Welcome to Lean In Circles

Circles meet about once a month in small groups to support each other and learn new skills. They talk openly about their ambitions and encourage each other to take on new challenges.

To help you get started, we’ve created a short checklist for you below. For additional support, join our private Circle Leaders group on Facebook—it’s a great place to exchange ideas, share best practices and network with other Circle leaders.

Before your first meeting

1. Create your Circle
   
   Visit www.leanin.org/circles to start your own Circle.

2. Invite members
   
   An ideal Circle size is 8-12 members, but you can start small: Invite 2 or 3 friends and build from there. To get started, invite people who work with you, are in a similar life stage (e.g. recent grads, working moms, etc.), or in your industry.
   
   - Use our sample emails to invite people.
   - Decide how to stay in touch. You’ll need to communicate regularly, so choose a platform that works well for everyone. See the pros and cons of different platforms mentioned most frequently by Circle leaders.
3. **Schedule your first meeting**

Your Circle can meet anywhere—from your local coffee shop to your living room or office. Here are our tips on how to schedule your first meeting:

- **Consider what times and days of week are most convenient for everyone** in your Circle. Some of our most successful leaders recommend using Doodle, to find a time and place that works for everyone.

- **Send invites.** Create a Calendar invite or an event on Facebook, Eventbrite, or your platform of choice and invite the members of your Circle. This will remind everyone of the day and time and give you a sense of how many will attend.

4. **Prepare for your first meeting**

What happens in a Circle meeting? They usually start with an ice breaker and updates from the group, followed by a connection or skills based activity, and a personal “one action” that every member commits to. Use one of our Getting Started guides for your first meeting:

- **1-2-3 meeting guide:** a comprehensive meeting guide to help you ease into your first three meetings (one meeting, for two hours per month, for three months)

- **Connection Cards:** you might have specific topics that you want to discuss as a group—before you jump right in, we recommend using this guide to get to know one another better and build deep connections as a group

- **Kickoff meeting guide:** if you already know you have a very committed group, you can use this guide to dig deeper and set shared goals in your first meeting.
During your first meeting

1. Create a safe space where everyone can share
   Circle meetings are a place where everyone can be open and honest about their experiences, skills, and thoughts. That’s why it’s helpful to agree to some shared values at the start of every meeting—but particularly your first. Take a look at our core values (we call them Circle Fundamentals) for inspiration:

   - **Confidentiality**
     Trust is crucial. What happens in your Circle should stay in your Circle.

   - **Communication**
     Commit to share openly and honestly—and to listen with empathy.

   - **Commitment**
     Everyone should be invested in your Circle’s success and fully present at meetings.

2. Make a strong connection
   We’ve designed connection activities that will help your group build deep connections quickly. We often hear that Circles who used the activities shared things they’ve never shared before—even with their closest friends and family. Choose one of our connection activities for your first meeting.

3. Decide when to meet next
   Vote on a regular time and place to meet and ask everyone to make a commitment to attending the meetings.
After your first meeting

1. **Touch base with members**
   Successful Circle leaders recommend touching base with members frequently to strengthen bonds within the group. Here are a few tips on how to stay in touch:
   - **Continue the conversation.** For example, text a member to ask how their job interview went, or post articles to start discussions in your Facebook group (or the platform of your choice).
   - **Choose/confirm the topic for your next meeting.** Browse our all-in-one meeting guides for inspiration—they cover some of our most popular topics and include by-the-minute agendas for the moderator.

2. **Set goals for your Circle**
   If you haven’t done so already as part of the Kickoff Meeting Guide, spend some time at an upcoming Circle meeting setting goals for your Circle. Shared goals will help your Circle choose relevant topics for discussion, gauge the success of your meetings, and generally stay on track as a group. Check out our tips on how to set goals for your Circle.
3. **Decide on how you want to run your Circle**

Before you close your first meeting, spend a few minutes discussing how you want to run your Circle going forward, including:

- **Select one or more moderators** to manage your Circle and facilitate meetings. Being a moderator requires work, but we constantly hear from moderators that it’s deeply rewarding and it helps them build their leadership skills. We’ve seen Circles approach moderation in a few different ways:

  - A single moderator runs meetings for a set period of time.
  - One circle member plans meetings and another member facilitates meeting discussions.
  - Everyone takes turns running meetings.

4. **Join a Lean In Network**

Lean In Networks connect groups of Circles and individuals. Add your Circle to a network to learn from other leaders and connect with other Lean In members that are in your area or share your Circle’s interests.