

Leader's Guide

Thank you for saying “Yes” to helping women to read more and read well by leading a Well-Read Mom group.

We're here to help you get started and share this experience with you.



Our Mission

As a leader, it is important to communicate the mission of Well-Read Mom to the members:

Well-Read Mom is a book club for women who want to accompany one another in reading the classics, great books, and timeless spiritual works from the Western and Catholic traditions in order to nurture our hearts and our moral imaginations.

Our book selections for each year correspond to the themes of a woman's life: mother, daughter, sister, friend, worker, pilgrim, and contemplative.

Our passion is to help women make space for reading and reflection in our daily lives, and so we aim to create a place where we can come together to share what we are learning through our reading.

Well-Read Mom is more than a booklist; it's an experience. You can find out how it all began in [this video](#) on our homepage.

The following pages will give you concrete tools to get started.

“Thank you, women who are mothers...! Thank you to women who are wives...! Thank you, women who are daughters and women who are sisters. Thank you, women who work! Thank you, consecrated women!” In his 1995 Letter to Women, Pope John Paul II thanks women in their various capacities for their vocation and mission in the world. “Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.”

– Pope John Paul II, “Letter to Women”

Getting Started

As an official Well-Read Mom leader, you are asked to:

- **INVITE** the women into this experience of friendship and organize the details of the meetings
- **CLEARLY PROPOSE** the model of Well-Read Mom which invites women to explore the annual theme through monthly reading selections
- **CONNECT** the women to the broader Well-Read Mom experience by utilizing our monthly audios and printed materials.
- **FOSTER FRIENDSHIP** among the women by facilitating the group in a way that encourages respectful and thoughtful dialogue



How to Begin

INVITING THE WOMEN

A good place to begin is by simply brainstorming women to invite. These could be relatives, fellow moms, neighbors, teachers, coaches, co-workers, etc. Women can be of any age and stage in life. Take a risk and put the invitation out there. Don't be afraid of rejection. Even having a handful of people can make for a wonderful experience. If you've been meeting already, consider whether the group is growing too large and may need to split. Sometimes this happens naturally by adding a second date or time. At times, a woman may volunteer to lead a branch of the group.

PUBLICIZING YOUR GROUP

Use our [customizable flyer](#) to spread the word about your group. You can distribute the flyer via email, print it and hand it out to women who may be interested, or even post it on social media. Here is a sample of an announcement used in a community bulletin to advertise a group:

Well-Read Mom Group Forming Now!

You are invited to come and learn about a local Well-Read Mom small group forming in this area.

Well-Read Mom (WRM) is a way for women to reclaim time to read the best. The goal is to provide a way for women to read high-quality literature together and grow in friendship in the process.

WRM groups read one book per month and meet to discuss once a month. Our year together includes great books, spiritual classics (during Advent and Lent), worthy reads, poetry and selected essays from the Catholic and Western Traditions.

Book selections for each year correspond to the themes of a woman's life such as daughter, mother, spouse, friend, worker, pilgrim, and contemplative.

Find out more at (time) and (place). Contact (leader) at (phone) for more information or visit wellreadmom.com to find out more.

USE THE WELL-READ MOM MAP FEATURE

Our website has a “Find a Group” feature that allows women to see all of our groups on a map. Groups are marked as “open to new members” or “closed to new members.” Potential members looking to join a group can send leaders an inquiry, or contact Well-Read Mom directly. As a leader, you may choose whether you would like to receive inquiries directly to your email or have them sent to us first.

The map feature is also helpful if local groups want to work together to host regional events or an occasional joint meeting.

SCHEDULE AN INTEREST MEETING

A non-threatening first step is to invite the women to a brief interest meeting (45 minutes) to find out more about Well-Read Mom and how they can become involved. Maybe you’ve found women who want to read every selection, or maybe you want to tackle a handful of books this year. *Remember, the goal is simply to read more and read well.* You can find an agenda with links to the resources [here](#).



Nuts & Bolts

Well-Read Mom began when founder Marcie Stokman gathered twenty women in her living room in Crosby, MN, in 2012. Today there are more than two hundred groups across the United States and abroad.

There's only one rule in Well-Read Mom: Don't apologize if you don't finish the reading.

Do attend the meetings—even if you haven't finished, and soak up the conversation. You may be inspired to go home and pick up that book. Remember, the goal is to read more. If you think you can't read every book, select those you do want to try. (Our Companion has tips on what to read if you can't read the whole book.)

That said, it's hard to have a discussion if no one has read, so discuss group expectations with one another!

Each meeting discusses the book from the previous month. For example, during the October meeting, the September book selection is discussed and so on. You can find a chart of what to read when [here](#).

The audios are posted by the last day of the previous month. (The audios are posted on the "Monthly Audios" page of the website and we notify our members when the audios are up.)

The recommended editions and translations of the year's books can be found in our Well-Read Mom Amazon.com bookstore on our website. When women use our website, Amazon will give a portion back to help WRM become self-sustaining. Kindle and Spanish translations are also available in our bookstore.

Spread the word to your friends and family. It's never too late to join a group. Women can search for a group on [our website](#).

We are proud to be an official 501c3 non-profit organization. We are grateful for [tax-deductible donations](#) in any amount.



