

#AdventureSociety

Book Club

How to start your own online book club

So, you've decided to start an online book club – what a great idea! We're here to help make it as easy and adventurous as possible. Unsure where to start? Then read on...

1. There are two main elements to a club of this sort – books and readers. We can suggest the books; you will need to find the readers! The ideal number of members in an IRL (In Real Life) book club is 6 to 16, but in an online club you're not restricted by location and can increase this number if you wish. Think about whether you want to set a limit on the number of members, or whether you're happy to let anyone who wants to join. Online, the number of members can, in theory, be limitless!

Later (in point 7) we'll talk you through the options for video-based or comment-based groups, and whether you wish all participants to be able to contribute or whether you think some would prefer to just read or listen to a discussion.

2. Decide whether your book club will be local to your geographical area or, like the web, truly worldwide. You may decide later to run your book club 'in person'. And, it is quite a different thing running a club which is only open to a small group than one which is open to everyone on the planet. So, think about how many members you can manage, and keep this in mind when you advertise to prospective members.

3. Next, you will need to promote your club in order to gain members. You can:

- ask friends;
- ask friends to ask friends!
- send an email to your networks;
- post a status about it on your social media;
- post the #AdventureSociety logo on Instagram, or use it to create a post, or tweet, and make the request that way;
- post about it in various online book groups, including those on Facebook;
- post it on any online website, news sites, or virtual listing sites that you know of.

Think about who your likely members will be, and how you might find them. There may be other means of promotion which are available to you. Feel free to use them. If you use #AdventureSociety on social media, we'll share any posts you make. We'd love to see your group in action.

4. Book clubs often have rules, including who can be a member, but be wary of imposing too many rules on those who join your club. It needs to be flexible, and it also needs to be fun! Try to implement just a few rules which promote the need for good manners, fairness, and mutual respect and start your meeting with a reminder. We all have different tastes, opinions and experiences and that's what makes a good discussion.

5. Decide when and how often your book club will meet. This will depend a little upon your members – certain groups may not be able to meet weekdays, for example, or be unable to commit to meeting more than once a month. Bear in mind that people will very likely all have differing commitments and of course, you all need to try and find time to read the book!

If you cannot agree unanimously on a regular date, think about setting a schedule as organiser, but also try to canvas members and be a little flexible if you're able. You could, for example, ask about times in an online poll (both FB and Goodreads allow these), in an email, or in a preliminary Zoom meeting.

6. In addition to this, remember that there is no obligation on members to attend your book club every session, or even to read the books. We all have a lot going on in our lives, and people may drift in and out of your club depending on their commitments. The important thing is that members don't feel any pressure, and that they see your club and the books that are part of it as a pleasurable, stress-free activity. This will encourage them to return to the club, as and when.

7. So, how does an online book club meet up to discuss the books? You can do this via: a) a video hosting service, such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, and Skype or, b) a group forum, for example in a Facebook group or on [Everforo](#) or [Goodreads](#).

You can also [join our group on Goodreads here](#).

a) A video-based book club on Zoom, Google Hangouts and Skype

This is the closest to an IRL (In Real Life) book club. Research the different platforms available to you and choose your favourite. We personally recommend Zoom – it's easy to use and your members do not even need an account. Zoom run a daily training session you can sign up for to learn more: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360029527911>

Don't worry if there are hiccoughs in the beginning, you will soon become used to talking online and as a club. It should be informal and fun! Find out more about the platforms and how to use them safely online:

[More about using Zoom safely.](#)

[More about using Google Hangouts](#)

[More about using Skype safely.](#)

b) A comment-based book club on Facebook, Everforo and Goodreads

You can create a group and invite your members to join. It is a good idea to create some additional rules for online interactions and posts, again promoting the ideals of fairness and respect but also setting out clearly what your chosen forum is/is not for. Think about making your group private so you have to verify anyone who wants to join.

You can also add a list of rules which people must agree to. [Here's an example](#) for you to think about. On Goodreads, you can have these rules pop up every time someone goes to post a comment, if you wish to.

[More about running Facebook groups](#)

[More about running Goodreads groups](#)

[More about Everforo](#)

8. Online groups thrive on discussion – use our talk sheets as a starting point. In order to engage all members as fully as possible it is best to focus on one book at a time. You can follow the running order of our videos on YouTube if you wish to, although the order you read / watch is entirely up to you. You could also set a time in your group for everyone to watch one of our book club videos and chat together, or you could agree to watch them before to help prompt discussion.

9. Finally, make sure to have fun! A book club should be an enjoyable endeavour. In time, enquire whether any members of the book club might like to offer some support for the group, if you need it, and be open to suggestions and ideas from members. Perhaps your members could start to suggest more books to read.

Ultimately, though, make sure that the book club is an adventure in and of itself, and do get in touch with us at [The Wilbur & Niso Smith Foundation](#) if you have any questions at all. We'd also love to know how your book club is going and how you found the books, vids, and talk sheets!

Email us at mab@wilbur-niso-smithfoundation.org if you have any queries.



BOOK CLUB INFORMATION **AND RESOURCES**



Find all talk sheets, more information about the books, and video links on [our website](#)