

Leader’s Guide to Supplemental Instruction

The Learning Center



Tell me and I forget; Show me and I remember;

Involve me, and I understand.

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# Part I: Overview of the SI Program

Underline the key words or ideas presented in this summary.

1. The SI program targets traditionally difficult academic courses—those that have a high rate of D or F grades and withdrawals—and provides regularly scheduled, out-of-class, peer-facilitated sessions.
2. SI does not identify high-risk students, but rather identifies historically difficult classes.
3. SI leaders begin sitting in classes the first week of the term, with SI sessions beginning around the third week of the term.
4. SI sessions normally occur in classrooms near the course classroom instead of in a learning center.
5. SI sessions are open to all students in the targeted section and are attended on a voluntary basis free of charge.
6. The SI leaders are the key people in the program. SI leaders are students who have demonstrated competence in this or in a comparable course.
7. SI sessions are comprised of students of varying abilities, and no effort is made to segregate students based on academic ability. Since SI is introduced during the second week of classes and is open to all students in the class, SI is not viewed as remedial.
8. SI leaders are trained. This training covers such topics as how students learn as well as instructional strategies aimed at strengthening student academic performance, data collection and management details.
9. SI leaders attend all class sessions, take notes, read all assigned material, and conduct two one-hour SI sessions each week. SI sessions integrate how-to-learn with what-to-learn.
10. Students who attend SI sessions discover appropriate application of study strategies, e.g. note taking, graphic organization, questioning techniques, vocabulary acquisition, problem solving, and test preparation, as they review content material.
11. Students have the opportunity to become actively involved in the course material as the SI leaders use the text, lecture notes, and supplementary readings as the vehicle for refining skills for learning.
12. The SI Coordinator is responsible for identifying the targeted courses, gaining faculty support, selecting and training SI leaders, monitoring the quality of SI sessions, and evaluating the program.
13. The SI leaders meet as a group with the SI Coordinator at least three times during the term for follow-up and problem-solving.
14. SI participants earn higher course grades and withdraw less often non-SI participants. Also, data demonstrate higher reenrollment and graduation rates for students who participate in SI.

## The Inside Scoop on Group Discussions

Group discussion is probably the most common activity associated with collaborative learning. As such, we tend to take it for granted and rarely give much thought to the dynamics of facilitating a successful group discussion.

However, even slight changes in the way we approach a group discussion can make an important difference in the manner in which group members elect to involve themselves. For instance, note that in the material you just discussed, you were NOT asked to simply read and discuss it. Instead, you were asked to underline the key ideas and THEN discuss them. In this case, underlining the material as you read it encourages active reading rather than passively skimming of the material.

Sometimes the LEAST effective way to start a group discussion is to throw out a question and wait for a response. Why do you think that is the case?

## Tasks of the SI Leader

Which of the responsibilities listed below do you anticipate will be your favorite and least favorite parts of being an SI leader? If you are a veteran leader, how have your preferences changed?

1. SI Leader Training

* At the beginning of the semester.
* Throughout the semester.
* Meet with SI Coordinator regularly.

1. Attend the Targeted Class

* Introduce yourself to the course instructor.
* Ascertain requirements for the course.
* Introduce SI to the class and administer beginning-of-term survey.
* Announce in class the SI schedule and room locations.
* Market SI sessions throughout the semester.

1. Conduct Sessions

* Plan an introduction to the SI session.
* Schedule SI sessions.
* Check with SI Coordinator for room assignments for SI sessions.
* Organize the SI with built-in flexibility to the needs of attendees.
* Prepare handouts for SI sessions as appropriate.
* Hold SI Super Sessions or extra SI sessions when needed.
* Provide closure (quiz, summary, suggestion for future study).

1. Support Faculty

* SI leaders support classroom instruction in every way.

1. SI program is offered only in classes where the faculty member understands and supports SI. Integrate Content and Learning Skills

* Redirect discussion to the group.
* Use the language of the discipline.
* Integrate how to learn with what to learn.
* Get students organized and started but don’t do the work for them.
* Establish collaborative and inclusive learning environment.
* Use strategies and promote study skills that appeal to a variety of learning preferences.

1. Collect Data for Program Evaluation

* Collect attendance data at every SI session, i.e. student name, course title, date, and time.
* Administer end-of-term questionnaire.

## The Inside Scoop on Clusters

A Cluster is really just a group that is broken down into smaller groups. To be effective a cluster should be no larger than three or four people. Using clusters can be a powerful way to change the interactions within a group. Breaking people in smaller groups accomplishes several things:

* It makes them more accountable.
* It promotes active processing of material.
* It encourages participation by everyone.

