

**Teaching in the Biosciences: an Introduction for
Postgraduates and Postdoctoral Fellows**

Small Group Teaching

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Aims of this session

1. To get you thinking about what an effective small group tutor should be doing.
2. To provide some starting points from which you can consider developing your role as a small group tutor.

What do we mean by small group
teaching?

Exercise 1

What do you consider are the challenges of small group teaching? (Groups A & B)

What are the benefits of small group teaching for students? (Groups C & D)

Take 5 minutes as a group to think and keep a note of your points. At the end of discussions, each group will be invited to comment .

Exercise 2: Dealing with Potentially Tricky Situations

Work in your group and discuss your scenario.

Time allowed for group discussions – 5 minutes.

At the end of discussions, each group is invited to comment and provide alternative views.

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Issues in Small Groups: Scenario 1

You have noticed that during your biology tutorials Jennie has been very keen and enthusiastic, but beyond the point of being genuine you feel. She has also started to appear early for your tutorials and remains behind to talk with you afterwards. As well as this, you have been receiving a lot of emails from her and now there are phone calls as well. You feel that you need to deal with this.

What can you do?

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Issues in Small Groups: Scenario 2

During each cell biology tutorial you find that David is answering all of the questions you ask and tending to dominate class discussions. One or two other students in the group are getting annoyed, but most are simply switching off and ceasing to participate once he starts speaking.

What can you do to retrieve the situation?

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Issues in Small Groups: Scenario 3

For the last four group sessions Kevin, a student in your group has never spoken. Even when you have asked him a simple, direct question you have received only a monosyllabic answer, a grunt or silence. Today you try again. You ask a question. Kevin says nothing.

What do you do?

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Issues in Small Groups: Scenario 4

You have just begun your third session with a group of six students. Suddenly, Mary a student, leans forward and says angrily: *“I’m sick of these bloody sessions. I’m pissed off with the whole course. When are we going to do something useful?”*

What do you do and say in the next few minutes?

Small Group Teaching: 10 Pointers for Successful Sessions

Good Luck!