



how to start a
Book Club

a
WellRead.
guide



Book clubs are the perfect way to create your own community full of people who love great stories and, importantly, love to talk about them.

If you're ready to start your own book club, we're here to help you consider the options in front of you, giving you some ideas for your own gatherings and helping you to understand where some book clubs falter and lose momentum.

Defining the objective of your book club

Before you *take any other step*, take some time to consider what you want out of your book club. Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Are you wanting to make more like-minded friends?
- Are you wanting to keep books as the main focus?
- If books are the focus, what is your goal – to read a high quantity of books? To read more diverse books? To expand your knowledge in a single genre? To get to know one author in particular?

Your answers to these questions will help you at every step of the process of forming your own book club and will help you to set accurate expectations as other members join.

Starting a book club

Finding book club members

Talk to your book-loving friends to see who might be interested in joining. If you're looking to widen your circles, jumping online and asking your local community's Facebook group can be a great place to start.

Be aware, you may get a lot of interest, but not everyone will be committed, or have the same expectations as you, so it's best to check this through a conversation before officially forming your group.

Consider who will 'lead' your group. Perhaps you're the one who will drive the initiative, or maybe you will share the role. Have a conversation with your new book club as early as possible to make sure you're on the same page.

Choosing the right location for your book club

Book clubs can be held in person or online through video chat. Both options have their own unique features to consider.

Online Book Clubs

Virtual meetings thrived throughout lockdowns, it's possible to make it work! They're especially useful for those who find getting out and about more difficult and can be great backups if members are sick or on holiday, but still wanting to join in with the conversation. However, online meetings can sometimes lack personal interactions that many people are looking for.

In-person Book Clubs

Consider whether your in-person meetings will be held in public locations – parks, cafes, restaurants or bars are great options – or whether they'll be held privately, in the homes of members.

Hosting at home can be a big commitment and, if your group members are at different life stages, it can be a commitment that some are unable to make.

Remember to consider how your members will get to the meeting. Is the location accessible by public transport for those who don't drive?

Rotating responsibilities can be a great way to share the load – the same person hosting each week might be reliable for your group, but sharing the hosting duties can be fun for everyone.

Setting a date and time for your book club

How often would you like to meet? Consider the reading speeds of everyone in your group to know what's possible. Monthly is a popular choice for a reason, giving enough time for slower readers to dedicate themselves to one book over the month, but also providing an in-sight deadline to motivate.

What day of the week will you meet? Consider the commitments of everyone in your group. Weekends might not be ideal for those committed to weekend sport, while weeknights might not be preferable for those who have long commutes.

Set a regular time for your meetings. For example, if you choose to meet monthly, always meet on the first Sunday of each month for lunch. Allow for some flexibility if needed, but keeping it at the same time of day and the same time of month allows your members to plan their lives around book club, rather than trying to find the time to squeeze it in!

Don't fall into the habit of changing the date / time to accommodate one person who can't make it. This can cause your meetings to be irregular and harder to commit to for all your members.

These logistics can start to get granular, so try to have a central conversation, all together, about how you would like the group to run. This can happen at your first meeting or you can send a survey around to get some answers to these logistical questions.



Running a book club meeting

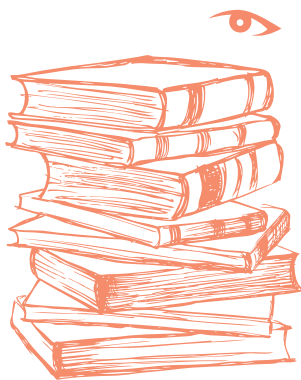
Choosing the books

It's a big wide world of reading out there – it can be hard to find a focus for your book club. Here are some ideas:

- Fiction
- Non-fiction
- Romance
- Classics
- Fantasy
- Mystery/Crime
- One author's backlist

You can focus on one genre/type of book for your whole club, or mix it up every month to keep things interesting and varied to appeal to everyone in the group.

It's a good idea to keep the process democratic. Perhaps, each month, one member of the group brings along several options for the other members to vote on. Give every member a chance to offer up options over time. Make sure everyone feels that they have a say in how your group operates.



Want someone to take care of all the decisions for you? Our Book Subscription for Book Clubs makes it easy. Each month, we send out copies of our adults' monthly selection to your doorstep for you to distribute to the members of your book club.

With guaranteed delivery by the 10th of each month (using our subscription option), we make sure that your book club is equipped.

Start your deliveries now

Leading discussions

Regardless of how you decide who will be leading the discussions, it's a good idea to prepare some questions in advance! Remember, you don't have to ask all the questions you prepare – they can just be a good jumping off point to keep conversation flowing.

With the WellRead Book Subscription for Book Clubs, we include a selection of questions, so the preparation is all done for you!

[Purchase now](#)

Plus, if you choose any of our past selections as your book club pick for the month, you can access all of our reading notes in our archive.