Sounds great, doesn’t it? But it is not as simple as it sounds. Most SI leaders quickly learn they are likely to encounter resistance when they ask students in their sessions to break into small groups. It turns out that students have other ideas about what an ideal session should be. In students’ minds, it would be ideal to simply walk into the session, sit in the back row, not have to say or do anything, and have the SI leader fill their heads with all the information they need to do well in the course.

And that will happen…when pigs fly! But until then, the SI leader must find a way to involve SI participants with the material. Cluster groups are a surefire way to do so.

The key to making a cluster group work is to be firm. The FIRST time you tell participants to break into smaller groups, you must show resolve. Otherwise, you’ll encounter resistance each time you ask them to break into groups.

# Part II: Relationships

## The SI Leader and the Professor

Read each of the situations presented below and think about how you

would handle it. You may want to review the “Dos and Don’ts” on the next page for tips.

What would YOU do in these situations?

1. The professor asks you to do something the SI Coordinator has asked you not to do (example: lecture for him or her during a time he or she will be absent).
2. The professor offers to show you some of the test items from an upcoming exam.
3. The professor asks you not to pass out old exams in SI. A student brings one to the SI session.
4. The professor asks you to help distribute handouts in class.
5. The professor asks if he or she can visit one of your SI sessions.
6. The professor wants to know which students have been attending the SI sessions.
7. The professor asks for feedback about content-related difficulties the students are experiencing.

Do

* Treat the instructor as your ally, never your adversary.
* Meet with the professor during his or her office hours to clear up any uncertainties you may have regarding material discussed in the SI or in the lectures.
* Provide the instructor with feedback about how the sessions are going without naming students who have attended. Professors should never attend any SI sessions.
* Show the professor the handouts you plan to share with the students in SI. He or she can help make your handouts more appropriate to the course material.
* Ask the professor for permission to make announcements to the class.
* Even though your professor agreed in advance to allow you time to survey the class and to make necessary announcements, it is always good policy to request permission before doing so.
* Be helpful to the professor whenever possible. You do not have to assume the role of being the professor’s assistant but offer to assist the professor in tasks such as passing out materials or other similar kinds of activities.

Don't

* Criticize the professor during an SI session. Students will report this to the professor and it is not helpful. Students are responsible for their academic performance, regardless of the professor's style.
* Grade papers or tests or be involved in constructing test items.
* Set yourself up as a teacher. Your purpose is to facilitate the learning of the material, not to do or evaluate the teaching.
* Hesitate to refer the professor to the SI Coordinator if he or she requests anything about which you are uncertain or uncomfortable.
* Answer questions the professor poses to the class or involve yourself in class discussions unless the professor directly invites you to do so.

## The SI Leader and the Student

Read each of the situations presented below and think about how you

would handle it. You may want to review the “Dos and Don’ts” on the next page for tips.

What would YOU do in these situations?

1. A student asks you for a copy of your lecture notes because "his mom is in the hospital."
2. A student asks you for the handouts you have prepared for the SI session but says he or she can't stay for the actual SI session.
3. A student repeatedly arrives late for the SI sessions.
4. The handout you have created is on the reading that was required for the last class session. No one in the group has done the reading.
5. A student tells you: "I got a 90 on my last test, and I don't need to come to SI anymore."
6. A student confides personal problems. (This could range from anything to registration difficulties to marital abuse problems.)
7. A student attempts to go beyond the actual content of the course as presented in class or assigned reading materials

Do

* Say “yes” to students’ requests whenever it is reasonably possible to do so.
* Remember that the goal of SI is more than simply helping students score well on examinations. Many things can contribute to attrition.
* Recognize the limits of your job description and training. You are a recognized expert on the course, but that’s as far as you have to go. Listen patiently to all other problems and refer the student to those persons who are recognized experts with the problem the student describes.
* Treat all students as you would treat a friend.
* Provide straightforward, truthful responses.

Don’t

* Allow yourself to be drawn into an argument with students. Even if they are clearly wrong or start it first.
* Demand that students have to defend themselves to you. For instance, if they miss a session, act concerned but don’t demand an explanation.
* Say anything that would make you sound like a parent, teacher, police officer, judge, or authority of any kind.
* Feel obligated to fix problems that students create and can solve for themselves. Just remember to be diplomatic when you must decline the invitation to get involved.

## The Inside Scoop on Working with Students

The relationship SI leaders have with their fellow students is critical to the success of SI. Above all, students should always feel welcomed, accepted, and believed by the SI leader. If a student is repeatedly disruptive, the SI Coordinator should be consulted to help deal with the problem student. SI leaders are more effective when they are not perceived as authority figures.

