

---

# CIRCLE KICKOFF KIT

---

FOR MEMBERS

---

## Introduction

Welcome to your first Circle! The Kickoff Meeting is about getting to know each other. It serves as an opportunity for members to start creating connections and building relationships. Given it's your first meeting, it's also a time to discuss how your Circle will work, identify shared goals and plan your next few meetings.

## What's Inside

- **Setting the Stage**.....Page 3  
An introduction to the resources referenced in this Kickoff Kit
- **Prepare for Kickoff**.....Page 4  
A short worksheet to complete before getting together
- **Kickoff Guide**.....Page 6  
A step-by-step guide to your first Circle meeting

## What to do with these docs

- Read **Setting the Stage** to ensure you understand the resources available for your Circle.
- Complete **Prepare for Kickoff** before your meeting.
- Review the **Kickoff Guide** for a sneak peek of your first meeting; your moderator(s) will handle bringing printouts for everyone.

# Setting The Stage

---

**GOAL:** Make sure you are aware of all the resources we offer for your Circle

---

We provide two platforms with access to everything you need for your Circle: our Circle Hub and Mightybell. Given that you're looking at this Kit, you've likely already been introduced to one of these platforms! Your Circle's manager should determine which tool works best for your Circle and then invite you to join if they haven't already done so. They may choose to use just one tool or they may decide to use both. Either way, we want to ensure that you are familiar with both tools before you get started since we will reference them repeatedly in this Kit.

## Circle Hub

Think of the Circle Hub as a one-stop destination for all things Circles. Here you'll find downloadable Circle Kits, our most popular education videos, and links to daily inspiration and articles. You'll also be able to read first-person testimonials from Circles around the globe, interviews with moderators, tips for your Circle, as well as monthly advice from our team of experts.

If your Circle is using the Circle Hub, your Circle manager will send you an invitation to join. If they haven't already done so, you should remind them now. Alternatively, you can register for the Circle Hub yourself at [leanin.org/circles](https://leanin.org/circles). (Note: If you register yourself it will be as if you are setting up a new Circle, but you'll have access to all the same materials). Once you have registered, be sure to bookmark [leanin.org/my-circle](https://leanin.org/my-circle).

## Mightybell

Mightybell is an optional technology platform for Circles with features and functionality that make it easy to stay organized and connected. Using Mightybell, you can access materials like Circle Kits and expert lectures. You can also chat with your other Circle members. Mightybell also powers what we call "Circle Matching", which enables you to search for new members to join your Circle. For more information on Mightybell, visit <https://mightybell.com/communities/lean-in>.

If your Circle is using Mightybell, your Circle manager will send you an invitation to join. If they haven't already done so, you should remind them now.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

Think of the contents of this kit and the resources outlined above as a recipe that your Circle manager, facilitator, and fellow members should customize for your Circle. If there are ingredients you don't like, remove them. If you think something is missing, go ahead and add it. Every Circle is different will try new things. If you find an approach worth sharing, we'd love to hear about it at [circles@leanin.org](mailto:circles@leanin.org).

# Prepare for Kickoff Worksheet

---

**GOAL:** Identify your Circle goals and outline your Lean In Story. You'll share both of these during your Kickoff Meeting.

---

## Identifying Your Personal Goals

Our hope is that by participating in a Circle, you'll gain the encouragement and know-how to pursue your goals with gusto. This leads to the question: What exactly are your goals? Or put another way, what are you hoping to get out of your Circle?

### ACTION

Take a few moments to think through your goals in advance of the Kickoff Meeting and write them down. Don't worry if you're not quite sure what your goals are. That's the point of joining a Lean In Circle! Just share a few ideas to get started.

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_

A few common goals to jumpstart your own thinking:

- + Find a good work life/balance
- + Take more professional risks
- + Develop a good network of female supporters

## Sharing Your Lean In Story

Sharing personal stories is an important part of Lean In. Good stories can inspire, teach and connect us. To get to know each other, plan to share a short Lean In Story during your Kickoff Meeting.

A Lean In Story captures a moment in your career or life when you chose to "lean in" or "lean back." When you lean in, you push through a challenge and go down a path with an uncertain outcome—you believe in yourself and take a risk. When you lean back, you choose to stay in a known or comfortable situation—you play it safe. We all lean in and lean back at different times, and can learn from both types of stories.

---

Visit [leanin.org/stories](http://leanin.org/stories) to read the stories of other Lean In community members; you can also add your own.

---

## ACTION

Outline your Lean In Story using the prompts below as a guide.

