

# Study Group Guide

5 Steps to Success

Collaborate to  
Prepare for  
and  
**PASS** the  
**Board Exam**

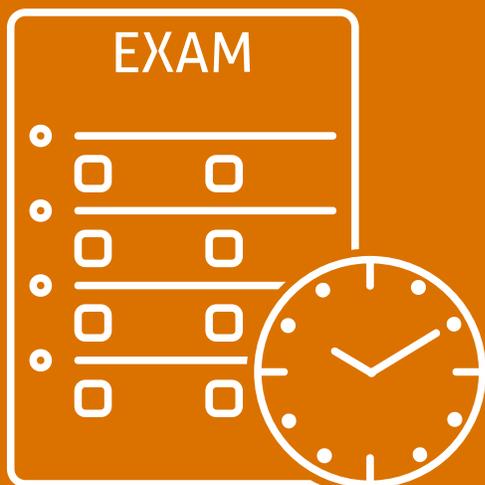


**NEJM**  
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# Need to prepare for your board exam?

Participating in a study group is an excellent antidote to procrastination that provides structure, accountability, and inspiration. Studying with others also creates a camaraderie that transforms the solo drudgery of preparing for your board exam into enjoyable partnerships.

This guide offers five best-practice suggestions to help you create, facilitate, and participate in a study group to **accelerate learning and build confidence for your board exam.**



## 5 Steps to Create, Facilitate, and Participate in a Successful Study Group

- 1** Form Your Group and Set Expectations
- 2** Decide on the Schedule
- 3** Choose a Meeting Location
- 4** Set Goals and Measure Achievement
- 5** Facilitate Productive and Engaging Study Group Sessions

# 1 Form Your Group and Set Expectations



Generally, three to five members is a good group size for **promoting collaboration and efficiency** while minimizing distractions. And even though good manners and dependability seem obvious, consider working with one another to formalize expectations. Possible inclusions:

- **Respect one another's time** by showing up prepared and on time, and staying on task during meetings.
- **Contribute equally** and take turns facilitating meetings.
- **Outline procedural expectations** such as the best method for communicating outside of meetings or where to store group files.
- **Show patience.** This is a busy time for everyone and adding too much pressure takes the fun out of it.

# 2 Decide on the Schedule



**Create a schedule** for meetings and a timeline of when material will be covered (see the "**Set Goals and Measure Achievement**" section). How often and how long the group meets will depend, in part, on how much time there is before the exam, but gathering for one to three hours at least once per week will establish a cadence beneficial to learning. Regularly reviewing material over time is a proven strategy for building understanding and developing lasting recall.

# 3 Choose a Meeting Location



Your meeting location may be in the library, at participants' homes, or at work. Wherever your group meets, the location should:

- Be in a convenient location for all participants.
- Have comfortable seating and room to move around.
- Be well-lit and involve minimal distractions.

## Virtual Meetings

If your group chooses to hold online meetings, here are a few guidelines for virtual study sessions:

- Check to make sure technology is working before the meeting begins.
- Use cameras and good lighting to engage participants and simulate the benefits of in-person connections.
- Mute yourself when not speaking.
- Remove cluttered, distracting backgrounds and minimize extraneous noise.

# 4 Set Goals and Measure Achievement



Setting goals for what material to cover by when and finding ways to measure achievement will ensure everyone becomes board certified the first time they take the exam. Begin with your specialty's **exam blueprint** to prioritize topics.

## Exam Blueprints

- [Internal Medicine](#)
- [Family Medicine](#)
- [Pediatrics](#)
- [Physician Assistant](#)

To measure achievement and promote accountability, consider quizzing one another on previously covered materials. Testing is an effective strategy for identifying knowledge gaps and developing deeper understanding and long-term retention. Try using NEJM Knowledge+ Question of the Week as a starting point.

## 5 Facilitate Productive and Engaging Study Groups



Here are some ways to facilitate productive and engaging board exam prep sessions:

- Create agendas in advance to help members prepare.
- <sup>1.</sup> • **Divide and conquer** — each participant can synthesize, distill, and teach a different topic.
- <sup>2.</sup> • As the test approaches, ask members to **prepare by taking a practice exam** and then use meeting time to review and debrief the test. (NEJM Knowledge+ Board Review includes two timed practice tests.)
- Ask study group participants to **share patient case studies** (within the bounds of HIPPA) that exemplify blueprint topics. Making connections between 'book knowledge' and real-life examples reinforces learning and enhances patient care.
- At the end of each session, **summarize the material covered**, preview topics for the next meeting, and assign roles for upcoming meetings.



# Pass Your Board Exam!



A great study group will lead to great results. We hope this guide helps you and your colleagues collaborate for success in passing the board exam.

For additional support in preparing for your board exam, **NEJM Knowledge+ Board Review** provides gold-standard content, the most comprehensive question bank anywhere, two practice exams, and adaptive technology that delivers questions based on what you know and don't know, saving you valuable time.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

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## Best of luck and happy studies!

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