

Leading a Book Discussion

As the leader of your book club, you'll often be leading the discussion and ensuring everyone has fun and is able to participate. Here are some common challenges and suggestions for how to handle them:

- If one person is dominating the conversation ... Redirect the conversation by thanking the person for their perspective and ask if anyone else would like to comment. You can also introduce a new topic yourself to encourage others to share their thoughts.
If members keep talking over each other ... Bring an object to pass around the room—only the person holding the object gets to speak. If one person is holding the object too long, change the object to a timer and give each person a set amount of time.
- If shy or quiet members don't get to participate ... If you can tell that someone wants to speak, invite them to comment. One way to guarantee everyone has a chance to speak is to allocate time at the end of every meeting for each person to share their final thoughts.
- If the discussion becomes heated ... Though there's nothing wrong with members having different opinions, remind everyone that there is no right—or wrong—answer.
- If the discussion becomes emotional ... Controversial books can make for great club choices because they often spark lively discussions. However, topics that are too sensitive may cause your members to be embarrassed or uncomfortable. If you sense that some members are uncomfortable with the discussion, take a quick poll of the group to decide if you want to move on to another topic. You can also break members into smaller discussion groups according to how they would like to proceed.
- If the conversation stalls ... Sometimes the problem isn't too much talk, but not enough. Not all books will capture the group's interest, so if you're all talked out, ask members if they want to discuss other book-related topics. This can be a fun way to get book recommendations—both for the club and for your own reading—and learn more about your fellow club members. Some fun ice-breakers include asking people their favorite fictional characters, a favorite film based on a book or books that have changed their lives.

If leading the group becomes overwhelming ... If you're looking at this list and thinking that running a book club is hard work, don't worry! Once you get a consistent group of members, consider rotating leaders for each meeting so that you get a break and other members have a chance to guide the club.