

A Student Guide to Whitworth's Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program

Supplemental instruction (SI) is a learning enhancement program offered for historically challenging classes including introductory courses in biology, chemistry and physics. The SI sessions are *optional* collaborative learning sessions that provide students with a systematic and disciplined approach for processing the subject material assigned by the professor. Therefore, SI sessions focus on group activities involving critical thinking and problem-solving exercises centered on the course material. They are scheduled outside of class time in the evening and are led by trained student leaders who've received the department's or professor's stamp of approval. *All the sessions are free and open to all students enrolled in the class. A supplemental instruction leader and your instructor will let you know when and where these sessions will be held.*

What Can Supplemental Instruction (SI) Do for You?

SI can help you in a number of ways:

- It is an effective way to study. Not only are you spending more time on the class material – that alone increases your chances of success – but you are **efficiently studying**. The time is spent reviewing and discussing concepts and/or solving problems related to the course, which helps you understand the material much better.
- It is **collaborative**. In the sessions, you work with other students and the SI leader, asking questions, discussing ideas, and participating in ways your class doesn't usually allow due to time restrictions. Sometimes you'll be a learner in a session, and sometimes you'll be a teacher; in both cases, the interactions are excellent learning opportunities. As the French essayist Joseph Jourbert put it, "To teach is to learn twice."
- It helps you **develop active-learning strategies**, often modeled by the SI leader, and **improve your study habits**.
- It **creates links** between you and the college community. You'll develop friendships with other participants and with the SI leader, and you'll find people you can work with or go to with questions about class material. Eventually, you can use these links to navigate your way through the college experience.
- Overall, it leads to **higher grades**. At Whitworth, students who participate in SI have higher grades and are far less likely to earn a D, F or withdraw. National supplemental instruction research shows attendance at SI **produces higher retention and success rates**. Also, those who attend regularly develop more interest in the class and contribute more.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who attends supplemental instruction sessions? SI is open to all students enrolled in the class and therefore attracts students from all ability levels. The program helps "A" students keep their "A," and it helps struggling students pull up their grades. One strength of these sessions is that students informally quiz and teach each other and thereby deepen their understanding of course content.

How do I find out when and where supplemental instruction sessions are held?

Your leader will post on Blackboard the time, day and location of sessions and any changes to the sessions. The general session times are also posted on the Student Success webpage:

www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/student-success/resources

What goes on in supplemental instruction sessions? Major research studies, such as the Harvard Assessment of Undergraduate Education, indicate that students earn better grades when they work actively with the course material and participate in small groups. Therefore, *you should expect the SI sessions to have an informal atmosphere* where you and your classmates can ask questions, identify and discuss important concepts, review class notes, discuss reading assignments, work practice problems or take practice quizzes, and improve relevant study skills. These *active-learning* sessions are facilitated by a leader.

What makes the SI leader qualified to lead these study sessions? Leaders are undergraduate students who have already successfully completed training, which focuses on how to encourage active, not passive, learning. Many have done advanced work in the discipline. The leaders are selected based on their academic strengths as well as their communication and people skills. The leaders attend the class, take notes and do the readings, just as the enrolled students do.

How are the times for the SI sessions selected? Different disciplines will hold meetings on different nights. Chances are you will have the chance to attend SI sessions for multiple classes.

Why do the leaders keep sign-in/attendance sheets? Attendance is taken solely for statistical purposes. We want to know how many students use the services, how often they attend, etc.