Guidelines for a Healthy Group

Your small group matters—a place where people can be healed and restored, a place where members feel appreciated and valued, and a place where your group will be a good fit and help you grow. The small group you form will be a good representation of your group and will share similar values with you.

Our Mission
Our small-group teams exist to fulfill the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18, to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey everything we have commanded them. We are called to be seekers, learners, and builders of strong, unified, and healthy small groups. Our values include community, communication, commitment, and confidentiality.

Building Relationships with Others in the Group

Supporting one another’s spiritual growth

Inviting others to join the group

Connecting with God through worshiping together

Meeting Day: Start Time: End Time:

Frequently Asked Questions

We’ve included an amazing resource in the top-right pocket of your Starter Kit: Leading Small Groups with Purpose, a guidebook by Steve Gladen, Saddleback’s Pastor of Small Groups. Here are some questions you can use to ask the most frequently asked questions.

What is my role as a HOST?

pages 19–20

What are some tips for making a great 1st-night impression?

pages 23–24

How do I help my group go deeper with each other?

pages 24–26

What should we study, and how can I go about making those conversations engaging?

pages 29–30, 46–48

Are there ways I can help my group discover their gifts and use them in the group?

pages 31–33

Where can we go to make a difference and be a group of significance in our community?

pages 34–37

How should we approach prayer time in our group?

pages 39–41, 48

I’ve got a conflict situation in my group — any tips on how to handle it?

pages 50–55

What’s the best way to address a challenging personality in the group?

pages 55–59

We’ve got some really heavy things going on in our group. Are there any verses or thoughts that might offer perspective?

pages 59–60

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, clothing at our expense, or stepping up as an alternative option, everyone has a 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 a utopia, proving that, while we have various gifts, we ultimately need to be Community, because everyone knows someone who struggles at some point.

Limit Our Freedom
We want our group to be inclusive, encouraging, and beautiful. We want everyone to feel like they belong. Yet, due to practical concerns at our group level, we need to be intentional about balancing our group to make sure our group doesn’t grow too large.

Our Group Guidelines

Our Group Guidelines

Prioritize Group Attendance
Life happens. We know this is a snap, and sometimes life gets in our way as members of other, but the relationships developed in this small group will last long after the books have been put away. Here are the details:

Start and End Times
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!

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

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 following the words in Matthew 28:18–20.

Native 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, clothing at our expense, or stepping up as an alternative option, everyone has a 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 a utopia, proving that, while we have various gifts, we ultimately need to be community, because everyone knows someone who struggles at some point.

Limit our freedom
We want our group to be inclusive, encouraging, and beautiful. We want everyone to feel like they belong. Yet, due to practical concerns at our group level, we need to be intentional about balancing our group to make sure our group doesn’t grow too large.

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
Inviting others to join the group: Ministry
Connecting with God through worshiping together: Worship

Our group guidelines

Prioritize group attendance
Life happens. We know this is a snap, and sometimes life gets in our way as members of other, but the relationships developed in this small group will last long after the books have been put away. Here are the details:

Start and end times
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!

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
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:

1. Have a heart for people
2. Open a space for the group to meet
3. Serve a snack
4. Type 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

Stay Connected

NEW HOST JOURNEY

Check your email inbox. You've just received a Welcome to the Saddleback Small Group Community email, which contains your login to the Saddleback Small Group community.

Host Your First Group
Check your Quick Start Guide

Check Out the New HOST Training:
Typically, small groups have a leader and participants. This is not the case in all groups. Each host is different, so it's important to stay engaged in the training to understand how your group will fit into your experience.

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). Sharing your images on social media with the hashtag #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.

SHARPENING YOUR HOST SKILLS

How HOST Training is going to help

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

1. How do I prepare for a group meeting?
2. What are the elements of a group meeting?
3. What should I talk about in a group meeting?
4. How many meetings do I need in a group?
5. How do I get started with my small group?

And many more!

saddleback.com/watch

New HOST Training – Getting Your Group Started

An additional “What’s Next?” video will be released soon.

