Book clubs are more than just another night out with the pals. They offer an excuse to read (giving permission to leave the hectic pace of everyday life behind) and the chance to read books you may not typically consider.

If you’d like to start a book club, talk to people you know from different parts of your life (work, social, cultural) and get one going. A diverse group can make for a more interesting night of conversation, but you can always ask your friends if you need a quick start.

Strategies for book club success:

1. Read the book. Not everybody will finish every one, but make it a group of passionate readers.
2. Cross genres. Read diverse selections from the classics, young adult literature, and contemporary fiction. Allow anyone to make a suggestion and claim hosting a month. There are online book club communities that offer book group suggestions.
3. Get a mix of people. Married, single, working, staying at home, with and without kids and employed in varied professions. It adds perspective and more interesting conversation.
4. Patronize the library. Oftentimes popular books are available in quantities at the library with a few weeks’ notice. You may need to buy some books, but it’s nice to know some are available for free.
5. Reach out. If an author lives locally, invite them to attend the book club meeting to offer insight. Or see if the author would agree to a virtual meeting, via webcam.
6. Mix up the venue. Meet in living rooms, backyards and even the beach if you’re reading a summer seaside novel.
7. Discuss the book. That may seem obvious, but oftentimes the book is neglected. Put together a list of questions and keeping the meeting on topic—at least for a while. Most new books feature a Reader’s Guide either bound in the volume or available online at the publisher’s web site.
8. Socialize and snack. You can’t think on an empty stomach, so book club always comes with plenty of beverages, as well as trays, platters and bowls of nibbles.

Surprise your book club at your next meeting with a popcorn bar. Like a library full of books, a popcorn bar lets your pals choose what they’re in the mood for. Simply make a big bowl of popcorn, then set out smaller bowls of seasonings, nuts and seeds, dried fruits, chocolate pieces, and grated cheese. It’s easy to assemble; fun, healthy and delicious to eat; and guaranteed to keep the conversation going.