



BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

NEVER BEEN IN A BOOK GROUP, OR READY TO START YOUR OWN? NEED TO BREATHE SOME NEW LIFE INTO YOUR LONG-STANDING MEETING? WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT BOOK GROUPS ANYWAY?

Reading is an inherently solitary activity, but having feelings about a book you've just read is universal! Whether you hated it, loved it, didn't finish, thought it was "meh" -- these things are all better shared. And while we have the big wide book-ternet to talk about them, sometimes it's nice to sit down with other readers and hash it out in person. The book group veterans among us have found that a good meet-up can change the way you see a book, get you to read something you never would have picked up otherwise, and give you an opportunity to be part of the bookish community IRL. (Also, you can have book-swaps! And eat cookies, or partake of adult beverages. Truly, the benefits list goes on and on.)

TL;DR, what are you waiting for?

WHAT KIND OF BOOK GROUP SHOULD I START?

Public or private: Do you need a reason to make your friends read the same books as you, or are you interested in meeting other folks in the area? Both are valid! Friends-only/private groups can be great; you can meet at each others' houses, live-text as you read, and not be nervous about voicing an opinion during meetings. Public/open groups are great for different reasons -- you might make some new friends, and you'll definitely get to hear new opinions and takes, and likely read things you might not otherwise have read. This guide is oriented towards those working on a public group, but there are lots of ideas that can apply to your private one as well!

Themed or any-book: Some book groups have a theme. You could decide to only read nonfiction; plays; YA; comics; new releases; truly, the options are endless. Here at Book Riot, for open groups we recommend one of two things: Read Harder Challenge-themed, or any-book!

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Each year, our fearless Read Harder captain Rachel Manwill puts together a list of tasks to read outside your comfort zones and find new favorite authors and genres. There are 24 tasks, and in 2017 we even have some contributed by authors! [Check out the full list here](#). For a book group focused around the list, aim for discussing two tasks per month. This will give you lots of room to trade suggestions, swap ideas, give recommendations based on who is most familiar with which type of book, and discuss how your challenge is going.

Any-book is even easier; literally any book you've read or are reading counts! We were inspired by [Dana's post](#) on the subject, and have heard from lots of folks doing these in their own neighborhoods. Pick a time, pick a place, and turn up ready to talk books. If some of your members are also working on the Read Harder Challenge, or are members of another book club, this makes it easy for them to not add to their reading but still participate. There's room for everyone in this format! You won't get as deep into a particular book as if you'd all read the same one, but you'll be exposed to a huge range of reading styles and reading preferences, and your TBR list will grow by leaps and bounds.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE MEET?

Most book groups meet monthly, but you can play with this! Many groups hosted in a venue (library or bookstore, for example) will meet on a particular day each month, e.g. the third Thursday of the month. Some groups will decide their next date at each meeting based on the availability of their members. For an open group we recommend a set monthly date, especially for groups where people pop in and out from one meeting to the next.

Of course, your venue options may affect this schedule, but it's good to have a plan going in.

HOW DO I FIND A MEETING SPOT?

Are you a regular (or maybe an employee) at your local bookstore or library? Ask if they might want to host — some will be happy to. Don't be offended if the answer is no; many small businesses and organizations have set schedules to help with staffing, and it just might not be a good fit. Cafés, bars, and community

centers are all good options too. In all cases, I recommend talking to the management if only to give them a heads-up. If you're a small group or the space is large enough you might not need a reservation, but you want to feel welcome and not worry about getting kicked out. Off-peak hours are great if you can manage them, since then you'll be bringing in potential business as well. So Friday at 9pm might not work for your favorite brewpub, but 6pm on a Tuesday could be perfect. And speaking of brewpubs! If you want teens to have the option of joining, make sure to pick a teen-friendly meeting place.

HOW WILL PEOPLE FIND MY GROUP?

Why, the Internet, of course! There are a bunch of platforms that lend themselves to this. Facebook works well for this, as does Meetup (with the caveat that Meetup charges, and you can only create and run up to three different groups). Lots of communities have neighborhood groups with announcement boards. If you're meeting in a venue, they might be willing to post it on their events calendar. You can list yours on our Book Group Resources page by [filling our our listings form!](#)

There is also the time-honored coffee shop/library/community center flyer, and the fun of designing one is not to be under-estimated. And then there's word-of-mouth; you can start with a core group of friends/acquaintances and make sure everyone knows that the first rule of book group is "Tell people about book group!"



OKAY, I'VE GOT MY VENUE AND MY FORMAT ALL SET; HOW DOES HOSTING A BOOK GROUP ACTUALLY WORK ONCE YOU'VE ALL SAT DOWN?

This might sound silly, but make sure you go around in a circle and have everyone introduce themselves, EVERY TIME. It's been proven that if you can get someone to talk once, even if it's just to say their name, they're more likely to talk again later on (which is great for our shyer, more retiring group members). Also, some of us are bad at names and need to be reminded! And it's just friendly.

If it's your first meeting or you have a lot of new folks, here are a few ice-breakers that are probably NOT ones you were forced to do at summer camp:

- Favorite author of all-time
- Favorite book from childhood
- "Desert Island" pick
- Favorite movie based on a book
- Reading tracking habits (Do they keep a spreadsheet? Don't track at all? We bet you'll have a whole range of answers)

Doing the Read Harder Challenge as your theme? Dive right into the selected tasks.

If you're doing any-book, take turns talking about what everyone's reading right now. This often will spark some conversation -- "Oh, I've been wanting to read that! How is it?" Definitely allow interjections and tangents, since that's where book group becomes the most interesting. Once everyone's had a turn talking about their current book(s), open it up for further discussion about previously mentioned topics, recommendations for what to read next, your favorite TV shows (not even kidding -- off-topic happens), etc.

THIS MIGHT SOUND SILLY, BUT MAKE SURE YOU GO AROUND IN A CIRCLE AND HAVE EVERYONE INTRODUCE THEMSELVES, **EVERY TIME.**

Discussions can last anywhere from 45 minutes to 3 hours, depending on the number of people you have and how excited they are about their books.

THIS IS ALL GREAT BUT I'D LIKE SOME MORE IDEAS AND TIPS, AND MAYBE SOME BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS.

Have we got the newsletter for you! Sign up for our In The Club newsletter [right here](#), delivering biweekly resources and recommendations.

