

How to get your reading group online

Some ideas from BCP Libraries

Getting started

It's helpful if someone hosts the group, by taking responsibility for organising the date, time and email/ social media/ conference facility.

For any method of virtual group, you need to decide a day and time for the email discussion to take place. This isn't as important with the email or Facebook group, as people can post anytime, but still good to have a time to focus the posting and responding. You may need to set some rules around length of comments, language and positivity as it is easy to create misunderstandings when you are not meeting in person.

Questions about books can be found on websites such as the following, or type "book club questions" into a search engine. If you add the title of the book, there may be some pre-set questions.

- <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/>
- <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/what-to-do-when-no-discussion-guide-is-available>
- <https://wondermomwannabe.com/book-club-questions/>
- <https://bookriot.com/2017/08/21/book-club-discussion-questions/>

Email group

Advantages

- simple to set up, provides an easy way to share views

Disadvantages

- Assumes all group are on email.
- You need to ask permission for email addresses to be shared.
- There can be technical issues - not everyone understands they need to copy to all the others.
- Alternatively, you can just use Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) but not everyone understands how BCC works and you may have some data breaches.
- Email groups have less interaction than other virtual groups

How ? Group leader, or person with technical skills, contacts the group members using the blind carbon copy option (bcc) to ask for permission to share emails with the rest of the group. Once permission received from enough people to make a reasonable discussion, prepare an email inviting comments. You could use one of the following suggestions:

- a. A shared title the group already have
- b. Any book they are reading at present
- c. A theme for books they could all discuss (rivers, historical, mothers, etc)

Facebook group

Advantages

- More interactive than just email. Easier to add pictures etc

Disadvantages

- The page is linked to a member profile for the person who sets it up.
- To use a Facebook page a member must have, or set up, a Facebook profile to post.
- Some people don't like the exposure of Facebook and are worried about Facebook data management policy, so won't use it.

How? Facebook has instructions for setting up a group. You may need to start off making the group public until all your members have joined, or they won't be able to see it to request to join. You can change the privacy to private once everyone has joined. You can decline membership to people you don't know in the meantime.

To create a group:

1. Click **Create** in the top right of Facebook and select **Group**.
2. Enter your group name, add group members and then choose the [privacy option](#) for your group.
3. Click **Create**.

Personalize your group by [uploading a cover photo](#) and adding a description.

Related articles

[How do I share photos or videos to a Facebook group?](#)

[How do I allow or remove access to group apps on Facebook?](#)

[How do I join a Facebook group as myself or my Page?](#)

Video conferencing

Advantages

- You can see and talk to people as though you are together, it's friendly and fun.

Disadvantages –

- You need the right equipment, including video or audio links on your phone or device.
- Some apps, such as House party, only work on certain types of device.
- Some systems have a maximum number of people allowed, or time limit higher number.
- Group members need reasonable IT proficiency to log on and manage the technology.

There are many links to different systems, and they all have different features.

Familiar links are

Facebook Messenger – easy if all on FB and a familiar environment for many people. Video only supports 6 people being seen at once, although more can talk .

Whatsapp – easy if all on Whatsapp and a familiar environment for many people. Video only supports 4 people being seen at once.

Zoom – can include up to 100 people. Free meetings with multiple people can only last 40 minutes (though you can start another meeting straight away).

See below for some reviews of different options

<https://www.howtogeek.com/661906/the-6-best-free-video-conferencing-apps/>

Reading agency tips on Virtual Reading Groups

<https://readinggroups.org/news/keeping-your-reading-group-active-while-social-distancing>