



Meopham

Starting a group

Everyone joining a study group must be a paid up member of the Meopham U3A and must show a membership card.

What is a study group?

It is a self- help group with no teacher

Members chose topic, when and where to meet, what and how they will study and how the programme is to be shared out among members.

Group should be welcoming, generous and uncritical.

Learning through sharing: as a rule 1 or 2 members will prepare a chosen topic and explain what they have learned to others. Group should be interactive, with contributions from members and discussion

Group contact is the person who pulls the group together. They have 2 roles: to maintain a list of members and recruit at Open afternoons, and to supervise the programme. The role maybe taken on as a short term commitment of 1-3 years or a short group may be set up to run for a certain number of sessions before the group decides on how to proceed.

At the first meeting

Decide:

- When, where and how often the group will meet? Decide on meeting dates and how long session will last – usually 2 hours. Usually groups have a break during the year, either Christmas or summer depending on group.
- What resources it will need?
- What its aims are and how those are best met?
- How the work is to be shared? The group will need to plan a programme of topics, who will lead them and who will host them. If this is done in advance everyone will have time for reading and research. Once agreed everyone should be given a copy of the programme.
- What study/learning methods shall we use? Books, DVDs ,Power point, on line courses etc.
- How long the group will last. Short groups last for a handful of sessions. They have to be simple and well-structured and are often on practical matters or have a strong defined outline.
- Costs involved and how those will be shared – is the hire of a hall necessary and how can this be funded by the group.
- If groups envisage outings often there will be an introductory talk at one session before a visit and a follow up session.

Size of group?

For a discussion group there needs to be enough people to make it stimulating - ten/twelve seems to work well. Big groups can be split into smaller sections.

Standard of group.

Often a group starts at a modest level; this is not degree or A-level standard! Languages may have different entry levels; book clubs may have different kinds of books such as Booker Prize shortlists, classics, 19th century fiction.

Ground rules:

- Everyone contributes in some way or another
- Everyone learns through the unique U3A shared learning model
- Everyone's contribution is equally valid and useful
- Everyone listens to others in a polite and respectful way
- Everyone shares responsibility for making the group work
- Members need to inform organiser or host if they are unable to attend the meeting
- Members make a small contribution to the host for tea or coffee

Keeping the group going:

- It is important for the contact to keep in touch with the members of the group, usually by email
- A couple of weeks ahead contact the person who is leading the next meeting to check that all is well
- About a week before each meeting send round a reminder of the topic and venue or other arrangements
- After the meeting send around a brief summary of the meeting or arrange for this to be done
- Between meetings if appropriate send around any relevant info or piece of news

However it is done, the important thing about frequent communication is to help members to feel continually involved in the group all the time, not just at the meetings.