



**capacity global**

living in a clean and healthy environment is everyone's right

## One Planet Culture DIY Discussion Group

So now you've finished reading the book. If you're thinking of doing something about the issues it raises – great! Making positive, sustainable changes in the way we live and work is what OPC is all about.

But more than that, we want to help you help others. Get your friends, family and local neighbourhood involved. Encourage them to read the same book, then talk about the issues and what you can do together as a group.

If you haven't held a discussion group event before, here are some tips on how to do it (adapted from About.com and eHow.com).

### How to get a discussion group together

1. **Get your group together.** It is much easier to start a group with two or three people who already have some connection. Ask around your workplace and local community to see if anyone is interested. Advertise in your circles of interest (school, work, play group) with fliers or announcements and encourage people to forward email invitations. There are also often places to post fliers at the library, local shops and cafes.
2. **Set a meeting place and time.** Some places to consider for your meeting are libraries, cafés, restaurants or someone's home. Send invitations to the group at least two weeks in advance and remind them again one day before the meeting. If your group will meet more than once, set a regular meeting time and date to avoid scheduling conflicts and to clarify the commitment required.
3. **Prepare for the meeting.** Ask the group to read in advance at least one chapter of the book. It's good if they have a few points or questions that they can ask or discuss with other members.
4. **Meet.** Invite all members to share their opinions regarding the book – the symbolism, the writer's approach, the imagery, the literary appeal, the environmental issues, etc. Share anything that you liked or disliked about the book to keep the conversation going.

Serve some proper refreshments. Food is not essential, but it does attract people and makes the meetings more fun.

5. **Now act!** After you've met to discuss the book and the issues, collectively decide on a course of action. Contact your local Every Action Counts Community Champion for assistance, or go online to find out what other people have done.

## How to lead a discussion

1. **Read the book.** This may seem obvious, but it is the most important step, so it is worth stating!
2. **Write down important page numbers.** If there are parts of the book that made an impact on you or that you think may prompt action, write down the page numbers so that you can access them easily while preparing and leading the discussion.
3. **Come up with eight to ten discussion questions.** When writing your own discussion questions, avoid questions that are too general, like "What did you think of the book?" Avoid questions that have "yes/no" answers; you want to ask questions that are open-ended and help people talk about themes and deeper issues.
4. **Assign roles to help everyone participate equally.** Get a few members to record the conversation, take photographs and moderate the discussion.
5. **Let others answer first.** When you are asking questions, you want to facilitate discussion, not come off as a teacher. By letting others in the group answer first, you will promote conversation and help everyone feel like their opinions matter.
6. **Make connections between comments.** If someone gives an answer to question 2 that connects well with question 5, don't feel obligated to ask questions 3 and 4 before moving to 5. Even if you go in order, try to find a link between an answer and the next question to build momentum in the conversation.
7. **Don't be dismissive about other people's comments.** Even if you disagree, take the conversation back to the book. Making people feel embarrassed or defensive is a sure way to shut down the conversation.
8. **Occasionally direct questions toward quiet people.** You don't want to put anyone on the spot, but you want everyone to know their opinions are valued.
9. **Rein in tangents.** Group meetings are popular in part because they are great social outlets. A little off-topic conversation is fine, but as the facilitator, it is your job to recognize tangents and bring the discussion back to the right topic.
10. **Don't feel obligated to get through all the questions.** The best questions sometimes lead to intense conversations. That's a good thing! The questions are there as a guide. Respect people's time by wrapping up the discussion when the meeting time is over rather than pushing on until you finish everything planned.
11. **Wrap up the discussion.** One good way to wrap up a conversation and help people summarize their opinions of the book is to ask each person to rate the book on a scale of one to five. You could also ask people to commit to one of the 5 action themes of Every Action Counts (save energy, save resources, travel wisely, shop ethically, care for your area) and report back next time.