



Sevenoaks U3A

Introduction to the U3A



University of the Third Age

Reg. Charity No. 1051712

www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk

Welcome to U3A in Sevenoaks

The University of the Third Age (U3A) began as a concept in France in 1972 and was established in the UK in 1982 but developed under a different model of collaborative self-help.

Sevenoaks U3A was established in 1994 and has grown steadily over the years to its current size of nearly 1000 members. In 2009, Knole U3A was established in Sevenoaks, and this has also grown. Both U3As work closely with each other and some shared groups and activities exist.

Although it is a large organisation, no new member need feel daunted about joining in activities. This leaflet aims to explain the organisation and helps you to integrate. The topics covered are:

- A resumé of what your membership includes
- Why everyone is automatically a member of the Third Age Trust
- What happens on joining and how you can help

What Does Membership Offer?

You are entitled to all of the following:

- **To attend** the Monthly Meeting, Science Group and Computer Group Meetings. These are meetings open to all with a speaker talking on a specialist topic. There is no need to book for these meetings; just come along. Entry to the General Meeting is free (it is included as part of your membership fee) but a small charge is made on the door for the Science and Computer meetings to cover hall hire. Refreshments are served at each meeting. It is a good way to meet others and make new friends.
- **To receive** a copy of the **Newsletter** by email. Alternatively a paper copy can be picked up at the Monthly Meeting or posted. You will also receive a copy of the Annual Handbook. This is issued in late summer of each year.
- **To join** any number of study groups. These are listed in the Handbook, which will be issued to you on joining.

- **To apply** for any special events advertised in the Newsletter, by flyer or on our website. Some of these may be organised by other U3As or the Third Age Trust. The events include:
 - Study Days run by Sevenoaks or Kent U3As
 - Visits to places of interest
 - Holidays abroad or longer trips in the UK
 - Other one-off events

Adjacent U3As may offer spare places on some events they are running.

Why do we pay a fee to the National Office?

The Third Age Trust is a registered Company, and the U3A Logo is copyright. No organisation may call itself a U3A without paying a capitation fee to National Office, which is currently £3.50 per head and is included as part of your membership fee. The main benefits are:

- Four Copies a year of **U3A News** and three of **Sources** magazines on educational topics and U3A national news. These are sent directly to members' homes.
- Third Party Liability Insurance
- Free legal help line on all personal or U3A matters.
Tel: 01455-251500 (Name The Third Age Trust Number 70494)
- Discounts on Computer Software through a third-party company
- Access to direct on-line Learning Courses
- Summer Schools, Seminars, Conferences etc. organised by the Third Age Trust
- Use of the Resource Centre. Videos and CDs on a wide range of subjects can be borrowed free of charge once you are registered but return postage has to be paid on items borrowed.

All of this means that each U3A has the professional backup of the National Office and regional networks, which can provide a source of great interest and cross-fertilisation.

What happens now that you have joined?

You will be invited to a coffee morning for new members. The Chairman, Membership Team and Groups' Co-Ordinator will be present to explain how our U3A works. It is your opportunity to discuss your expectations of what you are seeking from the U3A and to tell us what you can offer.

The U3A is a collaborative learning organisation and is dependent on all members playing a part.

Take time to read the Handbook and decide which groups you would like to join. Remember, do not take on too much at first. Some groups will require participation and may well involve some preparatory work. In such groups you will be expected to introduce a topic for subsequent discussion by the whole group. This could include undertaking some research, reading a book or presentation of material for discussion.

To join a group, contact the Group Organiser listed in the Handbook and see if there is space. You can attend one meeting without committing yourself. Make sure you are free to attend regularly as failure to attend disrupts the group and may block others wishing to join. Normally a small charge (30p) is made for tea or coffee; you supply your own study materials. Sometimes a charge is made for resources in a group; Sevenoaks U3A owns a stock of media equipment which can be borrowed for a group meeting.

The U3A is a learning co-operative. Its success depends on everyone contributing in some way and, as well as joining one or more groups, come to the Open Meetings, or apply for Visits or Study Days. Everything is priced to make these events as affordable as possible. Perhaps you can help with the administration. Your contribution will be welcome as it makes Sevenoaks U3A a success.

More information can be found on our Website:

www.sevenoaksu3a.org.uk, or the National Office website:

www.u3a.org.uk

Sevenoaks U3A April 2015