EXPERT GROUPS WITH GUIDING TEXTS

Purpose	*Expert Groups* is a technique for uncovering, processing, and retaining learning content with the help of a (guiding) text. The goal is to enable students to formulate their own results and communicate them to others in a peer-to-peer conversation.
Directions	Students are assigned to groups structured around different content (i.e. different guiding texts) and, with the help of specific prompts (possibly supported by visuals, summaries, or other written material), asked to work through the material individually first. In a second round, three to four students from the same group present and compare their individual responses to the same text to each other. Questions can be addressed by the group or the instructor during this phase. The direct engagement with a topic can be facilitated by the guiding text, a specific task, a short presentation of the main issues and controversies, etc. In this way, group members become experts on one aspect of a larger topic that they can present to others in a subsequent step (either in the whole group or in other small groups, e.g. via a *Jigsaw* activity).
Parameters	Group size: 40 people max., 3-4 students per expert group Time required: enough time for students to become sufficient experts on their topic Setup: enough space for individual groups to talk to each other without too much disruption Materials: guiding texts, prompts, writing implements
Helpful Tips	This technique is particularly suitable for covering a large amount of information, especially when the material is easily divided into smaller parts. The instructor should be aware, however, that structuring a seminar in this way requires active and focused participation and thus a high level of concentration on the part of individual students. Thus, the activity is best employed toward the beginning or the middle of a class rather than toward the end. In addition, it is important for each expert group to receive well-designed materials that enable them to acquire their expert knowledge. Thus, instructors should carefully prepare written questions or prompts to help students process (in their small groups) the information that they initially worked through by themselves, without much interference from the instructor.
Online Implementation	— This strategy can be used in asynchronous class units (e.g. via Moodle) or in synchronous classes (e.g. via breakout rooms in heiCONF).

Adapted from:
Huber, A. A., & Haag, L. (2011). *Kooperatives Lernen - kein Problem effektive Methoden der Partner- und Gruppenarbeit (für Schule und Erwachsenenbildung)*. Seelze: Klett, Kallmeyer.