
Start a Kids' Book Club



by Rose Garrett

For many kids, the notion of a parent/child book club could spell more flipping out than flipping through pages cover to cover. But kids' book clubs are springing up left and right, and book clubs are quickly evolving to fit every kind of kid, from the novel novice to the seasoned skimmer. These clubs provide a comfortable, communal atmosphere that promotes reading, critical thinking, and expressing ideas. The best part? Parents will get an extra-special glimpse of how and what their kid is *really* thinking about the world.

Starting a book club can be a breeze, but only if you take the right approach from the beginning. “Don't try to make the book club something it's not” advise Judy Gelman and Vicki Levy Krupp, co-authors of the comprehensive *The Kids' Book Club Book* (Tarcher, 2007). “We had parents telling us that at the beginning of the groups, they had an agenda. Some of these groups ended up not being so successful because the kids had a different agenda.” If this sounds familiar, you know that compromise is key. To create a common ground, make sure that you tailor the book club to all its members, not just the expectations of the adults. That way, kids will feel like the club belongs to them, and is not just a parent-mandated chore.

After you've established the group's goals, it's time to start reading! Both parents and kids can browse for books, but Judy and Vicki recommend that you preview all books for the group's approval before diving in. The *Kids' Book Club Book* authors also recommend that you choose books that can generate a lot of interest, like a book with a popular movie version, or a series of books that will hook them for months. Be

sure not to forget the reading level of the group, and take the time to find out what they'll be reading in school, so that you can be aware of the issues they're discussing, as well as avoid overlap.

“Make book clubs as unschool-like as possible,” advises Vicki. “Adding food and time to socialize and do an activity is really helpful in making it fun.” The biggest obstacle? “Scheduling. Simple and straightforward, kids are busy.” To avoid scheduling headaches, sit down with a school calendar and make note of important school events. Set the club meeting dates early, or bring calendars to each meeting and schedule as you go along.

If done right, a kid/parent book club will give kids a life-long love of reading they won't associated with the stress of school. A book club will also give kids confidence in their opinions, broaden their (and your!) social circles, allow parents and kids to reflect on serious or sensitive topics without feeling self-conscious, and help parents get a window into the daily lives and experiences of their kids. Plus, you'll have an excuse to revisit old childhood favorites and enjoy the best children's books of today – if your kid can get his nose out of your only copy!

For more information, as well as reading recommendations, fun recipes, and more tips for your book club, visit www.kidsbookclubbook.com.

Recommended Books:



[The Kids' Book Club Book](#)

Judy Gelman, Vicki...



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