## Referring Students

Using the “Guide to Campus Resources” on the following page, think about your recommendations of where to refer students who report the following difficulties:

1. “Someone broke into my car and took my CDs.”
2. “English is my second language and I’m having difficulties following the lectures.”
3. “One of my professors keeps coming on to me.”
4. “I would like to get involved in some campus organizations.”
5. “My father recently passed away.”
6. “I have a learning disability.”
7. “I would like to find out if there are other students here who are also from my country.”

## Guide to Campus Resources

Because you are in the helping business, the students you serve may have a natural tendency to share with you the problems they are experiencing, both academically and personally.

Be careful that you don’t take on more than your expertise and time allow. Listen to students’ concerns and then refer them to others who may be in a better position to help. Once you’ve referred someone, you can show your concern by following up with that student.

Campus EMS – Emergency

1st Floor, Van Hoesen Hall

Phone: 753-4112

University Police – Emergency

110 Whitaker Hall

Phone: 911 or 753-2111

University Police – Non Emergency

110 Whitaker Hall

Phone: 753-2112

Counseling Center

B-44 Van Hoesen Hall

Phone: 753-4728

The Learning Center - Campus Tutoring

B-205 Van Hoesen Hall

Phone: 753-4309

Nutritionist/Registered Dietician

1st Floor, Neubig Hall

Phone: 753-5773

Disability Resources Office

C-17 Van Hoesen Hall

Phone: 753-2967

SUNY Cortland Cupboard - Food Pantry

Interfaith Center basement, 7 Calvert Street

Phone: 753-1002

## The SI Leader and the Coordinator

It is the responsibility of the SI Coordinator to assist you in doing your job as an SI leader. How might the SI Coordinator assist you with students, professors, and sessions? Think about some ideas.

The Coordinator can assist me with students when…

The Coordinator can assist me with the professor when…

The Coordinator can assist me in getting things I will need for the sessions such as…

# Part III: Conducting SI Sessions

## First Days of Class

There are many things for SI Leaders to remember during the first two weeks of class. Organize the tasks below, numbering them in the order in which they should be done.

* Remind the professor that you will need to make a brief presentation about Supplemental Instruction to the class.
* Write your name and the SI website on the blackboard. Market the scheduling survey and encourage participation.
* Introduce SI to the students.
* Hand out a one-page overview of the SI program that includes some of the material from your oral presentation.
* Arrive on time
* Other:

## Introducing SI to the Class

Prepare a short speech to introduce SI to the class. Organize your presentation as though you were attempting to answer questions students might ask or have about the program. On the next page are sample questions and answers.

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program

**What is SI?**

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a series of weekly review sessions for students taking historically difficult courses. SI is provided for all students who want to improve their understanding of course material and improve their grades. The emphasis of the sessions is on facilitating active learning to help students become more independent learners. SI does not have a remedial image, and is not remedial in nature.

Attendance at sessions is voluntary. For the student, it’s a chance to get together with classmates to compare notes, discuss important concepts, develop strategies for studying the subject, and test their knowledge before the professor does, so that when he/she does, they’ll be ready. At each session, students will be guided by the SI leader, a competent student who has previously taken the course.

**What’s an SI leader?**

Have you ever wished you could do something over, knowing what you know now? SI leaders are students themselves and are prepared to share with what they have learned over the years about how to study. They know the course content and are eager to help guide students through it. They’ll be in class every day, hearing what the students hear and reading what the students read. What they won’t do is lecture; their job is to help students think about the lectures and texts and then put it all together during the SI review sessions. SI can help students learn course material more efficiently.

**When do SI review sessions start?**

During the first weeks of class, students will be given a link to take a short survey to let the SI leader know their availability. Each SI leader will set up two or three review sessions each week at times that are best for the majority of students taking the class. Sessions will begin the third week of classes.

**What’s in it for the student?**

If students attend SI sessions regularly, chances are they’ll earn better grades. They’ll have developed a better understanding of course content as well as more effective ways of studying. This will help in other classes, also.

## Opening the SI Session

1. How will you arrange the room? Where will you sit?
2. How will you introduce yourself to the group?
3. How will you introduce SI to the group?
4. How will you introduce the group members to each other?
5. What will you do if students come to the first SI session and seem upset when you explain that you will not "tutor" them?
6. How will you explain why participants need to sign in each time they attend?
7. If a student comes in halfway through the SI session, will you still ask the student to sign in?
8. What will you do if you only have one student show up for a session?
9. What will you do if no one shows up for a session?

## Conducting the Session

Read each of the situations presented below and think about how you would handle it. You may want to review the “Inside Scoop” below for tips.

