



How to Run a Left Book Club Reading Group

1) Ask us to help you

We want our groups to be open to everyone. You don't have to be a member to attend our meetings, so make sure to invite friends and colleagues even if they haven't subscribed. We can also put you in touch with other LBC members in your area who may be interested in helping organise. With your permission, we will give out your email address so that other members can contact you directly. If you're a member of a political party or other campaigning organisation, let them know about the meeting. This is often the most effective way to get people along!

2) Decide on a contact email address for your group

Some groups set up their own email addresses (i.e. southeastlondonlbc@gmail.com). This means you don't have to give out your personal details. Make sure you have someone responsible for being the first point of contact for new members. It means whenever we get an email enquiry from a member in your area, we can easily forward it on to you.

4) Set a date and time for your first meeting

Once you have a few people interested, agree on a date, time and location for your first meeting. It's good to schedule it for a few weeks in advance, so that we have time to publicise it properly. It sounds obvious, but pick a time that works for most people. Evenings after work, or weekend afternoons often work well.

5) Finding a venue

We recommend somewhere relaxed, with refreshments on hand. A bit of background noise is fine, it can help put people at ease. Although, make sure you can hear each other! A quiet corner of a pub or cafe is perfect. Other venues we have used include university seminar rooms or halls but meetings tend to be more formal.

6) Choose your book

Ideally start with an LBC book, we send members additional reading materials and a list of discussion points for our titles to help run meetings initially. You can order books from previous months on the website if you are a member. In the future, you may want to choose books that are not on the LBC list, especially if you meet every month. Make sure to include everyone when selecting these books!



7) Let us know

We will help publicise your event, make sure to let us know when the details are set:

- * We will email members who live in your area and let them know
- * We will list it on our social media channels and in our newsletter
- * We can send you a template to use for a poster, if you're happy to print it
- * We can sometimes arrange for authors to facilitate the discussion at your meeting
- * We can provide a short list of discussion points for all the books we publish
- * We also provide lists of articles for further reading

8) On the day: how to set up the room

Sitting in a circle around a table works best. Comfortable chairs and a bit of music in the background can help put people at ease. Most established reading groups get about 8-12 people attending regularly, so you don't need lots of space. It's good to have drinks and snacks on hand. Aim to make the environment as relaxed and inclusive as possible.

9) Enjoy yourselves!

It may sound obvious, but keep the tone as lively as possible. Video introductions to topics can be very useful. Prompts for discussion can be really helpful. Use a small section from a podcast or from a YouTube video if you have a laptop. In larger venues you may be able to use a projector. Keep your discussion to about an hour, and remember that most people are there to connect with like-minded people. We hope you enjoy it!

Facilitators Notes

How to facilitate your meeting

It's useful to have one person facilitating the group discussion. If you are setting up the group, you may need to facilitate the first meeting. Then in future, you can rotate this role.

Before the meeting, write a list of questions you'd like to explore.



During the meeting

- 1) Introduce yourself and ask others to introduce themselves too
- 2) Give a little introduction to the book/topic that lasts no more than 5 mins and outlines what kind of angles you'd like to cover and what you'd like people to get out of the meeting
NB: If you have invited a special guest speaker, you can assign this job to them instead, as an expert in the field.
- 3) Ask everyone to raise their hands to make a point before you start
- 4) It's great to use a video at the start to break the ice and get a lively debate going
- 5) Try and ensure nobody dominates the conversation, and if anyone is looking shy or not participating, try and give them opportunities to join in as the discussion continues
- 6) You're there to find out what everyone thinks so a little disagreement and lively debate is good!
- 7) Try and move the discussion on if you feel people are going off topic
- 8) If people stray from the discussion points and you feel that it's a good conversation then go with it. But try and reach some conclusions by the end
- 9) Try and keep the points as related to people's real life experiences as possible. Theory is very useful, but most people want to know how to apply it to their daily lives
- 10) At the end try and give a quick summary of the main points you feel you've all agreed on, what's been most useful
- 11) Collect people's names and email contacts, if they wish, so you can contact them again.
- 12) Thank everyone for coming!
- 13) If you have a guest speaker, thank them especially