

Oxfordshire Libraries Reading Groups



Oxfordshire Libraries

Reading Groups Guide

Are you a Reading Group member or thinking it would be fun to join one? Get all the information you need here.

Joining a Reading Group

Oxfordshire Libraries run reading groups for adults in some libraries. Your local library may have information or you can contact the Reading Group team on readinggroups@oxfordshire.gov.uk They can also send out your details to local groups to see if any would welcome a new member.

As an alternative, there are a number of reading groups run by newspapers, publishers, on the Internet or on the radio. You can find more details about these and other options in the following pages.

The Reading Group team are always happy to help. Email us at readinggroups@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Starting your own Reading Group

Your local library will be happy to put up a poster for you to recruit members.



What can the Library Service do for you?

Our service is open to you - all you need is a free Oxfordshire County Council Reading Group Membership Card

Your group will receive:

- Free access to our Reading Group Collection of over five hundred titles. A set of up to 12 copies will be delivered to your local library to fit your meeting schedule. Have a look at what would be available to you.
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/leisure-and-culture/libraries/library/books-and-reading/reading-groups>
- 10 week loan period - you can borrow the books for up to 10 weeks – longer if you renew.
- Access to titles in different formats – large print, audio, e-books and e-audio.
- Flexibility in your choice of titles. You can opt to compile a wish list from a wide variety of titles or let our experienced professional team select for you. Love crime novels? Or non-fiction? Speak to our team readinggroups@oxfordshire.gov.uk and we'll see what we can do for you!



Practical advice

How to set up a reading group

The easiest way is to start with friends, family, colleagues and acquaintances. However, your local library will promote your group by displaying a poster, or you could also try your local bookshop, workplace, cafes, etc.

How many members should a group have?

We offer up to 12 copies of a single title, however the average reading group has 6 to 10 members. This allows for a really good discussion, from several different points of view, and should allow for everyone to be able to make a contribution.

Where to meet and when?

Your local library may be able to offer you meeting space. Some groups meet in local bookshops, in each other's homes, village halls or pubs. It has to be a venue that will be comfortable, accessible and relaxing for all members. If it is in people's homes, make sure there is enough room to accommodate everyone, and that everyone takes a turn with the hosting where possible. Getting everyone together for an initial meeting is always difficult, but try and gauge what time of day, and day of the week suits the majority. Use that time for the first meeting, and then when you have that initial gathering you can discuss future dates and times.



Organising your first meeting

Try to make the first meeting relaxing and informal. You could use the ice breaker questions below to get discussion flowing. It might be an idea to ask people to bring along their all-time favourite book. When everyone has had a chance to get to know each other, consider:

- How often you want to meet? Monthly usually works well.
- What time of day do people want to meet?
- What will your venue be?
- How long will you meet for? On average groups meet for an hour to an hour and a half.
- Do you want to have refreshments?
- Who will lead the discussion? It's often good to get members to take turns in doing this.
- What kind of group will you be? Will you just read specific genres or do you want a wide variety?
- Will the whole group always read the same book?
- Think about the books you would like to read in advance. You can choose a list of around 50 from our Reading Group list of titles.

“Ice breakers” for your first meeting

- When and where do you like to read?
- What is your favourite book?
- Who is your favourite character?
- Who do you talk to about what you've read?
- Do you ever read the last page before you've got to the end?
- Which book have you always meant to read, but never got round to?
- Do you ever sit up late to finish a book?
- Do you re-read old favourites?
- Do you read in public places?
- Do you have lots of books on the go at once?
- What books do you tend to avoid?
- What books do you remember from your childhood?
- What book would you take to a desert Island?
- What makes you give up on a book and not finish it?

Leading discussions

This can seem daunting, but it's really just to get the conversation flowing, and to make sure everyone has a chance to express their thoughts. The main problems arise if someone dominates the discussion while others feel unable to say anything.

