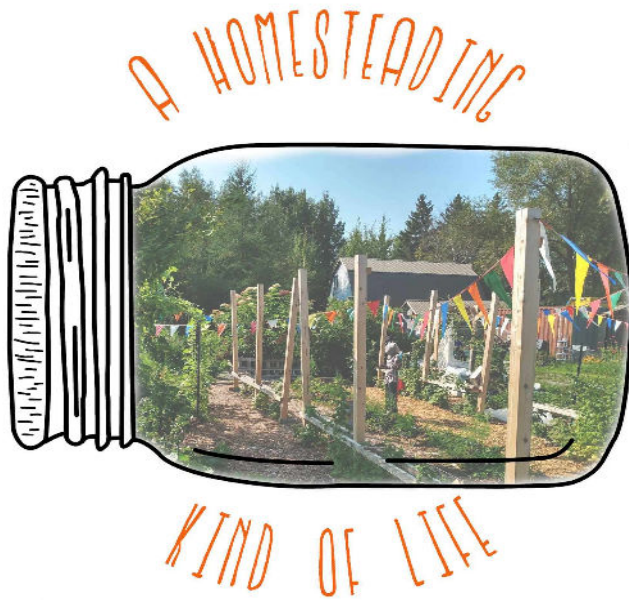


Kitchen Table Gatherings

A Free Informational Booklet

How to launch your own book club to build community

By Sandy Jeronimo



A Homesteading Kind of Life

[Facebook Group](#)



www.ahomesteadingkindoflife.com

Take the next step in building community. A book club launch is a great way to start community because you are literally on the same page.



A Message From Sandy

Thank you for downloading [Kitchen Table Gatherings - A Free Informational Booklet - How to launch your own book club to build community.](#)

My name is Sandy and I facilitate a Facebook group called: [A Homesteading Kind of Life](#). I started this as a chronicle of homesteading activities that interested me with a desire to share with like minded people. Recently I launched the website: [A Homesteading Kind of Life](#) in an effort to reach a broader audience and inspire others to build community.



What Got Me Started: I was reading a popular homesteading book which had a chapter designated to building community. One of the suggestions was to run a book club; an ideal first step because everyone is literally on the same page. I posted an invitation to my contacts on my social media with the basic information of the book and just "put it out there". Almost immediately I got a very positive response and people purchased the book and signed up. I created a separate social media group and community chat specifically for this book club. Then I set off to familiarize myself with the content of the book, creating an outline and agenda for our meetings. Although I cannot share specifics with respect to a book's content due to copyright, I can share my general practices and suggestions.

Please feel free to visit my website for the list of books I have covered in the past and for our upcoming book club announcement.

WEBSITE: <http://www.ahomesteadingkindoflife.com/>

FACEBOOK GROUP: [A Homesteading Kind of Life](#)

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Let's Get Started!

Select a Book

I like to work with NON-FICTION books which tend to lend themselves to skill building, skills based recipes, hands on tasks and do-it-yourself projects. I also like to support authors who create online content which I have had the benefit of accessing for free through their blogs, YouTube content and email subscriptions. Purchasing one of their published texts is a great way to support your favourite online creators.

As the host, you will be assuming a leadership role and you will need to be able to facilitate questions about the book's content, offer suggestions and possibly additional resources to support your participants. Select a book that you are already familiar with, this will make your planning and the scheduling of events a bit easier for you.

If you are selecting a new text, You may want to consider having the book a few months in advance so that you can take notes, sketch out an outline and most importantly test a few of the recipes, tasks or skills and give yourself ample time to collect materials in preparation for an in-person Kitchen Table Gathering.

On Your Own - Prior to launching your book club

You must be familiar with the content of your selected book in order for you to create a book club agenda. You'll want your agenda to explicitly communicate dates, times and the regularity of meetings (once a month, bi-weekly, final celebration of community), meeting topics (chapter name and page numbers, identify selected projects, recipes.....) and format in person and/or virtual (provide a link).

If you select a tasks, projects or recipes - You need to decide if you want to make these in community at the meeting or try them in advance to discuss the process and share tips, tricks and have general discussion prompts.

