

International SuccESS Strategies

Working in Small Groups, Attending SI, and Meeting with a Peer Tutor

Homework Groups

Many professors expect that their students will work in small, informal groups to do their homework. Don't be shy about asking other students who are native speakers to study with you. If you are diligent and interested in doing well in the course, they will be happy to include you in their group.

If a study group does not exist, then ask some of your classmates to form a group. You may even want to start a Study Group +1. Observe which students are attentive and engaged in class. These students will make the best study partners. If you are forming a study group to work on problem-based homework, check to see if the professor wants you to turn in original answers. In other words, your professor may encourage you to discuss the homework but will expect that you solve the problems on your own. Otherwise, you may breach a basic code of academic ethics. See <http://www.case.edu/provost/ugstudies/acintegrity.htm> for CWRU's Academic Integrity Policy.

SI (Supplemental Instruction)

For SI, come prepared to ask questions about the lecture and the homework. However, do not expect that the SI leader will do the homework problems. Instead, the SI leader may explain similar problems to help you get started on the homework.

Peer Tutoring

Meeting with Peer Tutors (content tutors, the SAGES Peer Writing Tutors, and Spoken English Tutors) will help you with both course material and your English. Be prepared to work collaboratively with tutors. They are not trained to teach in a formal manner. Working together helps you master the material more quickly.

Assignment Groups

Some faculty will create team assignments. In the US, academic team work may seem quite different than what you have experienced in your home country.

Often, US college students will have an initial meeting to evaluate the assignment and to allocate parts of the work to team members. Then the team members are expected to work on their portions of the assignment by themselves. At a later date, the team may meet to compile the individual team members' contributions. However, the team may assemble the project through electronic communication. This approach may seem unusual because perhaps in your home country, the teams work together on all parts of the assignment.

If you are concerned that your writing and/or speaking proficiency may impact your team grade, here are few ideas to consider:

- Be candid with your team members about your English proficiency. Volunteer that you will work with the SAGES Peer Writing Crew, the Writing Resource Center, a Spoken English tutor, or an ESS staff member.
- Ask that the team provide a written summary of how the assignment will be divided among the team members so that you are clear about the team's expectations.
- Ask questions; you are learning complicated material in your second language. You are preparing yourself for working in a global community! It is all right to ask questions.
- Ask your professor for assistance in understanding the assignment and his/her expectations.

Start your own group! Check out Study Group +1 at <http://students.case.edu/education/resources/studygroups/>