

Skill Training: 10 Keys to a Great 1st Meeting

By Mark Howell | 2

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Whether you're a brand new leader or a seasoned veteran starting a new group, it's natural to feel a little nervous about your first meeting. Here are 10 keys that I've found very helpful as I get ready to launch a new group:

1. Make it a point to call all of your members the week before your first meeting. Don't settle for voicemail. And don't just email them. Be enthusiastic when you call! Get yourself ready to call. It's amazing how even a quick phone call reminder will help your nerves begin to settle.
2. Enlist someone to help you make the calls! If you don't have a co-leader yet, this may be your first step toward recruiting them. Simply divide the list and split the work. Pulling in someone to help you will go a long way toward easing your mind about the first meeting.
3. Ask everyone to bring something (i.e., chips, salsa, cokes, cookies, etc.). This cements attendance! They're much more likely to show if you're depending on them.
4. Start your group with an informal "meet and greet" session. The agenda for the first meeting is all about making members feel comfortable with the new members of the group.
5. Have nametags and markers ready at the door. Nametags take the pressure off of remembering names.
6. Arrange for an uninterrupted session (childcare needs, food prepared in advance, etc.).
7. Your first meeting provides a great opportunity to get to know each other in a less formal way. Here are a few questions I like to use:

- Would you describe yourself as more of an extrovert or an introvert? Give an example.
 - Would you describe yourself as a structured, “just settle it” kind of person or more of a play it by ear type?
 - Are you a hugger? Or a non-hugger?
 - What motivated you to sign up for this group?
 - What are you most hopeful you’ll gain as a result of being in the group?
 - What are you most afraid of (in terms of the group)?
8. This is a great time to talk over the [Group Agreement](#). No commitments required. Nobody’s signing anything. Just a good way to get values and expectations on the table. Simply read over the values and reconfirm expectations. See also, [Skill Training: How to Use a Small Group Agreement](#).
9. Talk about materials for your study. Make sure everyone has book. Your church may have a plan to ensure that everyone can have a book even if they can’t afford it. If not, your group members may want to make it easy for everyone to participate.
10. Pray to close the meeting. Make it really simple. Ask, “Is there anything we can be praying about for you personally? There may be times when we pray for those who aren’t part of the group, but today, let’s keep prayer requests focused on just group members.” Write down any prayer requests. Close with a very simple prayer. See also, [Skill Training: The Simplest Way to Help Your Members Pray Out Loud](#).