What is OWLS?

OWLS stands for Oberlin Workshop and Learning Sessions. It is based on the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model developed at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. The essential elements of the model include:

- Extensive training of OWLS leaders
- Content and study skills are both integrated in sessions (what to learn and how to learn).
- Peer-based and facilitated group learning in sessions
- An emphasis on active and engaged student-centered learning
- Participation by students is voluntary, anonymous, and open to all in the course.

OWLS leaders and sessions are not:

- TAs - Leaders usually don’t grade and have no access to students’ grades.
- Tutors - Sessions are designed for peer learning and students are encouraged to ask their fellow students questions rather than the OWLS leaders.
- Substitute for lectures - Sessions are meant to reinforce what has been learned in lectures.

What should you expect?

OWLS is an interactive way to get more and different types of practice mastering the class material outside of homework and problem sets.

OWLS provides students with problems and activities to work on so students can gain a better notion of what questions they may have about the material. Then they can pinpoint their difficulties and ask tutors or the professor for help specifically in that area.

What can OWLS do for you?

OWLS sessions can help you view, organize, and engage with the material presented in class in a different way to help you not only with homework, but also exams and other assignments.

Even if you are doing well in the class, OWLS will help you stay on top of the material and keep you engaged in the class. It also gives you the opportunity to teach other students the material, which may help you understand it further and help you gain mastery of the subject matter.

OWLS is for everyone. Even those doing well in the course benefit by sharing what they’ve learned in their own words to their peers. And you’ll find that the types of skills you acquire through OWLS will benefit you in other courses.

Exam grades were directly impacted by the number of OWLS sessions attended. The more sessions a student attended, the better they did on their exams.

How to prepare

The following preparation suggestions are optional! Students are encouraged to come no matter how prepared or comfortable with the material they feel.

- Determine if your class is supported by OWLS and when and where its OWLS sessions occur.
- Before attending an OWLS session, look over your notes from class and any readings that may have been assigned.
- Bring any questions you may have…or not! OWLS sessions are beneficial both for those who are struggling and those who are excelling in a class. An OWLS session may help you identify questions you didn’t even realize you had.