Having some discussion prompts posted in advance may be helpful during the meeting

- What did you like? What did you dislike? (content, graphics, format, layout)
- Did you find the layout or special text features helpful? Why?
- Was information easy to find? (Index, table of contents)
- What challenges did you encounter? How would you do it differently next time?
- What did you find surprising?

Structure and Schedule

Begin to think about the structure and schedule of meetings, virtual and/or in-person gatherings.

Look at the table of contents and create the overall agenda for the entirety of the book club. I find that 2-3 months is the perfect length of time. However, your selected text will dictate how you roll out your meetings and what you are able to cover at during the individual meeting agendas. You may want to group a few chapters and topics at a time.

Prior to your first meeting, survey your participants in the selection of the best date and time to meet. This allows you to book your first meeting date. The rest of the dates can be sketched out or negotiated meeting to meeting as participants navigate the book.

I do not necessarily follow the sequential/consecutive chapters of NON-FICTION texts. This is where you need to give thought to your seasonal living and corresponding skills for the time of year. You need to consider the availability of materials, produce, routines and roles at different times of the year.

Basic Structure

Introduction of Members – usually done on the first meeting but be prepared if you permit new members

Introduction to text (Book Walk)

Discussion

Summary

Next Meeting Brief overview - book a day/time and a host (location or a member host to run the next meeting)

Introducing and Launching an Invitation

Use your social media, existing community groups you already belong to and even the local public library to ask friends, contacts and members of these groups if they are interested in being part of hands on type of book club. I always describe my book clubs as a very hands on; mash-up of a make-and-take, craft-club, meets book club, grassroots, kitchen table gathering. My events are inclusive gatherings which foster community and the notion of "bring what you can and take what you need"

I tend to purchase my books in the summer and go over and prepare materials in July and August. My favourite time to send out an invitation to my book club is in late October or November. This allows interested participants to request the book as a gift for the upcoming holiday season and maybe even take advantage of a sale during the time of the year when retailers are providing discounts and promotions. I like to run the book club during the winter months, for example January through to March is my ideal time.

Something to consider: having a firm deadline for the initial sign up. I find this to be helpful to maintain the momentum of meetings and progress of the group. However, I have had people join in once the book club is established. You will want to monitor if it feels appropriate or if it will be disruptive to the community you have already created. In my experience it has worked out at times and other times late joiners, though well intended, were generally unreliable for various reasons (getting book late, missing foundational meetings).

Meeting One-Book Walk – Talk

The purpose of the first meeting is to do a book walk to introduce the book. The first meeting can be in-person and/or online. An in person gathering allows for more of a social aspect. I have found that my online participants tend to lose their commitment to the group more than in-person participants. However, online incentives appear to help maintain interest and engagement. During your first meeting please take time to introduce yourself in addition to doing a skim and scan of the text, highlight specific interesting layout and format details, review the outline for the whole duration of the book club and introduce your proposed schedule and agenda.

The first meeting is also an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and it also allows you to survey your participants to gain some insight on their interests, areas of focus and their skill sets. Although you're the official host of the book club, inviting members to be responsible for a meeting, a chapter or a project is often a great strategy to alleviate some of your responsibilities as a host. Allowing your participants to volunteer to take ownership of the content within a chapter/section, host an event, sign up for the snacks and coffee or lead a project enables everyone to experience a chance to contribute in a way they are comfortable. I recommend that you as the official host lead the first two meetings. This will allow you to role model and establish the tone, norms and pace for the remainder of your meetings.

Communication – Motivation – Accountability

I used a Social Media private group and community group chats to allow book club members to post their questions, post pictures of tasks they completed and to send reminders, prompts and check-in to monitor and elicit participation.

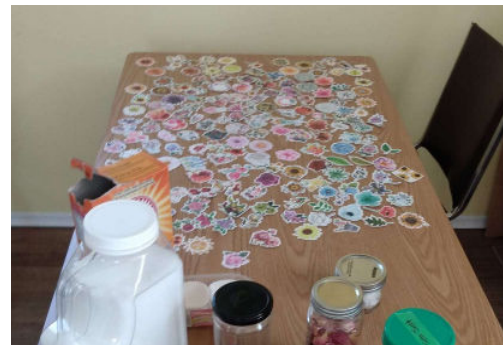
Additional – Incentives, Prizes and Freebies

Adding an element of fun and accountability

I usually have contests, games and prizes for participation – I find little items or make items that I can easily mail to my participants.

