

# Starting a Book Club

Book clubs are a great way to meet new people, discover books you may not otherwise read and, of course, have fun!

Here are some tips on how to get your new book club started.

## **WHO**

Book clubs typically have 8 to 10 members. If you're worried your club might get too big, consider setting a membership limit or creating criteria for new members.

## **WHAT**

Choosing a theme for your club will help you choose books and attract interested members. For example, some clubs may read only nonfiction books, while others may read only mysteries, books by female authors or books from a particular region.

## **WHERE**

Many book groups meet at one member's home each month, with the host providing small snacks or refreshments. For new groups, it may be more comfortable for people to meet in a public place, such as the Library or a café.

## **WHEN**

Establish a regular meeting time to help members remember and plan ahead. Decide how often you'll meet, and if you'll meet during the summer and over holidays.

## **HOW**

The books you read are the heart of the club, so it's important to make thoughtful selections and give members a chance to help choose. Some book clubs select titles far in advance, while others select from month-to-month. One approach is to give one person each month the opportunity to submit three book choices; the rest of the members then vote for one of the three titles.

Once your book club is up and running, keep the momentum going and keep people coming back by ensuring everyone has a good time and feels like they're able to contribute.

## **PLAN**

Read the book, do some research on the topics and/or author, and come prepared with questions that will generate discussion. Consider establishing a rough meeting outline to allow for socializing, discussion and planning future meetings without getting off-track.

## **BE FLEXIBLE**

People come to book clubs for different reasons—some may enjoy socializing, while others may want to focus on discussing and analyzing the book. Most book clubs have a relaxed environment, but if the book becomes an afterthought, consider scheduling social time before you start your discussion.

## **ENCOURAGE**

Not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of a group. Encourage everyone to participate, and emphasize that there are no right or wrong opinions. Also, people will feel reluctant to come if they haven't finished the book. Urge them to attend and discuss the parts of the book they did read.

## **DISCUSS**

Welcome attendees and allow new members to introduce themselves. Let the conversation proceed naturally, but keep in mind that as the leader, your role is to keep the discussion running smoothly.

## **CHECK IN**

If people aren't enjoying the club, they're most likely not going to complain—they'll just stop coming. Talk to members one-on-one periodically to see if they have any suggestions.