

Tips on How to Lead a Book Discussion

- » Prepare ahead of time. Read the book, biographical information about the author and book reviews. Prepare 10-15 open-ended questions ahead of time or use the questions included with your kit
- » Think of yourself as a facilitator. Try to begin with a provocative question and step back. Avoid closed-ended questions like “Did you like the book?”
- » Your job as a leader is to maintain the focus and keep the discussion moving.
- » Be a good listener and observer. Listen for quiet members and try to draw them into the discussion. Watch for someone anxious to get into the conversation and help them to find a gap in the conversation.
- » Push members beyond “I just didn’t like it” statements. Ask them to describe why a book was unappealing. Books that inspire strong reactions—positive and negative—lead to some of the best discussions.
- » Respect everyone’s opinion. Not everyone will like the book. When there are differing views, encourage discussion about the reasons for liking or disliking a book. Let it be known that the group is non-judgmental and everyone’s opinion is valued. Often the best discussions happen when there is less agreement.
- » Balance the discussion between personal thoughts and responses to the book. Groups that spend a lot of time reminiscing personal reflections are no longer book discussion groups.
- » Don’t use the discussion questions as if it were an exam. Rather use them as conversation starters.
- » Choose a favorite passage or two from the book. Reading aloud can bring a new perspective to the passage.
- » Don’t worry too much about short silent periods, but be prepared with your own notes to get the discussion started again.