The Office of Learning Resources provides professional consultation services in university relevant skills such as academic reading, writing, study strategies, and time management to the Penn student community. This academic support is provided through a varied menu of services and programs:

**Individual instruction:** Students can make appointments for one-on-one consultations with a Learning Instructor to address concerns and build upon already strong study strategies.

**Walk-in hours:** Walk-ins are available during the academic year, Monday through Friday from noon to 3:00 PM and Tuesday and Wednesday from 4:00 – 7:00 PM. Sessions are one half hour and are provided on a first-come, first-serve basis.

**Interactive workshops:** Several workshop series are designed for specific groups of students. In addition, individual workshops can be requested for specific courses, college houses, student organizations, or other University groups. For a workshop schedule or to request a workshop, please contact our office or consult our website.
Study Groups Can Make A Difference

“I’ve tried studying with friends and classmates, but we wound up either socializing too much or getting into personality conflicts.”
“Yeah, I always wound up doing most of the work.”
“I prefer studying alone.”

Many students have been socialized to study in solitary ways. They enter college, used to studying alone, and they continue to see study as a solitary activity. College students are expected to manage an enormous reading load, work through intricate quantitative problems, and remember complex concepts. Students who gather together consistently to review the weeks’ lectures and readings, are more on top of the coursework and better able to remember the material. Here’s why:

Study groups multiply your resources. A combination of observations and ideas means more resources to draw upon.

They get you talking. A more effective communicator is a more effective learner. Discussing forces us to clarify ideas, evaluate others’ ideas, and further develop them.

They make you smarter. When working with a group, you internalize not only facts and concepts, but critical thinking skills as well. These skills become tools for higher order thinking (analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating).

Making Study Groups Work For You

Who?

➤ Select classmates you know and like and who, ideally, live nearby. If you know no one in class, use bulletin boards or a Canvas discussion forum to find group members.

➤ Keep the group to three or four people.

➤ Equal participation is key. Everyone should be up to date on the material! Members must attend regularly.

➤ Rotate leadership of the session. Take turns leading and summarizing group activities to help keep perspectives fresh.

➤ Actively avoid taking sides or forming cliques. Polarization will defeat the purpose of studying together! Try to encourage each other.

When?

➤ Meet each week for 1-1 ½ hours. This allows you to consolidate and review the material throughout the semester. Weekly meetings build upon previous sessions, encouraging higher order thinking and intellectual development. Getting together just before exams won’t make a great difference in your understanding and may increase stress.

➤ Don’t meet for more than 1-1 ½ hours. Meetings that habitually go over time tend to turn into socializing.

What?

➤ The group must decide on a goal: i.e. ace the exam, be ready for the math GRE’s…

➤ Prior to each meeting, set an agenda. Then you can prepare for the study sessions, make them more productive, and stay on task.

How?

➤ Talk about the connections between ideas presented in the lectures, the readings, and the class discussions.

➤ Use the groups to generate exam questions, study guides, summary sheets, or concept maps. When you get exams back, discuss the types of exam questions and where the questions came from.

➤ Leave time at the end for debriefing on how the session went and for planning the next session.

Cautions:

➤ Obviously, for some academic requirements, like take-home examinations, study groups are not permitted.

➤ Some instructors believe that students should work totally independently at all times. Discuss with your instructor in advance any study group plans that you think might be questionable or not permissible.