What would YOU do in these situations?

1. When one person dominates the conversation of the group.
2. When students are having side conversations.
3. When all of the interactions in the SI sessions are between you and the students. There is no student-to-student interaction.
4. Every time you ask a question over the course content, the group becomes very quiet.
5. You have one student in the session who rarely talks.
6. If a student becomes confrontational and suggests the sessions are a waste of time.
7. Students who typically do not show up for sessions are being shunned by those who do.

## The Inside Scoop on Conducting Sessions

1. Running a successful session requires careful planning. Never go into a group intending to "play it by ear" or "answer questions."
2. Personally invite students to the sessions. Don't act insulted if they offer an excuse for not coming.
3. Maintain eye contact.
4. Build flexibility into the organization of the SI.
5. Don’t feel tied to keeping up with the content. You don’t have to “do something” with every bit of content provided by the instructor and the text.
6. It is more effective to “model” how successful students learn a particular subject than it is to “tell” students what they need to know.
7. Make use of the language of the particular discipline, course, and instructor.
8. Waiting for students to volunteer a well-developed answer takes time. If you are uncomfortable waiting for 30 seconds, join students in looking through notes or text.
9. If students are unable to answer the question, ask for the source of information. For example, ask for the date of the lecture that contained the information and search for the answer together. Avoid taking on the responsibility of always providing answers.
10. Encourage students to summarize the major concepts of the lectures. Let other students fine-tune the responses. If information is incorrect, ask students to find specific references in the text or notes that will clarify the correct answers.
11. Avoid interrupting student answers. SI should provide a comfortable environment for students to ask questions or attempt answers. Protect students from interruptions, laughter, or from those with louder voices.
12. Refer to the syllabus regularly. Check that students understand the requirements and dates of reading assignments, projects, and tests.
13. If your group has more than 12 students, divide into subgroups. Provide discussion topics that the groups can explore. Move from group to group, participating from time to time, reassuring the group that you are still there for them.

## Directing Discussion Back to the Group

Practice redirecting the questions below (or make up some of your own).

Hint: See “Suggested Phrases for Redirecting Questions” below

Questions for person #1:

1. Are proteins amino acids?
2. What is meant by the term “dialectical materialism”?
3. When was the Neanderthal period?
4. Where is the headquarters for the United Nations?
5. What are descriptive statistics?

Questions for person #2:

1. What is the difference between organic and inorganic matter?
2. Who was William Blake?
3. Can you explain photosynthesis?
4. What is sickle-cell anemia?
5. What is the capital of Germany?

## Suggested Phrases for Redirecting Questions

* Does anyone know the answer to that question?
* Can anybody help Mary answer that question?
* Can anyone find the answer to that in your notes?
* Let’s look that up in the book.
* What do you think about that?
* How would you say that in a different way?
* What are we trying to find out?
* What do you need to do next?
* How did you do that?
* What do you mean by . . . ?
* Tell us more...
* What else did they do?
* Anything else?
* Can you be more specific?
* In what way?
* What are you assuming?
* Why would that be so?
* How can that be?
* How would you do that?
* Are you sure?
* Give an example of that.
* How is that related to . . . ?
* Can you summarize the discussion up to this point?
* How does your response tie into . . . ?
* If that is true, then what would happen if...?
* What would [blank] say about that?
* Let’s see if we can figure out how to answer it together.
* Can you think of another way to think about this?
* Would any of you like to add something to this answer?
* How is your answer (point of view) different from ?
* How could we phrase that into a question to ask Dr. X next class?”
* What do we need to know in order to solve the problem?
* Which words in the question do you not understand?
* Let’s rephrase it on the board and figure out what information we will need to answer it.

## The Inside Scoop on Redirecting Questions

One of the most important moments of an SI session happens when a member of the study group asks the SI leader a direct question. If the leader answers the question for the group member, SI sessions will soon be reduced to the SI leader answering questions and re-lecturing over the material. It is, therefore, critical to the overall goal of SI that questions be redirected to the group to be answered.

This is more difficult than it sounds because it is counter intuitive not to answer a question to which you know the answer.

