

SI Leaders vs. Teaching Assistants: What's the Difference?¹

Supplemental Instruction
Iowa State University

Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders and Teaching Assistants (TA) support student learning, but the purpose of each position leads to different approaches to serving students. The chart below compares some differences between the two positions.

The SI Leader...	The TA...
...is a model student: Leaders do not profess to know all answers; will refer to instructors and other resources.	...is a content specialist: TAs have demonstrated knowledge in the field of study.
...is a peer student: Leaders are able to relate to students on their level of learning.	...is an academic elite: TAs are seen by students as superior; an authority.
...leads students towards success by facilitating learning.	...leads students towards success by teaching subject matter.
...encourages group participation and collaborative learning.	...may use collaborative learning, depending on the instructor's course format.
...is oriented towards serving students' needs.	...is oriented towards meeting the instructor's expectations.
...facilitates learning of course content and leaves teaching to the instructor.	...may re-lecture or present new material in support of the instructor.

To best serve students, Supplemental Instruction should be viewed by students as one option to develop learning. SI is not meant to replace attending class, reading textbooks, or completing other course assignments. Like tutoring, help rooms, learning communities, or instructor office hours, SI sessions are just one of the possible resources that lead to student success.

For more information about Supplemental Instruction at Iowa State University, refer to:
www.si.iastate.edu

¹ Comparison based in part on the Angelo State University *SI Program Faculty Guide*.