

Top tips for book groups

Interested in setting up a reading group? Here are a few things to consider when starting up, plus some ideas and suggestions to get the discussion going.

How many people to ask?

Too many and you will be waiting ages for everyone to have their say. Too few and there may not be enough of a range of opinions. Aim for between 6 and 10.

When to meet?

Decide this during the first session and how long each meeting will be. On average, groups meet for an hour to an hour and a half. You need to give everyone a chance to read the book. Meeting too frequently or too rarely may mean some don't finish the book or lose enthusiasm. Once a month is a good way of starting out but whatever is decided try to meet regularly and always decide the time and place of the next session before leaving.

Book choice

How are the books going to be chosen? Will one person decide or will each member choose a title? Will everyone read the same title, books by the same author or similar titles? What sort of books, specific genres or a wider variety? For suggestions, see our list of suggested books for discussion by book groups.

First meeting icebreakers

- What is your favourite book to date?
- Which book have you always meant to read but never have?
- Do you ever re-read books?
- Which is more important plot or characters?
- What type of books do you normally read/avoid?
- Do you ever read more than one book at a time?
- What is the first book you remember reading?

Getting the discussion started

- Take it in turns to lead the discussion, giving a brief introduction to refresh memories.
- Quickly go round the group to get an initial reaction from everyone.
- Write questions to discuss on cards, shuffle and turn over for a new point to consider - good if the discussion falters or if you're stuck for an opening.
- Make notes while reading the book of any points of interest to remind yourself later.

Some ideas for discussion points

- If you can get any reviews of the book, see if you agree or disagree with them.
- Have some information about the author. Do you think their background influenced the story? How does this compare in terms of style and subject with other books they may have written?
- What was the theme of the book?
- Were there any weak points to the story?
- Was the ending good or bad? Why?
- Were the characters believable and well portrayed?
- What did you think were the motivations of the characters?
- To what extent did the author's language affect the mood of the book?
- What did you think was the most important part of the book, in terms of character?

Useful websites

- [Reading Groups](#) - advice and links with other reading groups
- [Random House Readers Group](#) - reading group advice from Random House
- [Bloomsbury Readers Group](#) - reading group advice from Bloomsbury
- [Penguin Readers](#) - reading group advice from Penguin
- [Amazon](#) - reviews and book synopsis
- [Book Crossing](#) - share your books
- [Fantastic Fiction](#) - author information

- [Reading Group Guides](#) - guides to specific books
- [Which Book](#) - find a book to suit you
- [newbooks magazine](#) - new reading groups can email guy@newbooksmag.com to claim a free starter pack
- [The Book Group List](#) - Yahoo book group
- [Book Group Info](#) - virtual reading group
- [The Guardian Reading Group](#) - online reading group