



How to ...

Run a Care for the Family course for couples

Marriage Courses

By running a marriage or marriage preparation course you can make a huge difference to a couple's relationship. These courses are not aimed at those who are experiencing serious difficulties, rather they are for every couple who wants to invest in and enrich their relationship. Whether it's an engaged couple preparing to tie the knot, or a couple who have been married for many years, everyone can benefit from taking some time out to focus on their relationship in a supportive, non-threatening environment where they can explore some of the fundamental principles that build strong relationships.

Marriage by Design

Care for the Family's five-session, DVD-based marriage preparation course – Marriage by Design, gives couples the opportunity to explore how they would like their marriage to look. The leader's pack will help you guide couples through the DVD content and activities in the accompanying handbooks. It can be used with a group, or with an individual couple. Each session lasts up to one hour, so you could run it over the course of a day or over a series of evenings. Find out more [here](#).

The Marriage Sessions

This flexible, four-part DVD-based resource explores how a couple can build a strong relationship by looking at four key areas: cherish, connect, collaborate and commit. Each session contains 40 minutes of video material and provides the content for a two-hour stand-alone event with the opportunity for couples to discuss some of the main themes together. You might choose to run it in an evening with refreshments provided, or on a Saturday morning with brunch. Find out more [here](#).

Publicity

If you plan to invite couples from beyond your direct church community, here are a few ideas on how to go about it:

- Register your course on the Care for the Family website. You can then download publicity leaflets to over-print with your own details. You can also download a promotional video to show;
- Encourage people to personally invite couples they know who they think may be interested in attending;
- Use social media to let your contacts know about the course. Many communities have Facebook pages to enable the promotion of events in their area;
- Ask permission to give out leaflets at other local churches, registry offices, reception venues, bridal shops, jewellers, doctors and dental surgeries, libraries, even hairdressers – anywhere people are likely to visit;
- Put up posters on community noticeboards e.g. in libraries, pubs and supermarkets;
- Approach the local newspaper to see if they'll promote your course. You could write a short article or send a letter to the letters page;
- Ask your local radio station to promote your course, or ask if they would interview you about it.

Where to meet?

Whether you choose to meet in a church or community building, ensure that your venue:

- Is bright and relaxing with good lighting, heating and ventilation and free from distractions;

- Is the right size for the number of people you are expecting. In particular, you need room for each couple to have their own table (a small dinner table or a low coffee table) and enough space to feel that their conversations will not be overheard;
- Can provide you with the number of individual tables you need;
- Has facilities for serving refreshments;
- Is easy for people to find and get to by public transport or car, and is accessible for all.

Setting up

Before each session, allow plenty of time to put out the tables and chairs and to prepare refreshments. You might like to decorate each table and put some nibbles, a jug of water and glasses on each, along with a copy of the Couples Handbook (for The Marriage Sessions). Make sure the DVD player, or laptop is working and has the right connection to your TV or projector. Choose some unobtrusive background music that can be used throughout the session when required to create a relaxed environment similar to that you might find in a café.

Starting off

Your role as leader or host is not to be an expert in marriage, or to have all the answers. It is to provide a welcoming environment and an atmosphere where each couple will feel comfortable to discuss with each other the activities and questions raised in each section of the DVD.

It's important to set the right tone at your first session. You might want to start with refreshments and then open the session by sharing a personal story to build rapport with the couples.

Once your group is relaxed, you can move on to the housekeeping. This would include:

- Confirmation of start and finish times and dates of sessions;
- Where the toilets, exits and refreshments are located;
- House rules: e.g. an overview of course content and the role of participants. Explain that each session involves working through the DVD and that there will be regular activity times when they can discuss things together privately as a couple. Let them know that you will be on hand to explain the activities, but will step away (or leave the room) to provide privacy during their discussions. Reassure them that they won't be expected to talk openly to everyone in the room about their relationship. All conversations will be private, but agree that if someone overhears something by accident, they will keep it to themselves.

Leading the session

DO While as group leader you are not required to present any of the course content, however it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with the material beforehand.

DON'T If you're running your sessions over several evenings, don't constantly start late or over-run. If you always start promptly, those who turn up late should soon get the message that they will miss something. Waiting for latecomers to arrive devalues the efforts of those who come on time and runs the risk of the session ending later and later, inconveniencing everyone.

DO Think in advance how you might handle things if anybody becomes upset. It doesn't often happen, but it may occur occasionally. It can help to have someone else available if someone needs to take time out or wants someone to talk to.

The Leader's Guide that comes with the pack has more information and tips on leading the sessions.

Feedback from those who have used these resources has been overwhelmingly positive, with many stories of couples feeling encouraged and equipped. Both courses are available as a DVD pack or online download.

Visit [our website](#) for more information and for other family building resources and information.

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