

Your Personal Guide to Starting a Small Group

A GUIDE MAP TO TAKE
YOU FROM PREP TO
YOUR FINAL WEEK

Congratulations on starting a small group!

You've just taken a huge step toward spiritual health — not only for yourself, but for those who will be in your group, as well. As you open this box, you may have a moment where you think, “What did I get myself into?” That's OK! The wonderful thing about this process is that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. You don't have to be a Bible expert or teacher to Host a thriving group. All you have to do is:



**HAVE A HEART
FOR PEOPLE**



**OPEN A SPACE
FOR THE GROUP
TO MEET**



**SERVE A
SNACK**



TYPE
*[saddleback.com/
startmygroup](https://saddleback.com/startmygroup)*

And the great news is, you're not alone! We're ready to come alongside you on this journey, sending you tips and tricks and connecting you with a Community Leader who will be a resource to you along the way.

We cannot wait to celebrate all that God is going to do in and through your group in the days ahead!

Blessings,

THE SMALL GROUPS TEAM

START HERE
STARTING
YOUR
GROUP

Refer to Your
Quick Start Guide



Activate Your Group &
Unlock Curriculum
saddleback.com/newsmallgroup



Check Out the
New HOST Training
saddleback.com/sgstart



Attend HOST Gatherings



NEW HOST JOURNEY

Host Your First Group
*Refer to Checklist on
Quick Start Guide*



Explore Additional
HOST Trainings
saddleback.com/watch



SHARPENING
YOUR HOST
SKILLS

Follow up With Your
Campus's Small Groups Team
*(Refer to Small Groups
Team Contact Card)*



Guidelines for a Healthy Group

Your small group should be a place where community is built and every member feels welcome to be open and honest with one another. Creating values and expectations are a great way to help your group get off to a great start and on the same page. The Group Guidelines will give your group a clear idea of what to expect, and you might even have more values to add.

Our Mission:

Our small group's mission is to balance the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in the hearts of every member in our group. We also want to grow healthy lives by building a fun and dynamic small group community that is committed to balancing the five purposes:

Building relationships with others in the group *Fellowship*

Supporting one another's spiritual growth *Maturity*

Serving one another in the group *Ministry*

Inviting others to join the group *Mission*

Connecting with God through worshiping together *Worship*

OUR GROUP GUIDELINES

Prioritize Group Attendance

Life happens. We know life is crazy and surprises like to pop up in our schedules often, but the relationships we develop in this circle will help sustain us through the ins and outs of the daily grind. We'll do our best to prioritize the group so that we can forge the kind of community we all long for.

Start and End on Time

We value your time and want to always do our best to honor it. Everyone is more than welcome to stick around as long as they'd like, but we want to be sensitive to those who need to bolt!

MEETING DAY: _____

START TIME: _____

END TIME: _____

Maintain Safety and Confidentiality

What happens in group stays in group! Creating a safe place (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes) for people to be heard and feel loved is a cornerstone of this small group.

Share Roles in the Group

This is OUR group! Whether that's bringing snacks, hosting, facilitating discussions, collecting prayer requests, or something else, everyone plays an important role.

Resolve Conflict Biblically

We're all human. And we've all got issues. Conflict is bound to happen, but when it does, it's OK! That makes our community normal. Instead of panicking, gossiping, or letting the issue grow larger, we'll resolve concerns quickly by consulting Jesus' advice in Matthew 18:15–17.

Limit Our Freedom

We want our group to be a relaxing, encouraging, and comfortable place to everyone who joins us. Since we can't know the backstory of everyone who gives the group a try, we won't drink alcohol during our meetings to avoid triggering someone who's struggled with it in the past.

Optional: Care Well for Our Kids

If you anticipate kids being a part of your group, it would be great to add a word about how involved they'll be in meetings, how they'll be cared for when not present, etc.

For tips on what to do about childcare, visit
saddleback.com/sgchildcare

Tips for Building a Great Group

Leading a small group is just the beginning of an exciting journey, and there are thousands of other Saddleback HOSTs who are right there with you. Here are some personal tips, which Saddleback small group HOSTs have shared from their own experience to help you succeed!

- 1 Be friendly and be yourself.** God wired you uniquely with unique gifts and experiences. So relax and be the real you!
- 2 Share responsibility for the group.** Let others take ownership of the group to grow their investment and keep things manageable for you.
- 3 Ask great questions.** Ask compelling, open-ended questions and get comfortable with the famous awkward silence.
- 4 Pray for group members throughout the week.** There's nothing more unifying than praying for your group regularly.
- 5 Create opportunities for the group to get to know each other outside regular meetings.** Spending time together beyond the regularly scheduled group time can help bond your group and deepen relationships.
- 6 Don't cancel meetings.** At first, it's common to just have one or two people join you. But smaller gatherings offer a great opportunity to get to know people on a deeper level.



Sharpening Your Host Skills

NEW HOST TRAINING

New HOST Training – Getting Your Group Started will prepare you to be an effective HOST. Videos are categorized by common questions, such as:

How do I prepare for a group meeting?
What are the elements of a group meeting?
What should we do about childcare?
And many more!

saddleback.com/sgstart

ADDITIONAL HOST TRAININGS

HOST Training – Moving Your Group Forward: Learn how small groups operate and get a Small Group Survival Guide.

saddleback.com/sgforward

HOST Training – Balancing the Five Purposes in Your Group:

Discover how to involve everyone in making your group healthy.

saddleback.com/sgbalance

HOST GATHERINGS

Periodically, we gather our small group HOSTs for community and training. You'll connect with other HOSTs, share ideas and experiences, gain practical hosting tips, and interact with your campus's Small Groups Team.

Stay Connected

YOUR SMALL GROUPS TEAM

Take a look at the Small Groups Team card included in this kit for the Small Groups ministry leaders at your campus. Once your group is activated, we'll connect you with a Community Leader who will serve as your encourager and coach during your HOST journey. Your Community Leader will be available to you for advice, support, and prayer, and will regularly check in with you and remind you about upcoming trainings and gatherings. Remember — you're not alone!

KEEP US POSTED

We'd love to see and hear about what God is doing in and through your group. Post your pictures (especially of your first meeting) and share your stories with us on Facebook at facebook.com/smallgroups and Instagram ([@saddlebacksmallgroups](https://instagram.com/saddlebacksmallgroups)). Sharing your images on social media with the hashtag [#saddlebacksmallgroups](https://twitter.com/saddlebacksmallgroups) is a great way to let your community know what you're up to and how they can get involved!

If you have any questions or concerns about your group, please reference the Small Groups Team card included in your Starter Kit.

