

YOUR FIRST GROUP MEETING

Contact Your Group in Advance

Your first meeting as a Small Group is more of a social gathering. You may be eager to jump into the study, but beginning the process of cultivating relationships is essential to the group experience. The depth of your relationships will drive the quality of your discussions. Before the meeting, send your group members an email, text, or call confirming the date and time of the meeting and providing them with the address to your meeting place. Let them know the start and end time to your group meeting. Letting them know this information helps to create a predictable environment.

Preparations and Items Needed for the First Meeting

- Depending on what type of group you are leading you may need to plan for dinner or snacks.
- Copies of the West Ridge Group Covenant (<https://westridge.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Group-Covenant.pdf>)
- Name-tags
- Make sure people are greeted when they arrive
- Have drinks available when people arrive
- Upbeat music playing
- House cleaned, phone off if possible

Leadership Tip – Studies show that the first 7 seconds a person spends in a room can make or break the remainder of their experience in that room.

Goals of the First Meeting

- Rekindle relationships and meet new members. Take some time to introduce yourself and give group members an opportunity to share a little bit about themselves. During the first meeting, your job is to create an environment in which people can begin to connect. If your group members have already met and are comfortable with one another, you may not have to do much more than provide coffee and snacks. If your group is meeting for the first time, you may want to use some icebreakers to help people ease into the conversation. (<http://northpointgroups.com/cg-documents/IceBreakers.pdf>)

Clarify your group's goals/ values / expectations / commitments regarding key topics such as prayer, bible study, relationships, authenticity, confidentiality, and mission. Use the West Ridge Group Covenant to guide the discussion.

Have a conversation about caring for your group. The primary way care happens at West Ridge Church is through Small Groups. Rally everyone around the idea that for the upcoming semester/season this is our family. When one of the group members is going through a circumstance that requires care (hospital visits, prayer, or some other type of support), the group rallies around them and takes care of them.

- If time allows, briefly discuss the sermon topic or study material your group will focus on.
- Pray for the building of relationships and spiritual growth of the group

Practical tips:

- **Delegations** - Group leaders can't and shouldn't carry the weight of every responsibility. Find group members to help and own different group tasks where they apply.
 - Clean up: put chairs away & clean up room
 - Someone to be in charge of planning social gatherings
 - Organize outreach/serving opportunities

- **Homework** - Encourage group members to do the best they can completing any homework assignments if that applies. Remind them that they will get out of the study what they put into it. There is an expectation to complete assignments but grace is extended as well. Group members need to know they don't have to feel like they should skip a meeting if they don't get homework completed. Participating in group discussion will be beneficial.
- **Ask group members to contact you if they aren't going to attend** - This request helps to ensure group members stay in contact and don't "fall through the cracks" if they are not attending. This also keeps leaders in the loop if a member needs prayer/care if there is a crisis.

Before you end the meeting, ask your group members this question:

"Does anyone want to share what you hope to get out of this group experience?"

Let them know what you hope to get out of the experience of leading them.

Leadership Tip: Never underestimate the significance of the time after the meeting. It is key to connect with people and find out more what people are all about.