

CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW LEADERS SETTING UP A NEW GROUP

The first steps to starting a New Group

We welcome anyone who is interested in starting a new group to have a go, here are some basic points that should help you get started:

Firstly, decide what the group is going to be about, consider what interest there might be in the subject perhaps by some informal soundings.

Chat to the Groups Co-ordinators, they can offer support with ideas for the development of the group and, if appropriate, will put you in touch with another similar subject group in our u3a or a neighbouring u3a to get some first-hand knowledge. We have u3aweb, our membership web system, to help you run your group. This makes it easier for members to join your group.

Consider what the aims of the group are – what are you hoping to learn/achieve/share by offering the group?

Write a short description of the group. Send this to the Group Co-ordinators so it can be used to promote the new group via newsletter, website and members' monthly meetings.

Once you have some interest, exchange emails or arrange a meeting with those interested to discuss what they would like to see and do with the group.

You also need to discuss if the group will meet weekly, monthly or even every other month. There are no set rules for this – it's up to you.

Let the Group Co-ordinator know that you will be starting a new group. If you need a venue the Group Co-ordinators will be able to help suggest suitable ones and they can also help to advise on collecting fees if costs are involved.

Let them know when you would prefer to meet and if you have a specific venue in mind. If it's a private address, then that gives you more options. You could even rotate the venue around different members' houses.

Preparing for your first Group Meeting

1. The Group Co-ordinators will need to add your “new” group to the website so please supply them with all the relevant information.
2. As Group Leaders you will be able to manage most aspects of your group yourself. Arrangements can be made for anyone who wishes to receive one to one training on the website system, please contact the Group Co-ordinators for further information.
3. If you have a list of members who want to join, please add their names to your group on the website prior to the first meeting. In addition, please print out a register or download a copy to complete by hand.
4. You will also need a copy of your group’s “emergency contact details” which can be found on the website. If there are any gaps in the information, please remind members to update their “Profile” by logging onto the website. If they are unable to do this themselves, please ask them to forward their emergency contact information to the Membership Secretary.
5. Your group members will be looking to you, as Group Leader, for leadership so it’s useful to have an action plan for the first meeting and outline what you hope the group will achieve over time.

Introduce yourself and the purpose of the group as you see it

Ask about the skills within the group

Agree the tasks that need doing to run the group and who is willing to support these – i.e. help with basic admin tasks such as recording attendance, collecting session fees or communicating with group members or by becoming deputy leader to cover absence/holidays

Agree, if relevant, the level that the group will be aimed at – beginners, improvers, advanced

Agree how the group will work – discussion, instruction, presentation etc.

Agree some ground rules e.g.

Be punctual

Listen to each other

Allow others to speak

Let someone know if you are unable to attend

Agree to disagree amicably and be respectful to other group members

Every contribution matters

Have patience with and encourage those who are slower to learn

6. If a member is willing to help you, please pass their name to the Group Coordinators so they can be recognised as an “assistant” on the website.
7. U3a is all about shared contributions and presentations so do let the group know that you may be looking to them to contribute by researching an aspect of your subject or taking one of the meetings (working in pairs may encourage people to volunteer).
8. There should be an opportunity for discussion during the meeting, so everyone has the chance to have some input.