[Explore reading notes](#)

Decide whether you would like to rate the book you read and the rating system you'll use. 5 stars? 10 stars? Are half stars permitted? Agree on a system so that you can all be on the same page.



Keeping a record

If all goes well, your book club could run for many, many years to come. It's a great idea to note down some information about each of your meetings, just to keep track. You might want to document:

- The book you read
- The host of the meeting
- Where you gathered
- The ratings from each member
- The average rating overall

It can seem like another admin task, but it can be interesting to look back and see how your tastes as individuals and as a group have changed. To make it easier, we've created a template – simply print it out and fill it in as you go.

Planning ahead

Always plan your next meeting before leaving the current one. Decide who is hosting, what book you are reading, the date, time and location of the next meeting and who is bringing options for the following month.

Having firm plans means that your book club members know the deadline they're working to and can decline other engagements to make sure they're available for the next meeting.



The most important part of starting a book club?

Book club is supposed to be fun! Remember that as you build your group. While there are a lot of logistics to consider, they're all in aid of great conversation and stronger relationships, all centred around books!

Troubleshooting

We hear too many stories about book clubs fizzling out, but with the right measures in place, your group can avoid the same fate. The following examples might be already happening to your book club or you might want to have a read to mitigate them before they even start happening.

No one is finishing the book on time – how can I get members to commit to reading the book?

Consider the length of books you're choosing. Approximately 400 pages is the upper limit for a monthly book club to appeal to a wide range of readers. If you want to read Tolstoy, you might need to find a dedicated book club for that.

Creating an incentive for your members can also work – if you don't read the book, perhaps you can't submit your rating. This doesn't exclude anyone from discussion, but if members would like their rating to be recorded, they must finish the book ... even if they didn't like it!

Ultimately, book clubs rely on commitment and respect for one another's time. The host goes to a lot of trouble to read the book and create discussion points. It's up to the other members to recognise this effort and show their respect by completing the reading 'assignment'.

Don't worry if not everyone finishes the book every month – life happens. This is only a problem if it is happening on a regular basis.

Why isn't anyone showing up to meetings?

Ensure your meetings are scheduled for a regular date or time. Consider creating a Facebook group or group chat to update members with the event details for them to enter into their digital or physical calendar.

If you are doing all of this and members are still not showing up, you may need to have another conversation about commitment. These conversations need to happen upfront and as early as possible.

How can we choose books that appeal to everyone?

The short answer is that you can't. At WellRead, we choose a book each month for our 500+ subscribers. Not every subscriber loves every single one of our choices. However, this is expected from both parties from the outset.

Remind your members that book club isn't always about reading in your comfort zone.

However, you can avoid total disappointment by allowing each member to take a turn hosting and choosing the book club picks. If every member has a go at choosing the book at least once a year, they can guarantee they'll enjoy at least one of the selections.



Alternatively, make the process completely objective with our Book Subscription for Book Clubs – we'll make all the decisions for you with a promise that the books, whilst all literary fiction, will vary in form and content.

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One person is taking on all the organising and it's overwhelming, how can we even it out?

Take turns hosting, choosing the book club pick, the discussion questions and deciding on the location. This helps everyone to take ownership of the group, whilst simultaneously relieving the pressure from one person.

Check in at the start or end of every year to make sure everyone is happy with their level of involvement and how the responsibilities are being shared.

We agreed on expectations at the beginning, but now the group is changing – how do we course correct?

Book clubs can naturally evolve. However, if you agreed that discussion would be all about the books and now it seems more of a social catch up, it might be time to have a discussion. Regular check-ins can help to take the temperature of the group and to bring these issues up.

Don't wait until there's a problem to have a check-in.

The discussion time is hard to maintain, it veers off course or one person monopolises all the time ... how can we change this?

Prepare questions in advance and share the responsibility of leading the discussion so that each member understands the dynamics of the group.

No one is joining my book club, how can I find my people?

If you've asked your friends, headed online to community Facebook groups or forums and you're still having no luck, try to get more specific with what your book club will be about. Narrow in on your 'target audience' – do you want to have a group full of women in their 20s who live locally? Find the Facebook groups they're in and post there. If you want to run a book club on weekdays, exclusively for stay-at-home parents – consider sharing the idea in local parenting groups.

Too many people are joining, how do we limit numbers?

Discuss as a group, how many people you are willing to have join. For smaller local groups, around 10 people is the maximum – especially if you're meeting in public places that require bookings.

Make sure you are all on the same page when it comes to inviting friends into the group and check in to ensure everyone is okay with new additions, before you invite someone new.

If you've already hit your upper limit, agree on this as a group and politely explain this to any potential members. Over time, spaces may open up. Book club doesn't have to be exclusive, but it does have to be manageable.





Book Club

Date:

Title of book:

Author:

Location:

Host:

Member

Rating

Average
rating:



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