depth.

- Encourage everyone to share their insights, and ensure that all voices are heard. Ask open-ended questions to stimulate thought and foster discussion.

- **Example:** "How do you think social media can affect self-esteem? Can anyone share any personal experiences or examples?"

### 3. Argument and Counter-Argument

- As ideas are shared, there may be disagreements or differing opinions. This phase allows participants to present evidence, support their arguments, and respond to counterarguments.
- Encourage critical thinking and ensure that disagreements are addressed respectfully, without personal attacks.
- **Example:** "You mentioned that social media is harmful to mental health, but isn't it also a platform for individuals to connect and support each other?"

### 4. Conclusion

- The discussion should conclude with a summary of key points, agreements, or decisions made during the conversation.
- The leader or facilitator can help guide the group toward a conclusion, ensuring that the discussion ends on a positive note with clear takeaways.
- **Example:** "So, from today's discussion, we can agree that social media has both positive and negative effects on mental health. Let's continue exploring solutions in the next meeting."

## 2.4. Effective Group Discussion Strategies

### 1. Active Listening

- Listening attentively is crucial for an effective discussion. Give everyone a chance to speak, and show that you value their input by nodding, summarizing their points, and asking follow-up questions.
- Active listening fosters a more collaborative and inclusive discussion.

### 2. Asking Open-Ended Questions

- Open-ended questions encourage critical thinking and deeper exploration. They allow group members to elaborate on their ideas and generate a broader range of responses.
- **Example:** "What are the potential long-term effects of social media on our society?"

### 3. Paraphrasing and Summarizing

- After someone shares an idea, paraphrase or summarize their point to ensure clarity and understanding.
- **Example:** "So, if I understand correctly, you're saying that social media can help people connect but also create unrealistic expectations for self-image, right?"

### 4. Encourage Diverse Perspectives

- Encourage group members to share their unique perspectives. Diversity in thoughts, experiences, and backgrounds enriches the discussion and leads to more comprehensive solutions.
- **Example:** "Let's hear from someone who may have a different viewpoint on this issue."

### 5. Stay on Topic

- Keep the discussion focused on the subject matter. If the conversation begins to drift, gently steer it back to the topic at hand.

- **Example:** "Let's return to our main question: How can we address the potential negative impacts of social media on mental health?"

## 6. Manage Time Effectively

- Ensure that the discussion doesn't go off course or drag on for too long. Allocate time for each phase of the discussion and set limits to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- **Example:** "Let's spend the next 10 minutes discussing potential solutions to this issue before we wrap up."

## 2.5. Tips for Leading an Effective Group Discussion

### Method

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#### 1. Set Ground Rules

- Establish rules for respectful communication, active participation, and staying on topic. This ensures that the discussion is productive and everyone feels heard.

#### 2. Encourage Participation from All Members

- Actively encourage contributions from everyone in the group, especially quieter members, to ensure a balanced discussion.

#### 3. Keep the Discussion Structured

- Use a clear structure (e.g., introduction, exploration, argument, conclusion) to ensure the discussion stays focused and progresses logically.

#### 4. Be Neutral and Objective

- As the facilitator or leader, remain neutral and avoid pushing your own opinions. Your role is to guide the conversation, not to dominate it.

#### 5. Summarize Key Points

- Periodically summarize the key points discussed to ensure clarity and help the group stay on track. This also allows for reflection on what has been accomplished.

## 2.6. Giving and receiving feedback and criticism

One of the most difficult aspects of working collaboratively is offering constructive feedback or criticism on other people's work or contributions to the group. You may be asked to do this either formally or informally on your course.

### a- What is meant by 'constructive'?

Constructive criticism is feedback to others that:

- ★ provides insights or suggestions that benefit them, encourage them in the right direction and that they can apply to improve their work or achieve their goals
- ★ is offered in such a way that it does not belittle or undermine the recipients.

### b- Receive criticism in a constructive way

It can be hard to hear any criticism, whether positive, in the form of compliments, or as areas for improvement. However, we can learn a great deal if we are prepared to listen to feedback. This is now a requirement of many courses and in the workplace.

- 1 Be open to hearing what people say, even if you find it difficult to do so. Be ready to learn from it.
- 2 Be positive. Assume that the person giving feedback wants to be constructive and is on your side, even if it doesn't always feel like it.
- 3 Listen attentively. Take time to think about what has been said. Look for the truth in it.
- 4 Hear the main message, rather than questioning whether the speaker has understood everything about your intentions or has all the facts right.
- 5 Ask questions, or for a concrete example, to clarify anything you do not understand.
- 6 Show gratitude. Always thank people for their feedback: it takes time and effort to give this.

### c- Offer constructive criticism

#### When to offer constructive criticism:

- ★ if you are asked to do so by the recipient
- ★ if it is a requirement of your course
- ★ if it is a ground rule set by the group
- ★ if you have something worthwhile to offer that you consider that the recipient is willing and able to hear.

#### How to offer constructive criticism:

- 1 **Be sensitive:** comment on behaviour, actions, products or outcomes, not on people.
- 2 **Be current:** refer to what is going on now, rather than the past.
- 3 **Be balanced:** point out what is good and what could be improved. It is important that the recipient knows strengths to build on and how to do better.
- 4 **Be honest:** don't say things you do not believe. When listening, jot down a list of positive points and ways of making improvements, so you have something concrete to refer to.
- 5 **Be productive:** start with positive points and praise. This helps recipients to be open to more negative comments later.
- 6 **Be selective:** choose just one or two areas for improvement that would make a real difference.
- 7 **Be helpful:** phrase your suggestions in ways that can lead to practical outcomes. Suggest ways forward, rather than just stating what is wrong.
- 8 **Be realistic:** only suggest changes that can be achieved.
- 9 **Be precise:** give a clear example of what you mean.
- 10 **Be kind:** use a voice and a manner that help others accept your criticism.

## 2.7. Practice

### Exercise

Effective group discussions are essential for

- ☐ Collaborative learning
- ☐ Problem-solving

☐ Decision-making

### Exercise

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Define an effective group discussion