- **Describe a moment you could choose to lean in or lean back. What was the situation?**

I'll never forget when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Explain the decision you made—and why you made it.**

I decided to lean in (lean back) because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Describe what action you took and how the situation played out.**

I (action) and here's what happened \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- **Explain how the experience impacted you personally and professionally. How did your life change?**

After leaning in (leaning back) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Congratulations, you're ready for your Circle's Kickoff Meeting!

Just remember to bring this worksheet to help you participate in the conversation. Your moderator(s)/host(s) will take care of the rest.

# Kickoff Guide

---

## GOALS:

There are several goals for this first meeting:

- 1 Learn more about Lean In and how Circles work
- 2 Get to know each other better
- 3 Establish shared goals for your Circle
- 4 Agree on how you'll run your Circle

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

---

## Meeting Agenda

<b>Check In</b> Host welcomes everyone and general greetings	<b>5 Minutes</b>
<b>Part 1: Getting to Know Each Other &amp; Lean In</b>	
<b>Member Introductions</b> Everyone shares a little about themselves	<b>15 Minutes</b>
<b>Introduction to Lean In</b> Watch our "Welcome" video and share your Lean In Stories	<b>30 Minutes</b>
<b>Circle Orientation</b> Learn how Circles work and what you'll cover in monthly meetings	<b>10 Minutes</b>
<b>Break</b>	<b>5 Minutes</b>
<b>Part 2: Setting up Your Circle</b>	
<b>Agree on Your Circle's Goals</b> Share your personal goals and identify common goals for your Circle	<b>25 Minutes</b>
<b>Agree on Circle Fundamentals</b> Review and commit to recommended Circle guidelines and schedule of Education topics	<b>20 Minutes</b>
<b>Schedule Your Meetings</b> Determine times, dates and locations for upcoming meetings	<b>10 Minutes</b>

## PART 1: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER & LEAN IN

### Member Introduction

**TIME RECOMMENDATION:** 15 minutes (1 minute each for members; 2 minutes each for moderators)

This Kickoff Meeting serves as an opportunity for members to get to know each other and start building the trust and openness necessary for a Circle's success.

#### ACTION

Take a moment to introduce yourself to the group—for example, share what you do, where you live and three facts about yourself. (As a note: Your Circle Manager and Circle Facilitator—who serve as co-moderators of the group—should introduce themselves first and briefly explain their roles.)

Fact 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Fact 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Fact 3: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction to Lean In

**TIME RECOMMENDATION:** 30 minutes (2 minutes for the welcome video; 2 minutes each for members and moderators)

Lean In is creating a community to encourage and support women leaning in to their ambitions. If we talk openly about gender issues and work together to tackle them, we believe we can change the trajectory of women and create a better world for all of us. Lean In Circles play a critical role in achieving this vision.

#### ACTION

Watch a two-minute welcome video from Lean In ([leanin.org/welcomevideo](http://leanin.org/welcomevideo)). Then go around the room and share your personal Lean In Stories from the **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet.

You should already have a Lean In Story ready to share, but if you didn't have a chance to complete the worksheet, follow these prompts:

- **Describe a moment you could choose to “lean in” or “lean back.” What was the situation?**

I'll never forget when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- **Explain the decision you made—and why you made it.**

I decided to lean in (lean back) because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Describe what action you took and how the situation played out.

I [action] and here's what happened \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Explain how the experience impacted you personally and professionally. How did your life change?

After leaning in (leaning back) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When you finish sharing your story, take a moment and tell the group why you're leaning in with them:

I'm Leaning In because \_\_\_\_\_

## Circle Orientation

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 minutes

### ACTION

Talk through how Circles work as a group. Your moderator(s) will have more information to shape this discussion and can likely answer your questions.

A Lean In Circle is a group of 10 to 12 peers who meet monthly to explore professional topics and exchange personal experiences in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust. Our goal is that every time a Circle meets, members are learning together or from each other — many times, both will be true. Monthly Circle meetings reflect these dual priorities, alternating between what we call Education and Exploration meetings.

**Education Meetings** are focused on learning new skills. Before each Education Meeting, members watch a short online video on a topic developed by Stanford University's Clayman Institute for Gender Research and a broad range of subject matter experts. Then during the Circle meeting, the group explores the topic more deeply and runs through how-to exercises together. Lean In provides the video and Discussion Guide, and you bring your personal insights and experiences.

**Exploration Meetings** are designed so members can share real-life opportunities and challenges with each other, and ultimately learn from each other's diverse experiences. Typically, two members present their situation; then the rest of the group shares their own insights and related experiences. Lean In provides everything you need to run an Exploration Meeting.

We encourage Circles to meet 10 times a year. If you follow our recommended agendas, each meeting will run about two hours, keep in mind that these are just our recommendations. We encourage you to do whatever works best for your Circle.

