

Moderator Introduction

As a moderator, you make sure your Circle runs effectively and your Circle meetings are productive and rewarding for your members. It can be a big job, but we hear two things regularly from our Circle moderators: it's incredibly rewarding, and they're flexing—and getting recognized for—their leadership skills.

Materials and Resources for Moderators

We provide the following materials and resources to help you manage your Circle:

- Checklists for getting started and excelling in your day-to-day role
For Campus moderators: leanin.org/campus-checklists
For Local moderators: leanin.org/local-checklists
- A Facebook group so you can share ideas, exchange best practices, and network with other moderators
For Campus moderators: leanin.org/fb-campus-moderators
For Local moderators: leanin.org/fb-local-moderators
- All-in-One Meeting Guides with everything you need to run a meeting from beginning to end
leanincircles.org/running-your-meetings

Background for Your Kickoff Meeting

Your first meeting is important because everyone gathers together for the first time and you decide as a group how you want to run your Circle. To make sure you feel prepared to lead the conversation, we want to go over the following sections with you in greater detail:

Moderator Introduction (cont.)

Circle Fundamentals

There's no right or wrong way to run a Circle—you and your members should make the experience your own—but it's important to have shared values so everyone knows what's expected of her and what she can expect from everyone else. Based on the recommendations of several experts in group dynamics and our own research into what makes small groups work, we've developed what we call our Circle Fundamentals:

Confidentiality

Trust is critical. What happens in your Circle should stay in your Circle.

Why it matters: Members won't want to share real issues if they don't feel they can trust everyone in the Circle. We recommend you talk openly about the importance of confidentiality as a group and come up with a plan for dealing with a break in confidentiality before it's an issue with real members and hurt feelings.

Communication

Commit to share openly and honestly—and to listen with empathy.

Why it matters: Research shows that sharing begets sharing. As you share with one another, you'll feel more connected and better positioned to offer helpful insights and ideas. When you're listening, it is important to “listen in order to understand” (rather than “listen to respond”) and resist the urge to judge others' choices or experiences.

Commitment

“Everyone should be invested in your Circle's success and be fully present at meetings.”

Why it matters: The more everyone participates, the more you'll all get out of your Circle—the expression “groups are only as strong as their weakest link” is true. We recommend Circles meet ten times a year, and members remain active for a year.

Moderator Introduction (cont.)

Spend time with your Circle talking through these fundamentals. Whether they work for everyone as written or you revise them based on member input, make sure you agree to a set of values for your Circle. You may also want to come up with a way to keep them top of mind. For example, some Circles recommit to their fundamentals at the beginning of every meeting or post them online as a reminder. You can always find our Circle Fundamentals at leanincircles.org/running-your-meetings.

Circle Goals

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. In our Kickoff agenda, we walk you through a process for identifying up to three goals for your Circle. If you're having a hard time choosing goals that work for everyone, try making them broader in focus—for example, instead of “Get raises,” a broader goal might be “Ask for and get what we deserve,” which could include more flex time, a larger role, etc.

Try to pick one core goal that you're going to focus on in the beginning—the more focused you are, the more likely you'll be to see early results. And remember you can revisit your goals at regular intervals and update them as members' priorities change.

Wrap-Up

During the wrap-up at the end of your meeting, we recommend you talk about how you intend to run your Circle—especially if you want to ask for help!

We've seen several approaches work well (and there are certainly others):

- A single moderator runs a Circle for a set period of time (such as six months or a year).
- A single moderator serves as “manager” (sends information and updates, schedules meetings, etc.), but Circle members take turns moderating monthly meetings.
- Co-moderators share responsibilities. In some cases they serve as partners on everything; in other cases one moderator manages the Circle and the other facilitates meetings.
- The whole Circle runs as a co-op with different members taking the lead each month.

Before your Kickoff meeting, we recommend you think about possible approaches and talk to other members of your Circle to gather their thoughts and gauge their interest in participating more actively. Then come prepared with your recommendation and/or a list of options for discussion. Your goal is to close the meeting with a clear understanding of who's going to do what.