



HOW TO START A BOOK GROUP

MEMBERS

The first step is to get together a core group of at least four people. You can then each ask one or two others to join, or, ask around at work, or in other organisations you belong to, and/ or you can advertise on the community notice board at the library.

HOW MANY PEOPLE, SMALL BUT COZY OR THE MORE THE MERRIER?

It is recommended that a book group is limited to between 8-11 people, as this allows enough time for everyone to participate in discussion, and helps to ensure there is a core of members' in attendance at each meeting.

MAKING SURE EVERYONE IS ON THE SAME PAGE.

Here are some suggested ground rules, so everyone is on the same page.

- Cardinal rule: Everyone must read the book.
- Establish the purpose of the group. Find out what the members expectations of the book group are. Do they want informal and fun? Do they want to read particular genres?
- Discuss the responsibilities of each member. These can include the following:
- Who will lead the group? Will you take turns or have a permanent leader to facilitate all meetings.
- Can the meeting schedule be altered? If so, by whom? Do you take a vote or do you have someone in charge of this?
- Make sure everyone has a chance to speak, to avoid the issue of chatterboxes, you might like to limit turns to 5 minutes per person.
- Agree to disagree! Different people may have different interpretations and viewpoints about a particular book. It's unlikely you are going to love every book choice, however, some of the least enjoyed books may create the best discussion!
- Talk about potential problems that may arise. These can include tardiness, what if someone hasn't finished the book? Are guests allowed? Can more people join or do you need a waiting list?

WHERE AND WHEN

- Decide where you want to meet.
- Sutherland Library service can arrange for book groups to meet at any of their branches. There are meeting rooms available for hire at Sutherland and Engadine branches. It is suggested that you book well in advance, as they are in high demand. Arrangements can also be made if groups wish to meet at other branches. Alternatively you may wish to meet at each other's homes or in a public place. You could take turns meeting at each other's homes, with the host/ hostess running the meeting.

- You also need to decide on when to meet, for how long and how often. Select a time of day or evening that best suits your group. Then decide on how often to meet. We suggest meeting monthly, as this gives you time to source the selected book, and to read it before the next meeting. Pick a day of the week, then select week 1, 2, 3 or 4 of the month to meet. It is suggested that meetings be held for between 1-2 hours, as this allows time for discussion of the book, as well as socialising.
- Consider whether you want to serve refreshments, and if so, what will you have and who will organise these? You may want to take turns to bring a plate, tea and coffee, or everyone may wish to bring refreshments each time.

SO MANY BOOKS, SO LITTLE TIME

Genre fiction and memoirs are the most popular choices. Its best to select titles well in advance, (some groups plan for up to 12 months ahead!). Make sure everyone knows what they are reading for the next meeting, so they have time to get a copy, and read it. Remember there are both hares and tortoises when reading books.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- What books you want to read, who will choose them, and how you will source them.
- It is suggested that someone is nominated to keep a record of books read, when discussed and who suggested them.

In books to read we suggest the following:

- Take turns. This way everyone gets involved and a diverse selection of titles is created. Or if you can't choose one title, take a vote.

If these ideas don't work why not try writing some suggested titles on pieces of paper. Place them in a bowl and pull one out. If you want to borrow titles from the library, it is suggested you reserve them up to 3 weeks before they are needed, as they may be on loan, or not be available for loan when you want them. Library staff are happy to help with reservations, in person or over the phone, or you can place your own reservations online.

BOOK CHAT

Have a list of questions ready to discuss for the chosen book. You can often find these on publishers websites or in the back of some books. (A list is provided at the end of this document). The library website has access to a database called "Novelist" which also offers suggestions for books to read and lists of discussion questions.

Remember, most importantly: Have fun!

So, if you are interested in joining a book group, would like to start your own, need advice or even just suggestions about what to read next, the library is here to help. Please contact:

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