



Archaeology

This is a flexible guide intended to help new group leaders find their way in.

As I see it, there are three problems:

- feeling you don't know enough
- feeling overwhelmed by the depth of subject matter – what to include / leave out
- finding you have become a broker of expert talks for a passive audience, which soon wears out both the organiser and the pool of speakers

So if this is your first rodeo, I strongly suggest you start with a clear intention to expect group members to participate actively.

Not by becoming instant experts (although if that happens.....great!), but by showing willingness to complete smaller discrete tasks that when added together, represent achievements that are a source of pleasure and pride to both individuals and to the group.

Group size

Around 20

Frequency

Monthly

Group type

Research, shared learning and active learning

Resources

Local, national and international sites, museum displays and personnel, archives, map resources

The purpose of the group

Be clear on your purpose, which may vary from time to time. You might increase group members' willingness to participate by suggesting a relatively broad purpose eg

- 'Along the Silk Road through time', rather than 'the Indus Valley Civilisation'
- 'The Roman Empire's impact' rather than 'our local / regional Roman past'
- 'How workers' homes developed in this area from 1700 to 1950' rather than 'To understand the timeline of industrial change 1700 – 1900'

The above purpose doesn't then commit you to creating or sourcing a year's worth of session talks.



NB If creating a year's worth of session talks all on your own is your schtick, go for it and enjoy it. I'm not saying don't do that. But I'm trying to model the difference between spoon-feeding a load of prepared talks vs everyone mucking in a doing a bit.

The monthly running of the group

Whether you run your group as in-person, via Zoom or as a hybrid group, the pre-start information and the first session need to make the Group Leader's intention plain

ie will the group leader be organising a series of expert talks, or providing talks, or is this a group where members will be directly involved from the start on taking decisions and actions.

If the last option is the kind of group you want, then you need to plan what steps to take to involve all group members in decisions about what everyone will do, meeting on meeting.

If you were to start in September and meet monthly, bearing in mind the usual downtime around Christmas and other holidays, you might end up with 10 sessions looking something like the plan below.

Session 1

Group discussion and broad decisions ie what will our focus be?

- Introductions and consider a range of resources – GL may have books to look at, members could be asked in advance to bring in books / articles / weblinks
- Ask in advance for members to say a few brief words about what they brought in or what they like among the resources
- Agree on the programme for the next few months.
- Members discuss what they will undertake during the year.

Session 2

A virtual visit or actual visit to a heritage venue

- The group leader researches a place of interest and creates a short talk for the group.
- This is followed by a group discussion on related places of interest and the research undertaken.

Session 3

Group member talks



- Members present talks based on their own research.
- Members to find an interesting YouTube video to share at the next session – this should be no more than 5 minutes long. It might be that they show an extract from a longer video

Session 4

Christmas session

- Will you carry on as before or do something special
- The group agrees on the theme for the next few months, e.g. The Group Leader provides a list of topics within the theme and members select the areas they are most interested in.
- A good all-purpose starter theme could be '2000 years in 5 artefacts.....', with members choosing from topics such as coinage, footwear, glass, weapons, armour, tableware, storage containers, vehicles, textiles, writing and its implements/ accessories, trade routes, and so on.
- Over ensuing sessions members present for 10 minutes max on their chosen topic

Session 5 – 6

Theme talks

- Members present their themed talks – no more than ten minutes per member.

Session 7

Research skills

- Group Leader prepares material on research skills – this could be the use of a particular site's report plus an online collections of maps, with a walk round the locality in relation to old maps to understand street names and market squares etc
- Members agree on a research theme for the next few sessions based on the content of the research presentation, e.g. how Askew Lane, Chapel Street or Salt Pie got its name / what the local place names tell us about people's languages 1000 years ago

Session 8

Show and tell

- All members present one thing that they found out from their agreed topic – allow only 2 or 3 minutes per member. They could share pictures, interesting facts or historical maps.
- Group leader to prepare an archaeology puzzle. eg a fragment of old local sculpture with a given location. Over the next month, members research their

own mystery to present at the next session.

Session 9

Archaeology puzzle findings

- All members present one thing that they found out about the archaeology puzzle. Allow only 2 or 3 minutes per member. They could share pictures, interesting facts or historical maps.

Session 10

Talk from a guest speaker

- The year finishes with a talk from a visiting speaker. The session concludes with a short review: What surprised us most this year? Or favourite sources or talks.
- Members discuss ideas for next year's programme.

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