Creating Your Own Accountability Group

Joining an accountability group is an effective strategy for getting writing done and for making progress on projects. By meeting at set times and giving everyone a chance to report their progress and goals, accountability groups leverage social commitment, provide structure, and help you stay focused on tasks that are important but not urgent or that might otherwise seem isolating and unstructured.

# Accountability Group Structure

* First 5 to 15 minutes: Goal setting for the session.
  + Participants briefly reflect on progress since the last meeting, seek tips and strategies from the group, and share goals for the current session.
  + To protect the working block, it is best to set a limit on each participant’s talking time (e.g., 1 to 3 minutes).
* Next 45 to 60 minutes: Work silently together (in person or virtually) or in separate spaces or offline.
* Final 5 to 15 minutes: Report progress and set new goals.
  + Participants briefly describe what they accomplished during the current session.
  + Participants state plans for their next steps, identifying what they plan to accomplish by the next time the group meets.

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* Decide how often to meet.
  + Most accountability groups meet once a week.
  + Some groups meet daily or several times a week.
  + Some meet every other week or once a month.
* Decide how much time to block off for each session.
  + Most accountability groups meet for 60 to 90 minutes, allocating 45 to 60 minutes for working silently.
  + Some groups meet for longer blocks with planned breaks when the work time exceeds 60 minutes.
* Establish ground rules to ensure everyone feels comfortable and valued.
  + Have a common working space to share contact information and to communicate between sessions (e.g., Slack, Google, Teams).
  + The success of an accountability group depends on everyone showing up. However, knowing that life does not always go according to plan, decide in advance how a member should communicate to others if they cannot show up for a session.
  + Everyone should have a chance to reflect on progress, share current goals, and state next steps, but the group should have a strategy in place to make sure more time is spent working than talking. Consider using a timer.
  + Agree to turn off notifications and to remove other distractions during the sessions.
  + Keep the accountability group sessions focused on goals, progress, and getting individual work done.
    - If your accountability group is the same as your lab group, then agree to set up separate lab meetings.
    - If you want to receive peer feedback on the content of your work, then arrange to do that outside of your accountability group time.
  + Have a “what happens in group, stays in group” policy, in case members share things they consider to be personal.