

## Frequently Asked Questions About The Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) Model

- Q. How do you justify using inexperienced undergraduates to teach?**

*A-1. The leaders are not teachers; they are guides to effective learning.*  
*A-2. They have the most recent experience in learning the material. Faculty and TA's do not remember the difficulties they had learning the material when they were first exposed to it.*
- Q. Do peer leaders or students get the answer keys?**

*A. There are no answer keys.*
- Q. Do peer leaders have to be majors in the subject?**

*A. In fact, most are not.*
- Q. Do peer leaders get paid?**

*A. Usually, but it is possible to provide other compensation - e.g., credit.*
- Q. Do students get any credit for Workshop sessions?**

*A. Maybe - it is a local option.*
- Q. Do students hand in answers after Workshop sessions?**

*A. Usually not - The Workshop is not exactly about answers.*
- Q. Can a Workshop be more than eight students?**

*A. Only marginally. A workshop composed of 16 students is unwieldy for an effective team.*
- Q. Can PLTL Workshop leaders participate more than one semester?**

*A-1. Sure - although we look at it as an opportunity and always recruit some new students.*  
*A-2. Sure - when they do they are a great resource to the professor, since they are more confident and have better insights for improving the units, discussion, etc. They are also a great help to new leaders.*
- Q. What if a PLTL Workshop leader gives the wrong information?**

*A-1. How much wrong information do students have when they work alone?*  
*A-2. The Workshop leader is trained to facilitate debate and discussion, and to avoid being an information provider.*  
*A-3. The group usually sorts out the misinformation.*
- Q. Do PLTL Workshop leaders have to be upper-class students?**

*A. No, we recruit students directly from first semester general chemistry to be leaders the next semester.*
- Q. Do PLTL Workshop leaders grade exams?**

*A-1. It is better to keep leader and grading roles segregated.*  
*A-2. At some colleges peer leaders give and grade short quizzes at the beginning or end of the Workshop.*
- Q. PLTL Workshops look like a lot more work for the faculty. Are they?**

*A-1. Compared to what? The number of students at my office hours has decreased dramatically since we introduced Workshops.*  
*A-2. Much of the work is first-time-only work to get organized and assemble Workshop problems.*

13. **Q. Are good students bored (or even put-off) by the PLTL Workshop approach?**  
*A-1. In practice, most good students are also very interactive; they find significant rewards in the opportunities to check, refine and articulate their understanding.*  
*A-2. The good students benefit in a way weaker students cannot. They learn to ask questions about the material since they are trying to help others get it. By doing this they are able to look at the material in several different ways.*
14. **Q. Would a traditional recitation section with eight students work just as well as a PLTL Workshop?**  
*A. A PLTL Workshop would work better than a recitation with 20-30 students; but a recitation is not a PLTL Workshop because the underlying conception of purpose and function is different.*
15. **Q. Do peer leaders hold special exam prep sessions?**  
*A-1. Several do but it is by arrangement between the students and the leaders. It is not part of the contractual responsibility of the peer leaders.*  
*A-2. The question derives from thinking about Workshop leaders as junior TA's, and equating Workshop leader responsibilities to typical TA assignments. Leaders are not teaching assistants.*
16. **Q. Can graduate students be peer leaders?**  
*A. Sure, but they need to learn the role.*
17. **Q. Does a student have to earn an A in the course to qualify for a peer leader position?**  
*A. That is often the case, but it is certainly not a rigid requirement. We have had excellent leaders who were not A students.*
18. **Q. Are faculty less visible in Workshop courses?**  
*A-1. My students clearly understand that I have run the Workshops for their benefit.*  
*A-2. Yes - if done right they should be less visible. That is the whole point!*
19. **Q. Are Workshop sessions required?**  
*A. Yes. It is very important to make clear that Workshop session is an essential part of the way the subject is taught.*
20. **Q. Do students stay in the same Workshop with the same peer leader all semester?**  
*A. Yes. This is a prerequisite to building an effective team. It also gives the leaders a chance to become mentors.*
21. **Q. Would you recommend the Workshop structure to others?**  
*A. In many years of teaching, no other innovation comes close to the impact of Workshops. The theory and the practice are "right-on."*
22. **Q. Are PLTL Workshops better for students at risk?**  
*A. No - because workshops are not remedial in purpose or structure. However, our evaluations indicate that all students can benefit from Workshops.*
23. **Q. Should the "at risk" students be in a separate group?**  
*A. We see no compelling reason to separate students based upon ability. If the "at risk" students are separated from the rest, the mutual benefits of debate and discussion would be lost.*