

## TIPS FOR NEW BOOK CIRCLE LEADERS:

### Logistics, Organization, Your Role

1. It is often helpful for the group to decide what role they want the leader to play so that you're all happy with the authority imbued in the role and there is no member resentment. Some groups want a formal, "official monitor" and some want a casual presence to guide the proceedings.
2. You might wish to devise some rules or guidelines for the Circle before you meet for the first time. For example, some groups give everyone a turn to speak or set a time limit for each member to speak on a topic. Whatever you decide, run the guidelines by the group before installing them.
3. At the beginning of subsequent meetings, remind members of the rules. This is not time wasted but time well spent, especially if you and others feel that there was a problem in previous meetings.
4. In your guidelines indicate to group members that comments such as "like" or "dislike" aren't very helpful and could lead to others' feeling defensive. The best approach to making comments is to discuss experience while reading the book and offering evidence from the text for opinions and viewpoints.
5. So too, tell members to read with pencil in hand and take notes on interesting questions or ones that confuse them.
6. Typically, the leader's role falls somewhere between that of a host or hostess and a chairperson. This means that you need to keep the meeting on track. (More on this below).
7. At the first meeting, decide with group members whether you'd like to name the group. If people are game, solicit ideas from everyone and conduct a vote. All suggested names and voting should be done in written form on a piece of paper and handed to you so that no one is intimidated or strong-armed into thinking or voting in a certain way.
8. It is often the leader's role to take care of the administrative details, such as reminding members of the time, date, and place of the meeting—by phone or email—a few days before you convene. Provide clear directions to the meeting place in this email. And remind people to be punctual!
9. Greet people with a smile: it is your job to make everyone feel comfortable in the environment.
10. Passing around a sheet at the first meeting for peoples' names, phone numbers, email addresses (if applicable), and preferred way of being contacted is useful.
11. Provide a comfortable setting for the meeting with enough chairs. Putting chairs in a circle is very useful.
12. Not a big deal, but consider the room temperature of where you meet. The elderly, for example, might want the room to be warmer.
13. Again, this almost goes without saying, but make sure the meeting venue is clean, doesn't smell, is quiet, and free of distractions.
14. Arrange for a spouse or sitter to attend to children and make sure pets are kept away from the meeting area. Ask members ahead of time whether or not they have any allergies to animals, smoke, etc. and whether they fear animals.
15. Have a place at the ready for people to leave their coats, etc. and tell people where the bathroom is.
16. It is nice to provide some light refreshments and beverages at the meeting(s). Regular (and decaf) coffee