

Study Group Activities

- ❖ Group members pair off and compare their homework answers. They generate a list of the homework problems they're not sure about and write the question number up on the board. The entire group discusses the homework problems. The preceptors can keep track of the hard problems and turn them into the senior preceptor, who can then collate the problems and redistribute them as an exam review (the hardest homework problems).
- ❖ Each group member identifies up to three things in their lecture notes or assigned reading that they do not understand or for which need clarification. Those are written on the board. The group then organizes them either by topic or by importance and tries to clarify them as a group. The preceptors can keep track of these concepts and turn them into the senior preceptor, who can then collate and redistribute to the preceptors for an exam review (the hardest concepts).
- ❖ Group members choose or are each assigned a day's worth of lecture notes. They individually make lists of the most important concepts. They then work with one or two others, who worked with the same day's worth of material, refine their lists and then write their list on the board for the rest of the group. These lists can be used to generate a review sheet for the material.
- ❖ The study groups works together to develop easy to remember mnemonic devices for processes or words in a list, such as the products in the Krebs's cycle (A crazy idiot shot someone for making oatmeal); or the phases of mitosis (pickled peppers make awful trumpets).
- ❖ Group members pair off and review/compare their lecture notes from the past week. They then make a list of three or four of the most important concepts and attempt to summarize them in their own words. These lists can later be used to help generate a review sheet.
- ❖ Before the group meets, the preceptors make lists of vocabulary words and the titles of concepts based upon their notes. These are just words or short phrases, not entire sentences. For group study, the preceptors write these on the board and have each group member take turns explaining the terms of concepts to the rest of the group. This list can be used to help figure out what is most important and what is less important in the material.
- ❖ For concepts that can be compared and contrasted (such as types of mutations, different biochemical processes, etc.) each group member (alone or in small groups) reviews notes and makes a list of major topics for the material covered (see other methods for doing this above). Note any relationships among the topics—these are often good material for essay questions. Then the study group creates a chart by placing the major topics in the left column. In the header row, they either break down the major topics into analytical categories or provide applications, definitions, and examples.
- ❖ For articles or non-textbook reading, group members can pair off to generate summaries of the assigned readings and report to other members. The summaries should describe what was most important, not simply restate what was read.
- ❖ Group members take turns drawing or explaining diagrams from the notes/reading. The diagrams can be assigned or the preceptor can write the number or page number for each diagram on a scrap of paper, allowing each group member to choose randomly.

- ❖ Each group member draws a picture of a structure or a process on the board without the help of their notes. Then have the group members switch places with each other and either label the drawing or write out the steps to the process in words, again without their notes.
- ❖ Before the group meets, the preceptors identify and study complex or detailed processes, diagrams, figures, etc. that appear in the notes or the text. During the study group, the study group members review all of the applicable notes and the preceptor assigns each group member an item to draw and explain without the help of their notes. Then the group members use their notes to correct, refine, or add to the drawings or explanations.
- ❖ Group members brainstorm and try to predict test questions each week. Preceptors keep a running list for each chapter or lecture so that you can do a grand review before each test and the final exam.
- ❖ Create your own exam review sheet. Preceptors divide the material among the group members and have them use the homework, notes, and/or readings to figure out what is most important (What should I be able to do? What should I be able to explain?) and report it to the rest of the group. This can be done at the end of the group to share at the beginning of the next study group.
- ❖ Create your own practice test, version 1. In the study groups taking place two weeks before a test, assign a chapter or lecture to each individual in the group. Each individual looks through his/her notes to devise at least five challenging test questions for the next study group (the week of or before the exam). Ideally, the questions would resemble the types of questions (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, essay, etc.) and represent the range of question levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, etc.) you might encounter on the real test, so this may work best for the second exam. Each individual shares his/her questions with the group so everyone takes away a full set of questions. If time allows, you can start tackling the questions, preferably without the use of your notes to simulate the real test situation.
- ❖ Create your own practice test, version 2. The preceptor pairs are each assigned a chapter or lecture and each preceptor looks through his/her notes to devise at least five challenging test questions by the next weekly meeting (the week before the exam). Ideally, the questions would resemble the types of questions (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, essay, etc.) and represent the range of question levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, etc.), so this may work best for the second exam. The senior preceptor collates all of the questions and gives copies to each preceptor to use at the study groups. At the study group, the group members can work through the practice test.
- ❖ Use old or sample tests (approved by the instructor) for additional practice problems. Assign each group member or pair problems and give them time to work on them. Then, each group member or pair presents their answer to the group.
- ❖ After a test has been returned, the groups make a list of and analyze the difficult questions (where did you go wrong, why is the question difficult?) and plan a strategy for the next test.