



# GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDELINES FOR WRITING GROUPS

As a group facilitator, you have some responsibilities, but [LitArts RI](#) will be here to help support and cultivate a safe space for sharing creative work.

## How LitArts RI Supports the Group

As a Member, you have free access to LitArts RI's Zoom account (unlimited minutes) for all your writing group's meetings. Since this account is shared, we will need to know the dates and times of meetings ahead of time to reserve it for you. It's best to find a consistent monthly or weekly time so we can provide you with one recurring link that you can share with the group. Please do not post this link publicly.

You will be able to use the account without a Staff member present, though we are happy to help you launch your first meeting if needed, and are available for tech support. Please do not share the Zoom login information with anyone else. If you are unable to host a meeting, please assign an alternate host and let a Staff member know. We will arrange separate Zoom access for your replacement on that date.

You may also choose to meet in-person at the LitArts RI's headquarters. Meeting rooms may be reserved by contacting [jodie@litartsri.org](mailto:jodie@litartsri.org). Room rentals are free for LitArts RI writing groups.

We will recruit and provide names and introductions for anyone interested in joining your group, and offer guidance around keeping the community space supportive and safe. Please note that this means that your writing group is open to the public. If you would like to set up meetings for a private writing group, please contact us at [programs@whatcheerclub.org](mailto:programs@whatcheerclub.org).

## Your Role/Responsibility

- You will be responsible for establishing the cadence of the group meetings and communicating that with Staff as well as the group
- With the input from your group, you will help determine the format for group submissions and feedback. If you need help establishing a structure for the group, feel free to adapt our workshop guidelines (below)
- You will provide some moderation during the meeting to keep things moving and ensure equal participation, and uphold the Writing Group Guidelines
- We ask that you keep Staff informed of any issues or ideas you may have, and to let us know when your group has reached capacity or does not want to be listed publicly
- If you no longer wish to facilitate the group, or the group wishes to dissolve, you will be responsible for informing Staff as soon as possible and assisting in the transition

All writing group facilitators must be current [LitArts RI members](#) (\$15/month; free for Black, Indigenous, or POC Creatives).



# WRITING GROUPS

## SAFE SPACE GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS

Please take time to establish a safe space for your group. Below is a suggested guide to creating a community agreement that allows participants to voice individual safe space requests and agree on how sensitive and confidential content will be handled. We understand that each writing group facilitator will have a different approach to building a safe environment where creative work is shared and encourage you to incorporate this guide into your own methods.

### GUIDE TO COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Community agreements can be contributed to and agreed upon by every member of your writing group. A simple way to ensure full participation is to go around the room in a circle during your first meeting and ask each participant to voice a specific need or ground rule, record these in a visible place, then give everyone a chance to request modifications and verbally confirm their agreement. As new members join the group, inform them of these ground rules and ask for their agreement.

Before creating your agreement, you may wish to offer a few opening questions as prompts, allowing time for participants to jot down their responses and compose the ground rule they wish to bring to the group. Opening questions might include:

- How can we create a safe and respectful place for you to share vulnerable content?
- What will best nurture your creative work and ideas?
- What needs to stay in this workshop, and what can be shared outside of it?

Ground rules might include:

- Act with respect, even when you disagree
- Give your full attention to everyone who shares
- Participate with positive intent; assume others are doing the same
- Do not share the work of others outside of the workshop
- Protect the individual experiences and identities of everyone in the workshop
- Let others know in advance before sharing sensitive content
- Share your needs
- Express your concerns
- Ask questions—including to hear more or to spend extra time on a topic

As the facilitator of the group, you are responsible for creating a safe space. Let participants know how you will do this and ask for their consent. For example, you could explain that you may need to redirect conversation back to the group's focus area or ask a participant to make space to ensure everyone has time to share. Describe how you would like participants to contribute and make sure this method feels welcoming and accessible to all.



# WRITING WORKSHOPS: REFERENCE GUIDE FOR WRITING GROUPS

The ideal format of a writing workshop will vary across genres and groups. This guide offers ideas that you can adapt based on your group's preferences. Or come up with your own!

## Suggested Practices

1. Set word or page counts to ensure there will be enough time to critique all works submitted
2. Establish clear and equitable procedures for how many pieces will be critiqued each session, and in what order
3. Provide content guidelines or prompts for submissions as needed
4. Ensure all feedback remains safe, supportive and constructive

## Establishing Constructive Feedback

Provide a general set of feedback guidelines for your group. You might recommend everyone reads each submission twice ahead of your meeting: once without a pen in hand, and the second time, with a pen, making notes in the margins. It can be helpful for each reader to provide an endnote or letter to the writer, expanding on any comments in the manuscript.

For group members to think about while reading and discussing:

- What the piece is about
- What form the writer used and whether it is working well with the content
- What works in the piece (including style, POV, tense, dialogue, setting, etc. )
- What might need reconsidering
- Any additional thoughts or advice

Encourage thoughtful, helpful comments with suggestions of what to work on in a second draft. Any criticism should be constructive and positive, asking questions rather than offering a closed critique. The group is there to help the author revise the piece into the best it can be!

## A Sample Workshop

To begin, the writer reads aloud a brief excerpt of the piece to be discussed, and the facilitator opens discussion, keeping track of time. Critiques are not directed at the writer's person. Instead of "You say" or "Jim writes," commentators use language such as "the writer" and "the author." Authors may respond to comments but are primarily there to listen, and should try to resist the impulse to defend or justify, to allow for a natural discussion. Halfway through, the facilitator can check in with the author to see if they'd like to redirect the conversation, and at the end, the author may request time to ask questions and thank the group.

## Other References

- Milford Style of Critique: <http://cascadewriters.com/milford-style-workshopping/>
- *Steering the Craft* by Ursula K. Le Guin (see Appendix: The Peer Group Workshop) <https://www.ursulaklequin.com/steering-the-craft>