

How to Lead a Book Group

I. **Getting started**

Ask each person to say their name and give their initial brief thoughts about the book. This will help to break the ice and give everyone a chance to participate in the initial discussion.

II. **Guidelines for Participants**

- a. *Format* - After asking each member of the group for their name and initial thoughts, follow with discussion questions, then author biographical information.
- b. *Interruptions* - There will always be someone who breaks in while another person is speaking. Most interruptions are due to enthusiasm rather than rudeness. Control the interruptions by saying, "Hold that thought, Sheryl, we'll want to hear it again once Angie has finished."
- c. *Monopolizing Conversation* - Cut in on long-winded group members with, "That's an interesting point you just made. Did anyone else get the same impression or a different one?" or "You've made some interesting points, Teri. Let's hear from another reader. Chris, what did you think?"
- d. *Keeping the group on topic* - Try not to let attendees wander off topic and bring them back if they do.
- e. *Listen carefully to what is said by participants* - Rephrase a participant's comments or ask a question to be sure you and others understand what was meant.
- f. *Allow everyone the chance to contribute to the discussion* - Engage silent attendees by posing open-ended questions directly. But don't badger the participants who really don't want to participate. Try asking them, "What did you like/dislike about the book?"
- g. *Ask open-ended questions* - if you ask a question that can be answered with a "yes" or "no", all you'll get is a one-word answer.

III. **As the facilitator, think of yourself as an umpire.** It's your job to make sure everyone has the opportunity to respectfully share his or her opinion with the group. You do not have to agree or disagree with every statement made.

IV. **Other questions (if the discussion is stalled):**

- a. How does the title reflect the book?
- b. Would you recommend this book? Why or why not? If yes, what would you say about it?
- c. What was your favorite part?
- d. Who was your favorite character?
- e. What messages are in the book, if any?
- f. What did the book make you think about?
- g. How did the book make you feel?