
CIRCLE KICKOFF KIT

FOR MODERATORS

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.

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What to do with these docs

- Read **Setting the Stage** to ensure you understand the resources available for your Circle.
- Review **Moderator & Meeting Basics** to make sure you understand your role.
- Use the **Kickoff Checklist** as a tool to stay organized.
- Complete **Prepare for Kickoff** before your meeting (all members do this).
- Spend time reviewing the **Kickoff Guide** before the meeting. You should also bring copies of the member version of the same document to the meeting; you'll find it on page 5 of the PDF titled **Circle Kickoff Kit** for Members.
- If you're the Circle Manager, bring a printout of **Circle Fundamentals** and be prepared to fill it out during the meeting.

Setting The Stage

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

CIRCLE MANAGER

You should determine which of these tools will work best for your Circle. You may decide to use just one tool or to use both. You are responsible for registering your Circle for the tool(s) you choose and then inviting other members to join.

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.

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you decide to use the Circle Hub, you should register at leanin.org/circles and then invite other members using the invitation link on the right of your My Circle page in the Circle Hub. Once you have registered, be sure to bookmark leanin.org/my-circle and remind your members to do the same!

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 and schedule upcoming meetings. 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>.

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you decide to use Mightybell, you should visit <https://mightybell.com/communities/lean-in> and click "Create a Circle" in the top right. Once you have created your Mightybell Circle, invite other members to join. Be sure to bookmark your Mightybell Circle and remind your members to do the same!

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you've already registered with the Circle Hub, you can upgrade your Circle to Mightybell. You'll still get access to the content on the Circle Hub, but now you'll also be able to use the added functionality that only Mightybell offers - like live chat and scheduling meetings. To upgrade, just visit your My Circle page in the Circle Hub and click on the "Upgrade to Mightybell" button on the right. Don't forget to invite your other Circle members to your new Mightybell Circle!

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.

Moderator & Meeting Basics

GOAL: Make sure you and your Circle are ready.

We recommend two members serve as co-moderators and divide up responsibilities as follows:

Note: The rest of this document outlines specific how-to's and tips assuming there is a Circle Manager and Circle Facilitator.

The **Circle Manager** focuses on the operations of the Circle and handles:

- Choosing which platform the Circle uses (the Circle Hub and/or Mightybell, see previous page for details), setting it up and inviting members to join
- Scheduling meetings
- Timekeeping during meetings
- Managing the Topic Lot and shaping the agenda of meetings

The **Circle Facilitator** focuses on guiding discussions and handles:

- Guiding in-meeting discussions
- Helping members prepare for Personal Explorations
- Making sure everyone respects the Communication Guidelines (outlined later in this document)

ACTION

Decide how you're dividing up the shared moderator role.

For an introduction to the Topic Lot and Personal Explorations, consult the **Circle Exploration Kit** for Moderators available in the Circle Hub at leanin.org/my-circle. Mightybell users can find this Exploration Kit in your Mightybell Circle in a post titled "Exploration Meeting".

ACTION

Quickly run through the following action items, and make sure you're all set:

- _____ Invited 8 to 10 peers to participate in the group (at similar stages in their careers and lives) for a total of 10 to 12 members including you and your co-moderator.
- _____ Arranged a meeting time and place and other details that make sense for your group.

Kickoff Checklist

We've created the following checklist to help you keep track of everything you'll need to do before and during your Kickoff Meeting.

Both the Manager and Facilitator will want to take time before the Kickoff to:

- _____ Read through all the materials in this packet
- _____ Watch the videos and/or read the FAQs in the Circle Hub at leanin.org/my-circle

Circle Manager

You are responsible for overseeing meeting preparation and logistics, so you're mostly focused on what happens between meetings.

BEFORE THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

- _____ Set a date, time and location for your meeting
- _____ Remind everyone to bring a copy of their completed **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet
- _____ Print copies of the **Kickoff Guide** for Members (on page 5 of the **Circle Kickoff Kit** for Members)
- _____ Print two copies of the **Kickoff Guide** for Moderators, one for you and one for your co-moderator
- _____ Print a copy of the **Circle Fundamentals** worksheet to complete during the meeting
- _____ Bring a computer or tablet to play a two-minute "Welcome to Lean In" video
- _____ Make sure you have a device to keep track of time

You can access the "Welcome" video on at leanin.org/welcomevideo

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

- _____ Serve as timekeeper and flag timing concerns with the Circle Facilitator
- _____ Track the group's responses to activities on the **Circle Fundamentals** worksheet

Circle Facilitator

You are responsible for guiding discussions and making sure everyone in the Circle communicates openly and respectfully, so you're mostly focused on what happens in meetings.

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

- _____ Welcome everyone and begin member introductions
- _____ Encourage active participation
- _____ Try to make sure the group starts and ends on time

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.

ESTIMATED TIME: 20 minutes

CIRCLE MANAGER

We encourage Circle members (including you and your co-moderator) to complete this worksheet and bring it to your first meeting. This way, you'll be ready to participate. You may want to send out a reminder to everyone beforehand to complete theirs.

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 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.

CO-MODERATORS

Consult your **Kickoff Checklist** for everything you need to know to get ready for the meeting, such as bringing a device to play our “Welcome to Lean In” video on and printing out copies of the member version of the **Kickoff Guide**.

