

TIPS ON STARTING A BOOK GROUP

Have you always wanted to start a book group? Here are some ideas for you to consider.

GROUP GROUND RULES

1. Who will your book group include-friends, neighbors, work colleagues, members of your religious organization or members of your service club? How many members do you want?
2. Where will your book group meet-the houses of members, work or restaurants? Will you rotate where you meet?
3. How often your will group meet? Many groups meet once a month. What day of the week and time of day are best? Some groups take breaks during certain months of the year.
4. How long will your meetings last? Many groups meet 1-2 hours. How much of your meeting will be spent talking about a book? How much time will be spent socializing?
5. Will have a group leader? If so, will you take turns being a leader?
6. Having a group leader is a very effective way to conduct a group. Among the leader responsibilities: leading the discussion, presenting background information on the author, providing the discussion questions and keeping the conversation on track.
7. Will you keep a list of members, with phone numbers and e-mail addresses so you can contact absent members and let them know the next title to be discussed? Who will do this?
8. Will you have refreshments? Who will provide them?

DISCUSSION PROCEDURES

1. Will you start on time? How long will you wait for late arrivals?
2. Think about minimizing outside interruptions.
3. Encourage everyone to speak. Do not let some members dominate the conversation. Don't talk while another member is talking.
4. Think about using methods that assure everyone is heard. Go around the table at the very beginning of the discussion and have each member give a quick, uninterrupted, opinion of the book. Also, have the group leader sometimes call on individual members.

5. Be open minded about and accepting of the comments of other members. Encourage each other. If members disagree, do it in a cordial way.

BOOK DISCUSSION LEADERS

1. Encourage members to read and finish a book, even if they think they might not like the book. Convey the idea that it is a good experience to read all kinds of literature.

2. Come prepared. Arrive at the meetings with author information, book reviews and discussion questions.

3. Leaders can find everything they need for a book discussion, including copies of the books, author information, book reviews and discussion questions, in the Library, Arts & Culture Department Book Group To Go Book Group kits.

4. If someone arrives late and wants to discuss something that the group has already covered, gently ask that it wait until the end.

5. Direct, don't dictate.

6. Create a warm, inviting environment by encouraging everyone to speak. Do not let some members dominate the conversation. Think about establishing a time limit until all members have contributed. Do not let members interrupt each other.

7. Remember that differences of opinion often make for interesting discussions.

8. Use tactful methods to keep the discussion focused. Ask another question to move the conversation along.

9. At the end of the meeting mention who will be the leader for the next meeting and the title you are going to read.

BOOK SELECTION

1. Be adventuresome when selecting titles. Choose books from all genres: fiction, non-fiction, classics, contemporary, biographies mysteries, history, romance, science fiction, fantasy and everything else!

2. Choose books that will stimulate discussions. Books with interesting themes, events and characters will get members thinking. Some books, such as self-help books, may be just too bland to discuss.

3. Choose books in our Book Group To Go Book Group Kits. All those books are "tried and true" and are great to read and discuss.

4. Choose books that people are talking about or books that other book groups have read and enjoyed. However, think very carefully about choosing a current bestseller.

Bestsellers are often checked out of libraries and are difficult to obtain unless purchased.

5. Every group member has ideas about good books. Be fair and make sure everyone has the opportunity to suggest titles.

7. There are two ways to approach scheduling when you will read a book:

- Develop a list of books the group likes and make a calendar of when you want to read and discuss them.
- At the end of each meeting decide what book you will read for the next meeting.

8. Members may obtain books in a variety of ways:

- Use Library, Arts & Culture Department Book Group Kits which each contain 15 copies of each book
- Borrow books from the library of your choice
- Buy books and then think about donating them to Library, Arts & Culture!