You could do any of the following:

- Make a few notes if you are leading the discussion; the themes, characters, etc.
- Go round all group members to get an initial reaction.
- Ask open questions rather than ones which have a yes/no answer.
- Ask people why they didn't like the book.
- How did the book make people feel?
- Consider the style of writing.
- What issues did the book raise?
- Would you read anything else by the same author? Has anyone already read other books by the same person – how do they compare?
- Some groups like to give the book an individual or group 'score' to show how it compares with other books that they read in the group.
- You could ask what other books people have read since the last meeting. Any recommendations? Have they watched films based on books?

Remember there's no right or wrong. Opinions may differ greatly!

Resources to get you started

- **newbooks** - this is a magazine specifically for readers and reading groups, containing reviews, recommendations and interviews with authors talking about books and reading. It's published quarterly.
<https://nbmagazine.co.uk/>

Reading Guides

Some publishers and organisations produce reading guides to specific books.

Reading guides can provide starting points for your discussion by posing questions about the characters, plot, etc. They may also have background information about the author and suggested further reading. However some reading groups may find these guides too restrictive and make you feel as if you are back at school!

If you are interested in reading guides try the following:

- **Reading Group Guides** - a good starting point if you're looking for the guide to a particular book: this site allows you to browse by genre as well as author and title.
www.readinggroupguides.com
- **BookBrowse** – a general resource for book clubs, including an extensive reading guides section.
www.bookbrowse.com
- **Vintage** - includes a description of each book, questions, discussion topics, and author biographies.
www.randomhouse.com/vintage/read/rgg
- **Virago** - all guides contain extracts from the book, discussion questions and background material about the author.
www.virago.co.uk/category/virago-news/virago-modern-classic-book-club/
- Penguin – Articles and fun quizzes to get your reading group started
www.penguin.co.uk (click on the 'features' tab)

Websites

Websites devoted to books and reading are many and varied but they will all help you find a good read. Here are just a few examples to whet your reading appetite.

- **General Websites about books and reading groups:**

- **BBC Radio 4 Book Club**
www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/bookclub
- **Bookgroup** - readers and reviewers who are all members of book groups.
www.bookgroup.info
- **BookCrossing** - read a book then set it free...
www.bookcrossing.com
- **Good Reads** www.goodreads.com
- **Guardian Unlimited** - book pages.
www.guardian.co.uk/books
- **Love Reading** www.lovereadings.co.uk
- **The Reading Club** – advice on starting and running your own book club. www.thereadingclub.co.uk
- **Reading Group Guides** www.readinggroupguides.co.uk
- **Reader's Place** – online book club community.
www.areadersplace.net
- **Reader 2 reader** <http://reader2reader.openingthebook.com>
- **Richard and Judy Book Club** – UKTV book programme.
www.richardandjudy.co.uk

- **Fiction and Poetry**

- **Fantastic Fiction** - sci-fi, fantasy and horror.
www.fantasticfiction.co.uk
- **Poetry Library** - promotes the reading of poetry.
www.poetrylibrary.org.uk
- **The Poetry Society** - promotes the study, use and enjoyment of poetry.
www.poetrysociety.org.uk
- **Which Book** - find a book to match your mood.
www.whichbook.net

- **Literary Prizes**

Books that have won or been short listed for a prize can be a good starting point for choosing titles to read in your group.

- **The Man Booker Prize** - promotes the finest in fiction by rewarding the best book of the year.
www.thebookerprizes.com
- **Women's Prize for Fiction** - rewarding the best fiction written in English, by women, throughout the world.
www.womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/

- **Online Booksellers**

Online Bookseller websites highlight bestsellers, new and future releases and have special offers on a wide variety of titles. You can read reviews by other readers and these can be helpful when deciding what might make an interesting book for a group to read. Here is a small selection, but there are many more.

- **Amazon**
www.amazon.co.uk
- **Independent Booksellers Group**
[Bookshop](#)
- **Waterstones**
www.waterstones.co.uk
- **W H Smith**
www.whsmith.co.uk

If you would like any further information please **email**
readinggroups@oxfordshire.gov.uk