Questions that Require Students to Think: It's All in the Verbs

Level One: Knowledge

* define—repeat—record—list—recall—name— relate—underline

Level Two: Comprehension

* translate—restate—discuss—describe— recognize— explain—express—identify locate—report—review—tell

Level Three: Application

* interpret—apply—employ—use— demonstrate—dramatize— practice—illustrate—operate—schedule—shop—sketch

Level Four: Analysis

* distinguish—analyze—differentiate—appraise—calculate— experiment—test—compare—contrast—criticize—diagram—inspect—debate—relate— solve— examine—categorize

Level Five: Synthesis

* compose—plan—propose—design—formulate— arrange— assemble—collect construct—create—set up—organize— manage—prepare

Level Six: Evaluation

* judge—appraise—evaluate—rate—compare—value— revise—score—select—choose—assess—estimate—measure

Bloom, B. (1973). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

## Closing the SI Session / Reviewing for Exams

Read each of the situations presented below and think about how you would handle it. You may want to review the “Dos and Don’ts” on the next page for tips.

What do YOU think?

1. Why is it generally important to provide “closure” at an SI session?
2. If things are really going well during an SI session, should the SI leader stop to do “closure?” Why or why not?
3. Many SI leaders report they find it difficult to use closure techniques at an SI session because they run out of time. What recommendations can you offer to avoid this problem?
4. When is the best time to offer a review session for a major exam? Right before the exam or several days in advance?
5. How would an SI session that takes place before a major exam differ from a regular SI session?
6. If you have a two-hour marathon session before the exam, would you count this as one or two sessions?
7. What would you do if you typically have six to nine students show up for a session and twenty-five show up right before the exam?

## The Inside Scoop on Closing SI Sessions

Closure Techniques

To ensure that students do not lose sight of the "big picture," reserve the last few minutes for reviews. During this time, books or notes should not be used.

Technique #1: Informal Quiz

When time permits, the informal quiz will help students put all of the important ideas together. We have provided information about the informal quiz in the Strategies Section.

Technique #2: Predict Test Questions

Divide students into groups of two or three. Have them write a test question for a specific topic, ensuring that all major topics have been covered. Ask students to write their question on the board for discussion. This technique requires more time but the benefit is that students see additional questions that focus on the specific material that has just been presented.

Technique #3: Identify the "Big idea"

Ask each person to tell what he or she thought was the most important concept, idea or new understanding he or she learned during the session. We call these "take homes." That is, if they could only take home one thing from the information presented, what would it be? Ask each student to offer a different "take home." This technique can be useful if you’re nearly out of time.

If there is sufficient time, have students organize the selected topics into more generalized concepts. We know that students frequently feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information that they have to deal with during the term. They need practice with organizing all of the information presented.

Technique #4: Predict the Next Lecture Topic

Have students predict the next lecture topic. See if there are connections between the last lecture and the next one. This activity helps to prepare them for new material, especially if it can be connected to information they have just mastered in the SI session.

Technique #5: Summarize the Procedure/ Steps / Etcetera

Sometimes it is more important to go over how an answer was obtained, rather than reviewing the answer itself. Remember to give time to the process of learning.

## Attendance Strategies

Select your “top three” strategies for improving attendance at SI sessions.

1. Report SI vs. non-SI test differences to the class Test score averages
   * Numerical difference in scores
   * DEW and ABC rates (final grades)
2. Report test scores from previous academic terms. Use national data until you develop your own history of institutional data.
3. Distribute reminder handouts to attend SI sessions throughout the term.
4. Offer sample tests in SI sessions with questions developed with the instructor. The instructor could make these available in class with the comment that they will only be discussed during SI.
5. Report the number and/or percentage of test questions covered in SI sessions.
6. Provide time for regular verbal encouragements to attend SI sessions.
7. Use worksheets during SI sessions, especially in problem-solving courses. Even the use of empty matrix worksheets may encourage students to attend who need something tangible to take away from the SI session.
8. Post anonymous quotations from students on how SI has helped/is helping. Include some of these with the SI handout on the first day of class.
9. Write the daily SI times and locations on the board during each class.
10. Allow for discussions between the class and the SI supervisor when SI attendance is low.
11. Report improvement on test scores from previous terms.
12. Offer regular reminders from SI leaders in class on attending SI.
13. Offer something specific in SI sessions - a study skill, rules for problem solving, jeopardy, games, text review, etc.
14. Change SI times to accommodate the greatest number of students. Resurvey the class if necessary.
15. Offer “how to” handouts on the most efficient/effective study skills.
16. Tell student lab instructors about SI and ask for their support.
17. Report differences in final course grades from previous terms.
18. Create an awareness video (5-10 minutes) that explains and promotes SI. Show it on the first day of class.
19. Give handouts during SI sessions occasionally.
20. Be sure to promote the SI program through academic advisor, new student orientation programs and other means before the academic term begins.
21. Place a display ad in the student newspaper that lists all courses to which SI is/will be attached. Remember to include a short description of SI.
22. Place an advertisement or announcement in the campus course booklet that identifies all courses to which SI will be attached. Again, remember to include a short description of SI.