Tips for Building a Great Group

1. Share responsibility for the group:
   - Share leadership and responsibility for the group. This will help keep the group healthy and avoid burnout.

2. Stay connected with each other:
   - Regularly check in with each other, either through email, text, or group meetings. This helps keep everyone engaged and accountable.

3. Pray for the group:
   - Regularly praying for the group members helps foster a sense of community and unity.

4. Provide opportunities for group members to interact:
   - Offer group members opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings, such as weekly meetings or social events.

5. Create a safe and welcoming environment:
   - Make sure everyone feels comfortable and included in the group, even if they are new or shy.

6. Attend HOST Gatherings:
   - Attend HOST Gatherings to connect with other HOSTS and learn from their experiences.

How HOST Training is going to help
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 Group Team.

saddleback.com/newsmallgroup

Check out the New HOST Training

saddleback.com/sgstart

Follow up with your campus’s Small Group Team

saddleback.com/watch
Starting Your New Small Group Is as Easy as Pie

O R 1 - 2 - 3

1 Decide when you’ll meet. Once there’s a date on the calendar, people can start getting excited. Don’t worry about finding the perfect date. Just do your best to land on a first meeting time that works for as many people as possible.

2 Activate your new group online. Head to saddleback.com/newsmallgroup to set your group up, unlock your group’s FREE video curriculum library, and get instructions on how to use the fun elements of this kit to begin building relationships and making memories. We’ve put together a special, two-week Quick Start study to help groups like yours begin with a clear picture of God’s design for small groups. We encourage you to choose this as your first study. If you’ve already registered your group, you can access this curriculum by going to saddleback.com/startmygroup

3 Chat with us. If you haven’t already, you’ll soon be hearing from a Small Groups Pastor and/or your Community Leader. Need ideas? Hit a roadblock? Is something going on in your group you need help thinking through? They are here to offer personal assistance along the way, so be sure to get back to them to begin building a relationship that will inspire and encourage you in this new adventure.

Want to chat now? Email us at smallgroups@saddleback.com
Checklist for Your First Group

Before Gathering
- Assemble the squad! Invite others to join your group with the invite cards provided.
- Send 2 reminders with address and time: about 1 week out and 2 days prior.
- If any of your guests have kids, decide if there will be childcare, or if kids are welcome to join.
- Make sure the video works in the space where you’ll be gathering.
- Prepare or purchase tasty treats.

Day of Gathering
- Make sure there are enough seats for everyone.
- Turn on some music. Create a fun and welcoming atmosphere.
- Set out name tags, markers, snacks, and drinks.

During the Gathering
Here’s an idea for how you can break up your gathering. There are no requirements for time; this is just a sample of what your meeting may look like. Remember to be flexible — every time you gather may look different! For your first week, you’ll want to pass out the snack sign-up sheet.

Arrival, Mingling + Snacks 15 minutes
Welcome, Introduce Yourself + Pray 5 minutes
Ice Breaker/Group Introductions 20 minutes
Share Guidelines for Group 10 minutes
Video + Discussion 35 minutes
Prayer Requests + Prayer 5 minutes

After the Meeting
- Let everyone know you had fun! Email the group to celebrate your first week and preview the next week’s gathering.
- Help everyone feel at home. If anyone is new, reach out to them individually and offer to answer their questions.
- Follow up on any prayer requests.
Here are a few questions to get the conversation rolling

Some people in your group may already be familiar with each other, while others may be new to the community. Use these questions as a way to kick off the gathering and discover more about each other!
If you had an unlimited budget, what would be the guilty-pleasure item you indulge in?
If you knew when your last meal would be, what would you eat, where would you eat it, and who would be there?
If you could witness any moment in history, what would it be?
What is something you hate, but wish you loved?
What is your go-to movie and why?
What gives you joy?
If you could compete in the Olympics, what sport would you choose?
If you could shop for free at any store, what store would you choose and why?
What is something funny or embarrassing that you believed as a kid?