

Making the most of your teaching space



There is definitely a time and place for traditional teaching arrangements. However, we encourage you to be open minded about what works best for you, your students and your teaching, particularly in the small group setting. We recommend [using space](#) and furniture in a way which enhances [collaboration](#) rather than relying on traditional set-ups which often obstruct small group working.

As your students subconsciously make their way to the rear of a room, by the time they've sat down, you've missed your opportunity to break this habit. There are a number of ways to approach this;

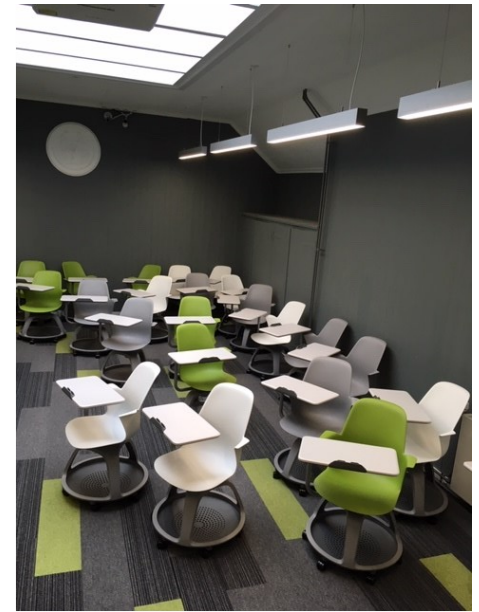
- Catch their attention as they enter and encourage them forward
- Set the room up prior to their arrival
- Set places with hand outs
- Turn chairs at the rear of the room the wrong way round only leaving the right amount facing forwards

In a small group setting, it might even be best to sit with a group. This can [set a tone](#) for being learner-centred and lets you reserve standing up for occasions where you need to recapture the group's attention.

We appreciate that not everybody has the luxury of time. Where this is the case, make arranging the room a quick, informal activity and get your students involved.

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Teaching spaces within NHS and university buildings differ greatly. For each of these room set-ups below, consider how you might maximise the learning space and opportunities for interaction within the context of small group teaching.



All of these images are of teaching spaces within the University of Edinburgh. Images belong to CEP.

Now: think about your last, or next, small group session. Sketch a plan of how you might set up the room to optimise the space, the learning and interaction.

Additional top-tips

- Try to be there before your students. This helps set a **tone** that communicates that they are important to you. It also helps gives you ‘ownership’ of the space.
- Chat to them as they arrive – make small talk. This helps create a sense of **psychological safety** and that you are approachable.
- Address people by **name!** People often say that they are “*terrible with names*”. If you find it difficult to remember people’s names, make sure you find a way to help you do this. You could use sticky labels, ask people to write their names on a piece of paper in front of them, or you could write names down on a seating plan during introductions.