---

For answers to common questions, please visit the Circle Hub at [leanin.org/my-circle](http://leanin.org/my-circle). You can also email your questions to us at [circles@leanin.org](mailto:circles@leanin.org).

---

---

## Break

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 5 minutes

## PART 2: SETTING UP YOUR CIRCLE

### Agree on Your Circle's Goals

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 25 minutes

#### ACTION

Go around the room and share your list of three personal goals (refer to the **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet you filled out before the meeting). Write down the common goals and interests you hear, and vote to choose the top three for your circle.

**Votes**

**Goal**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

---

## Agree on Circle Fundamentals

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 20 minutes

### STEP 1: COMMIT TO GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING YOUR CIRCLE

Circles will develop their own personalities over time, but research shows that all successful peer groups rely on the principles of confidentiality, personal commitment and good group communication.

#### ACTION

As a group review our suggested guidelines for confidentiality, commitment and communication.

##### 1. Confidentiality

- The goal of a Lean In Circle is to create a safe environment to learn and grow together. Confidentiality and trust are critical to the success of Lean In Circles. It's important that anything shared by members isn't discussed outside the Circle. If it helps, think of the three Ns: Nothing, No one, Never.

*However, feel free to share your own experiences and learnings with family and friends.*

**WE COMMIT** \_\_\_\_\_

##### 2. Personal Commitment

- Groups are only as strong as their weakest link. The more you participate, the more you'll get out of your Circle. We encourage Circles to meet 10 times a year and members to remain active for a year—and we hope longer!

**WE COMMIT** \_\_\_\_\_

##### 3. Good Group Communication

- Push yourself to share openly and to help others do the same. Everyone benefits from stretching outside comfort zones.
- Listen beyond the words to hear the feelings. It is important to listen in order to understand rather than listen to respond as we often do in our daily lives.
- Accept Circle members and topical discussions without judgment.
- Ask thought-provoking questions to help the member see their situation from a different angle. But avoid embedding advice in the form of a question (e.g., "Have you ever considered...?").
- Share experiences, not opinions or advice. Use "I" statements and speak only for yourself. Be specific and brief. Avoid "you should..."
- No cell phones, text messages or distractions during Circle meetings.

**WE COMMIT** \_\_\_\_\_

## STEP 2: ALIGN ON AN EDUCATION SCHEDULE

We recommend you discuss your education goals for the year. Keep in mind that you will alternate between Education Meetings and Exploration meetings going forward, so you will likely have about five Education Meetings this year.

### ACTION

We recommend you begin with these three topics, but there's really no right or wrong way to get started. Explore all of the topics at [leanin.org/education](http://leanin.org/education) and pick the topics that are interesting to your Circle. Try writing down the ones you're most interested in below, but know that you can change your plan as you go!

#### Power & Influence

There's a body language of power. Find out how to use it to increase your influence.

*Deborah H. Gruenfeld, Professor of Leadership & Organizational Behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Co-director of the Executive Program for Women Leaders*

#### Difficult Conversations

Learn how to achieve shared goals while remaining true to yourself, even when the stakes are high.

*Fred Kofman, Professor of Leadership at Francisco Marroquin University in Guatemala, Director of the Conscious Business Center*

#### Creating a Level Playing Field

Develop workplaces that tap everyone's talents and best work.

*Shelley Correll, Director of the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Professor of Sociology at Stanford University*

#### Our first five education meetings will be:

Education Meeting #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Meeting #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Meeting #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Meeting #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Meeting #5: \_\_\_\_\_

**WE AGREE** \_\_\_\_\_

## Schedule Your Meetings

Circles run smoothly when they're well organized. Establishing the basic who, what, where and when for your Circle is an important step in this process.

### ACTION

As a group, fill out the following information. Although things may end up changing, we suggest you plan out your next few meetings.

	MEETING TYPE	DATE	TIME	HOST	EDUCATION TOPIC (WHEN APPLICABLE)
1	Kickoff				
2	Education				
3	Exploration				
4	Education				
5	Exploration				
6	Education				
7	Exploration				
8	Education				
9	Exploration				
10	Education				

---

## And you're done! Congratulations, you've accomplished a lot today.

Next month will be your first Education Meeting. In advance, make sure you watch the expert lecture your group has chosen. You can find the videos at [leanin.org/education](http://leanin.org/education) or in your Mightybell Circle.

We also recommend you read the **Circle Education Kit** for members available in the Circle Hub at [leanin.org/my-circle](http://leanin.org/my-circle) for an overview of how Education Meetings work and what to expect. Mightybell users can find the Circle Education Kit in a post titled "Education Meeting".