

GUIDE FOR SETTING UP A READING GROUP AND YOUR FIRST MEETING

- Decide what type of a group you want. Is it aimed at a particular audience (e.g. over 55s; young parents) or do you want a wide social mix?
- One person should co-ordinate the group. The coordinator should give their contact details to the library. The coordinator is responsible for ordering titles and ensuring that all books in a set are returned to the library. The Library will contact the coordinator if there is a problem.
- It is a good idea for this coordinator to have the contact details of all the members of the group.
- Register your group with your local library. The library will supply a group ticket. The group ticket allows you to have more books and for a longer time than an individual ticket.
- Think about the size of your group. Too large and it will be unwieldy, too small and you may find it hard to get good discussions going. Six to twelve people is a good size.
- Choose a place and time to meet that suits your target audience. Older people may not want to come out on dark winter evenings; working people are rarely available during the day.
- If you want to meet in a public place such as a library, you will need to check the availability of the building. Some groups choose to meet in each other's homes.
- Publicise the meeting at places your target audience will see it and provide contact details for those unable to come to the first meeting. Your local library may be able to help you and may know of people looking for a reading group.
- A monthly meeting suits most groups. Some choose to take a break during the summer and/or in December.
- You may not decide this until the first meeting but consider how much time each will last. A two-hour meeting is enough time to allow for refreshments, discussion of your chosen book, and to talk about any other news or ideas for the future.
- Choose somebody to lead the meeting. Some groups find it is better for everyone to take a turn. Others have one person who leads the group each time.
- Have a chat about the books you enjoy. As an ice-breaker the leader could ask everyone to tell the group what they are reading at the moment or ask each person to name their favourite book or author.
- You don't have to read a book at the first meeting. Use it for planning or ask people to bring along a book they want to talk about.
- Decide what type of meeting you want. Is it a light-hearted group reading books people know they will enjoy; a more serious group reading challenging literary titles; or somewhere in between?
- How will you choose what to read? You may want to get suggestions from the group and decide to read all of them in turn, or just fix something for the next meeting. You might want one person to make all the choices.
- Some Book Group sets from the library are very popular so decide whether you will be more flexible in your choices or whether people are prepared to buy a title occasionally
- Establish a time at the beginning or end of the meeting for news, discussion or future plans.
- Sort out arrangements for refreshments. Are you going to have any? Will people want something before the meeting starts, during the meeting, or stay on at the end?