



How-to Guide: Running an SYA Book Club

Congratulations!

You are officially on your way to planning a Shout Your Abortion book club. This guide will give an overview of the entire book club process—planning, facilitating, and follow up. You know what will work best for your community, but we'd like to share what has worked well in the past. If you have any questions, please email bookclub@shoutyourabortion.com.

CHECKLIST

- Fill out the book club [Google doc](#).**
- Write down why you are planning a book club.** Why is it important? What does the club mean to you? This can be very helpful with marketing it to others.
- Choose a date and time for the event.** Give yourself two or three months to plan and market your event. We suggest planning for at least 1.5 or 2 hours for the actual club meeting.
- Book a space to have the book club.** Depending on your community's feelings toward abortion, you may want to wait to share this location with the book club members till the day before the event. If you're having trouble finding an affordable venue, try your public library.
- Market to your community.** The best strategies will differ by area, age, size of community etc. See the Marketing Strategies section for more advice.
- Create a google doc for interested parties to fill out.** This should gather things like names, contact info, pronouns, and share your conduct agreement (see below for advice on this agreement). If applicable, you should also ask if they need a book provided and how much they can pay for the book (sliding scale \$0 - \$24.95)
- Order your books from SYA.** Determine qty and how much they can pay on the sliding scale. Coordinate with bookclub@shoutyourabortion.com to provide shipping name/address/phone/notes, and let us know how/when you anticipate paying.
- Distribute your books.** Some people arrange a pick-up location like a cafe; a professor; a

bookstore, others have a pre-club event/happy hour to distribute the books.

Collect payment. (if you have an event to distribute books you can ask folks to contribute there, then send the \$ to SYA. Otherwise you can collect \$\$ at the book club event, and send it to SYA afterwards.

Get snacks! Everyone loves an event with snacks. <3

Send out reminder emails to all participants the day of the event.

Follow up with SYA. Follow up could include:

[Debriefing](#) with us on any notes/feedback.

[Sending](#) quotes/pictures for social media (get your participant's permission)

[Sending](#) a photo of your sign-up list if you have one.

PLANNING

Finding like-minded people who are excited to partake in your event is one of the most important parts of planning a successful book club, and also one of the most potentially challenging. You know your community best, so the strategies that you settle on for spreading the word are entirely up to you. Below are some suggestions for how to spread the word and get more participants.

IRL. One of the most effective ways to get participants is by speaking with people in person. If you are on a college campus, go speak at student group meetings. Create a 2-5-minute pitch for the book club and try to reach as many groups as you feel would be interested in this event. If you are a community organization or business, talk to as many people in person as you are able to access. This may involve talking to people who come into your bookstore, or at one of your organization's meetings.

Email. Emails can be a great initial strategy for reaching out to a large group of people at once. Make your emails clear and visually centered. Use images of the book club! We are happy to send some your way! Be clear about what the book club is and expectations for the event. Include a google form in your email to organize those who are interested.

Be sure to include in the form all of the information you put in the email, some images, and clear expectations for the group (see the conduct agreement for specifics). The most important part here is that people understand from the start that these events are intended to be safe spaces and are not a time or place for debate. Once you have your book club group solidified, send out reminder emails every few days leading up to the event.



OTHER MARKETING TIPS

Write down why the book club and this movement is important to you.

What is it about storytelling and about communally reading and discussing a book that speaks to you? This will help with formal pitches and also with informal mentions of the event.

Be consistent and diligent. Don't feel bad about sending out multiple emails or about pushing people who said they were interested to fill out the form. Oftentimes people don't respond to your first email

because they are busy, not because of a lack of interest.

If you end up with fewer participants than you had hoped, that is totally okay! The people that do sign up for your event care and are enthusiastic to discuss abortion stories. There is no minimum or maximum number of people for a great book club. Market to and for the applicable level.

PLANNING BEYOND MARKETING

Give yourself three or more months to plan the entirety of the book club. We suggest that you also allow two or more weeks for people to read the book. Some people may read the book all in one sitting, while others will need more time to read and process the information. Allow enough time so that no one feels rushed or pressured to finish the book.

As the event organizer, you may want to read the book more than once if you are able to. You may want to read the book once just for yourself, and then a second time to note particular stories and potential discussion questions.

CONDUCT AGREEMENT

It is important that everyone is on the same page before entering your event space. Make the expectations for your book club very clear. Include these in the google form you send out in initial emails. When people are picking up the book, have them read and sign the conduct agreement provided on the SYA website (or create your own if you want!) so that they are reminded of the expectations. These expectations may seem obvious to some or all of your participants. However, it is important to state everything you hope and expect for your event so there is zero confusion.



STRUCTURE

How do you want to structure your book club? Do you want to have a free-flowing conversation? Maybe you'd like to break up into smaller groups? We suggest that you keep the discussion groups to 20 people or less. However, you may also want to break it up into even smaller groups – it is completely up to you and your community! You can also play it by ear the day of the event, but it doesn't hurt to have a backup plan.

If there is a lull in the conversation, don't stress. Try to wait and sit with the silence for 30 seconds. People may just be thinking or processing and aren't ready to share right away. However, if you feel the current discussion has ended don't be afraid to pose another question to keep the conversation flowing.

FACILITATING

Abortion can be an emotionally charged topic. Once you have finally reached your event and the conversation is flowing, it can go anywhere. You won't be able to predict this, but a little forethought will be helpful. You can also look at the reading guide to find sample discussion questions.

We suggest beginning the event by introducing yourself, sharing why you are doing the event, why it matters to you, and sharing your pronouns. Invite everyone present to do the same.

Following introductions, say a little something about how the event will proceed. Let people know what your plan is; whether you decide to allow the conversation to flow organically, or if you will pose discussion questions every few minutes, etc.

If you can, make pronoun buttons or nametags before the event that people can pick up when they walk in. Most likely not everyone in the room will know each other. You may find that it takes a little bit for people to feel comfortable enough to speak up and keep conversation going. You can help by posing the first couple of questions. Try starting with a question like, what story spoke to you the most and why?

FOLLOW UP

How you decide to follow up or continue involvement after your event is entirely up to you. If you would like to continue discussions or involvement with your book club members, send us a follow up email with all the participants a few days after the event. Be sure to include a thank you to everyone who showed up. Additionally, if there were any books, organizations, or other things mentioned during the event that you feel are of note, include those names!

You may also want to include local abortion or reproductive resources for your participants. If you need help compiling a list like this-feel free to send us an email and we would be happy to help. Send a list of people who want to stay engaged with SYA to us! We can add them to the email list for future opportunities, updates, and projects.

FINALLY...

Thank you!