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

CO-MODERATORS

We've put together this document to make sure your first meeting goes off without a hitch. This guide is exactly the same as the member version, but includes callouts (like this one!) with information and tips to help you before and during the meeting. We recommend you read through this guide before the meeting to make sure you feel fully prepared and ready to roll.

The Kickoff Meeting sets the stage for your Circle's success and gives everyone a chance to get to know each other.

Suggested Meeting Agenda

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

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)

CO-MODERATORS

Get things started by introducing yourselves and your role in the Circle first. Remember:

The **Circle Manager** handles:

- Scheduling meetings
- Timekeeping during meetings
- Managing the Topic Lot and shaping the agenda of meetings (not relevant for the Kickoff but important)

The **Circle Facilitator** handles:

- Guiding in-meeting discussions
- Helping members prepare for Personal Stories (not relevant for the Kickoff but also important)
- Making sure everyone respects the Communication Guidelines

A NOTE ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY: The Circle discusses important confidentiality guidelines later in this meeting, outlined on page 14 of this document under **Commit to Confidentiality**. You can choose to discuss this now or just generally say everyone should respect each other's confidentiality given they're sharing personal information.

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). 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:

CIRCLE-FACILITATOR

If a member didn't prepare her story and doesn't feel comfortable telling it on the spot, politely offer to skip to the next person and suggest she shares hers at the next meeting.

- **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

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

We suggest you take the lead reading or summarizing the information covered in the meeting, including the basic ins and outs of Circles outlined below.

If you'd like more information, you can read through the Circle Kits available in the Circle Hub at leanin.org/my-circle. Mightybell users can find these kits in the collection titled "Meeting Types". You can also email circles@leanin.org if you're stumped on something.

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. You can also email your questions to us at circles@leanin.org.

Break

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 5 minutes

PART 2: SETTING UP YOUR CIRCLE

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

The rest of the agenda is designed to talk through all the large and small decisions you'll need to make as a group. This will help get everyone on the same page right as your Circle is beginning.

CIRCLE MANAGER

For the rest of the meeting, you should capture the group's responses on the **Circle Fundamentals** worksheet on page 17 of this document. At the end of the meeting, we recommend you use the worksheet to confirm everyone in your Circle is on the same page.

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 a clear commitment to confidentiality, good group communication and consistent participation.

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.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

Confidentiality is so fundamental because members aren't going to want to share real issues if they don't feel they can trust everyone in the Circle. We recommend you talk openly about its importance as a group and come up with a plan for dealing with a break in confidentiality now when it's not about a particular member or members.

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!

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

You may also want to encourage members to let your Circle Manager know if they're going to be late or miss a meeting, so the group doesn't lose any time waiting for them.

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.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

There is a reason why offering advice is discouraged during Circle meetings. Imagine you advised someone facing a difficult situation at work to leave her job to search for something better. What if she spent the next six months looking unsuccessfully? Advice may be well intentioned, but it’s usually not as helpful as our own experiences, and may break down trust over time.

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 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

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 minutes

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.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

Circle meetings are intended to alternate between Education and Exploration meetings, and our materials assume the second meeting is an Education Meeting.

	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				

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you've had ample time to fill out the Circle Fundamentals worksheet, we recommend you read it out loud so your Circle has a final opportunity to make sure everyone is on the same page. You also might want to send a copy of the Circle Fundamentals worksheet and of the Circle Schedule out after the meeting so members can use it as a reference.

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

Next month will be your first Education Meeting. 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 or in your Mightybell Circle.

We also recommend you read the **Circle Education Kit** for moderators available in the Circle Hub at 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".

CO-MODERATORS

Remember, your next meeting will be your Circle's first Education Meeting. To prepare, we recommend you take some time over the next few weeks to read the **Circle Education Kit** available in the Circle Hub at leanin.org/my-circle and in your Mightybell Circle. In both places, you'll also find a brief description of how Education Meetings work and what to expect.

CIRCLE MANAGER

It might help to send out a reminder to watch the expert video for the education topic your Circle has chosen a few days before the meeting. You can find the videos at leanin.org/education and in your Mightybell space. If someone arrives and hasn't watched the expert video, they'll miss out on most of the evening— like arriving at book club without opening the book!

Our Circle Fundamentals

Circle Manager: Print a copy of this worksheet and bring it to the meeting so you can capture the decisions your Circle makes during Part 2 of the Kickoff. After you've filled in all the sections, read it back to the group to make sure everyone agrees. You're officially a Lean In Circle!

Our Circle Fundamentals

We agree to the following goals, guidelines and schedule for our Circle. We'll use this document as a guidepost for how we interact with each other and operate as a group.

Our Circle's Shared Goals are:

Shared Goal #1: _____

Shared Goal #2: _____

Shared Goal #3: _____

Everyone in our Circle is committed to:

_____ Confidentiality

_____ Personal Commitment

_____ Good Group Communication

Our first five Education Meetings will be:

Education Meeting #1: _____

Education Meeting #2: _____

Education Meeting #3: _____

Education Meeting #4: _____

Education Meeting #5: _____

Our Circle Schedule

	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				