WHAT MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

We want all women who participate in Well-Read Mom to enjoy our beautiful materials. When you join WRM, you're not just purchasing a product, you're joining and supporting a movement of women who want to read more and read well.

Because we are funded through membership, **we ask that each woman that participates purchase her own materials.** The membership cost covers most of the expenses in running Well-Read Mom.

Using the materials makes it easy to be part of a group. Women who consistently use the materials tell us they have a richer experience of Well-Read Mom and are more connected to our mission.

ORDERING MATERIALS

Once you have registered as a leader, we will send you a link to forward to your potential group members so that they can purchase their materials.

All of the Well-Read Mom materials are copyrighted. There is no duplicating or sharing of materials allowed. Well-Read Mom requires that each woman purchase her own materials, and as such we do not permit the sharing of study materials (such as two women sharing the Companion or sharing website usernames and passwords).

Materials include:

- **The Reading Companion** - an *enhanced workbook format* with author biographies, book reflections, discussion questions, literary criticism, reading log, space to record your favorite quotes and burning question, and notes from your meeting.
- The monthly **audio resources** to enrich your reading and group discussion. Audios include an introduction to each book that explains why it was chosen and what to look for in your reading. (Even if you miss the meeting, all members have access to listen to the audios on their own.)
- Ongoing **access to members-only features and bonus materials** such as interviews, articles, and videos to help us go deeper into the year's selections.
- Inspiring and encouraging **members-only podcasts** on our favorite themes such as restorative leisure, nurturing a mother's heart, how to find more time to read and the relationship between reading great books and affecting a culture change.
- A beautiful **bookmark** with the year's artwork and booklist
- **Access to previous years' themes and booklists**

- **Optional text message** notifications sent to your phone to help you access the monthly audios and podcasts

Membership costs less than \$3.50 a month. The more women that register, the more the costs of running a non-profit are spread out among many women. All of the time Founder Marcie Stokman gives to Well-Read Mom is donated. Membership funds pay for website design, database and email services, printing, mailing, part-time staffing, and other business expenses.

Meetings How-To

The resources are created for groups to meet monthly. The kick-off for the year happens in September, and there is a selection for each month thereafter. Sometimes, the more difficult reads go for two months. During the summer months, optional WRM reads are proposed, a group may take the opportunity to read a book from a previous Well-Read Mom theme or a book of their choice, or simply take a break.

CONSIDER WHERE TO MEET

Brainstorm a potential location for the meeting that is open and accessible for as many people as possible; this could be a home, church, coffee shop, community center, restaurant, etc. You can also rotate locations, for example, members' homes.

You'll want to arrange the meeting room so members face each other in a circle or semicircle to create an open environment. Make sure the room is equipped with what you'll need (sufficient seating, etc.)

We recommend keeping the evening simple so that hosting does not become an obstacle to meeting regularly (although some groups love to host book-themed meals!). You can offer a pot of tea or coffee. Another member could sign up to bring cookies. Rotate the meeting place as needed.

HOW LONG ARE THE MEETINGS?

Generally, meetings last a little over an hour. We recommend that you run a timely meeting and then visit afterward if you like. This gives women the freedom to just attend the meeting, and the meeting is normally a great springboard for continued conversation.

MEETING FORMAT

Each monthly meeting follows the same general format. The September Kick-Off Meeting is the exception, and leaders will be emailed an agenda for the annual kickoff meeting.

Play the First Audio

After welcoming the women, the leader plays the first recording: a candid, encouraging reflection that helps focus the group, jog the women's memories on the reading, and launch the discussion.

Listening to the audios together when you gather as a group is vitally important to the Well-Read Mom experience. We find that those who intend to listen on their own before or after the meeting seldom do and are less connected to the mission of Well-Read Mom.

Before your meeting starts, find the audios on the [Monthly Audios page](#) of our website. You'll want to make sure you have Internet access at your meeting spot to listen to the audios and watch an occasional video together. If you won't have Internet access, please download the material before your meeting.

Share Initial Impressions and Discussion

Next, we recommend an initial go-around where each woman offers a brief impression, question or reflection from her experience of the book (women are free to pass).

This initial round generates discussion. Additional reflection questions can be found in the Reading Companion. This is also a good time for each woman to share a favorite quote, burning question, or what she gained from the reading.



Play the Second Audio

Toward the end of your discussion, play the second audio. This one introduces the upcoming month's book pick. The audios explain why the book was chosen, the connection to the year's theme, and what keep in mind while reading.

Closing Your Meeting

Wrap up the official meeting by reminding the women when and where you will meet next. Keeping the schedule consistent simplifies the scheduling of the meetings. This is also a good time to collect addresses and phone numbers. If time allows, invite the women to continue their conversations and enjoy the time together.

Sample Meeting Layout

7:00-7:10 P.M. Women gather, get a cup of tea and settle in.

7:10-7:15 P.M. Leader plays the first recording.

7:15-8:00 P.M. Group discussion.

8:00-8:15 P.M. Leader plays the second recording. Women often continue with a social time after the "official" part of the meeting has concluded.

Happy Reading!

Thanks again for your "yes" to leading or participating in a group. We are amazed at how women are responding to this initiative. If you have any questions or need assistance, please email us at info@wellreadmom.com.