Suggested Prizes

- a book mark
- a sealed tea bag
- motivational or inspirational quotes on cards
- stationary
- vinyl stickers
- seed packets



Accountability

Here are some suggestions to help your participants stay on task and remain accountable. Remember to include dates and the page number(s) from the book. You can create a digital post, a printed takeaway or mailer postcard.

- Create a **Bucket List** of tasks from the book
- Create A **Bingo Card** – Select tasks from the book and offer prizes to participants who finish a single row, four corners, a whole card
- Have a **pop up contest** – Post a picture and the pictures with the most likes get a prize
- Have a **random name picker** wheel at an event or to celebrate the halfway point of your book club. There are several online virtual name pickers where you can enter participants names.
- Offer to host a **group order** from a favourite local or online retailer– Support the companies that have given you promotional materials, discount codes and resources. I have ordered vanilla beans, seeds, general pantry items in bulk to help share the cost of shipping.

Freebies – Who doesn't like a freebie?

I have contacted different companies and explained my Kitchen Table Gatherings Concept. I often ask for samples, catalogs and even discount codes. You will be surprised that most companies will accommodate you and are willing to offer your group something. Remember to publicly thank the company, document and tag them in your social media. Encourage book club participants to do the same.

Freebies I have been able to request:

- Printed Seed catalogs
- Online discount codes and physical coupons
- Flyers and promotional materials for local and online businesses/entrepreneurs
- Free seed packets
- Materials in return for a promotional social media posts and tags, word of mouth promotion and/or handing out promotional materials like a post card or a flyer from the business
Some FREE materials I have been able to acquire include; sprouting seeds, coupons, triple mix, seeds, plants and recipe cards.
- A Guest appearance at one of the meetings – find someone who is an expert in a topic or skill and have them share and promote themselves (online or in-person)
- Off site meeting - A tour of someone's vegetable or medicinal garden, a local attraction, join another organization like attending a local horticultural club meeting, historical society meeting, arts and culture club meeting or event
- FREE SHIPPING – host a group order and together with all the small purchases you can qualify for free shipping. I have done this for ingredients like organic bulk pantry items and vanilla beans.
- Ask your participants to who are business owner or entrepreneurs to promote their businesses and offer any of the above to the participants

You may want to consider having some freebies at your last meeting as a motivator for participants to attend.

Host a Swap – Reuse, Recycle Re-purpose, Rethink - Celebrate

Invite participants to contribute and trade. Align your swap to your topic/skill.

- extra plant starts or seeds – seed starting skills event
- household items and clothes – de-clutter event
- crafting items – we did a make a take – Winter Crafts
- Cookie Exchange – just for fun and a seasonal gathering
- Friends Basket – we each created a homemade gift and made one for each participant. If you will be mailing to participants consider making flat items that are easy to mail.

I have mailed items to my online participants. I used my vacuum sealer to make mailing contents easier. Make sure that what you are mailing across borders is permitted.



Celebration – It's a Wrap

The final, meeting should be a joyous occasion to celebrate a culmination of skills which consolidates a feeling of accomplishment and confidence.

I often like to celebrate with a Kitchen Table Gathering where we make and take items home. This a great time to have members contribute handmade items to a friends basket which is assembled at the last meeting. A gift exchange where you draw names is another option.

Participants can also make something in community and either contribute materials enabling us to have a free event or I charge a fee to cover the cost of materials, handouts or rental space costs.

- Make fire cider (fall – outside if possible) or Elderberry Syrup
- Beauty and Bath Products
- Homesteading skills – sprouting, winter sowing, sauerkraut, canning jam, sourdough...
- Create a seasonal craft or home decor
- Bring a donation for the local Food Bank and have a potluck
- Do an outdoor activity – cookout, forage or a campfire
- Room spray or Yoga Mat Spray



The final meeting is often well attended especially if there are takeaways that you create together or that have been donated from local business.

Please consider this your invitation to assume leadership in your own local community. Throw a social event together with your entrusted friends and family and enjoy each other's company. If you want to see more of my ongoing chronicle, I would love to see you join my [Facebook Group](#) or visit my website: www.ahomesteadingkindoflife.com

Best of luck,

Sandy

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