



# Reach Society

Building Connections

## How to Start a Smart-Children-Club

Patron: Lord Ouseley

### The Smart-Children-Club (SCC) for parents, monthly draw

- The SCC catchphrase is: “**Belong to a Smart-Children-Club and help your child excel.**”
- To win a prize from our monthly SCC draw tell us, in less than 20 words, why you feel your Club is extraordinary. (To enter the SCC draw just use the “Contact Us” option on our website [www.reachsociety.com](http://www.reachsociety.com) )

### How to Start a Smart-Children-Club

1. **Get together a core group** - It is much easier to start a smart-children-club with two or three people who already have some connection. Ask around the family, or the office, or play groups, or your church, or civic organisations. Sometimes you might find enough people to start a smart-children-club right away from family members and close friends. Often you'll at least recruit some help in completing the rest of the steps.
2. **Set a regular meeting time** - An ideal size for a smart-children-club is **8 - 11 people**. As you can imagine, it is often difficult to coordinate that many schedules. Go ahead and set a regular meeting time and date for your smart-children-club with your core group. (For instance, a smart children club might meet the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm). By setting the time before advertising the smart-children-club, you avoid playing favourites when working around schedules and are up front about what commitment is required.
3. **Advertise your smart-children-club** - The best advertising is often word of mouth. If you have a core group of three, and you each know two people who want to join, then all you have to do to start a smart-children-club is ask these people. This is a good way to meet friends of friends. If your core group doesn't know of other people to ask, then advertise in your circles of interest (**school, work, church etc**) with fliers or announcements. There are often also places to post fliers at the **library, book stores and cafes**.
4. **Establish ground rules** - Get together with your potential smart-children-club members and set the group's ground rules. (You might want everyone's input; however, if you have set ideas of what you want, and then set the rules with your core group and announce them at this first meeting). The ground rules should include the first one or two books that will be read and discussed (for example Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* - the story of success and Richard Templar's *The Rules of Parenting* are two good ones), who hosts, who leads discussions and what kind of commitment is expected. If you did not set the meeting time with your core group, do that now.
5. **Meet** - Set a schedule for the first few months and start meeting. If the smart-children-club is small at first, don't worry about it. Invite people as you go. Some



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people will be more likely to join an already established smart-children-club because they feel less pressure than they would as a founding member.

**6. Keep meeting and inviting people** - Even if your smart-children-club is an ideal size, from time to time you'll have the chance to invite new people as other members move away or drop out. Don't be discouraged if you lose members. People's schedules and commitments change. Hopefully you'll always have a core group, and together you can reload.

#### Tips:

**1. Example ground rules:**

Your smart-children-club could decide that a different person would host each month. The host is responsible for picking the topic or issue, leading the discussion and providing the refreshment. We place no restrictions on what topic the host chooses – healthy diet, reading habit, after school activities, relations with teachers, homework tips, trips to museums - everything's fair game when discussing approaches for helping your children to become smart. Think about taking December off and plan a fun event out.

**2. How to choose the issues:**

Your Club could decide to use the issues raised in the recommended books (see below). Or your Club could simply let the host for the month choose the issues for discussion.

**3. Hosting ideas:**

Food is not required, but it helps the discussion roll and makes the smart-children-club meetings more fun. Some smart-children-clubs might wish to meet at a different meeting place each month. Sometimes meetings might be held in people's homes, or leisure centres, or local churches. You can choose to have refreshments. Whether you are out or in a home, I recommend at least having coffee, tea and some snacks.

**4. Leading the discussion:**

Be sure to create a list of say five open questions in advance and you're ready to lead.

#### **Smart-Children-Club source material**

Reach Society suggests below the first two or three books to be a source of discussion topics for parents, and interested adults:

- The Outliers, the story of success by **Malcolm Gladwell**
- The Rules of Parenting by **Richard Templar**
- Parents as first teachers (booklet) by **Dr Keith Davidson**

**Make 2012 the year of parent power.**

Dr D A Neil (October 2011)