



# Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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## Week 2: Offer your first contributions

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### What to expect this week

In Week 2, you'll make simple contributions to people on your relationship list, deepening relationships in some small way. Just looking at the list will attune your attention to your goal, and the simple steps you take will feel empowering.

### Related reading from *Working Out Loud*

*Chapter 11 - Your first contributions*

Blog post: [workingoutloud.com/blog/the-generosity-test](http://workingoutloud.com/blog/the-generosity-test)

### Suggested agenda

The discussions in circle meetings are important - and so is doing the exercises. This week, there is a full 20 minutes allocated to making your contributions. Make sure you use it. Avoid the trap of spending all the time in discussion and not leaving sufficient time to do the exercises. Details for each topic are below the table.

Thing to do	Approx. time
Check-in	10 mins
Exercise: Intimacy levels	5
Exercise: Make your first contributions	20
Discuss your contributions	20
Checkout for Week 2	5

## **Check-in (10 minutes)**

Each person should speak for just a few minutes about how they're feeling about the process so far. For example, how are you feeling about your goal? Did anything happen during the week such as adding people to your list or doing any of the bonus exercises?

## **Exercise: Intimacy levels (5 minutes)**

It helps to be conscious that not all relationships in your network are the same. The most obvious way they differ is the depth of the connection. Offering to watch your friend's child, for example, is a nice gesture. But the same offer to a stranger can get you into trouble. Here is a simple intimacy scale from zero to five:

- 0—The person doesn't know you exist.
- 1—You're connected in some way.
- 2—You've had one or more interactions.
- 3—You've collaborated.
- 4—You regularly call on each other.
- 5—You're a trusted advisor.

You're not trying to go from zero to five in one attempt, and you don't need to get to level five with everyone. You're simply trying to deepen some of your relationships over time. For this quick exercise, go through your relationship list and write down your intimacy level for each person.

*Q: Where should I write this down?*

After many experiments, the best system for me is to use index cards. (You'll read more about this in Week 6.) Many people just use a pen and paper. Others use a spreadsheet, Evernote, or a simple application that they can access on their phone or tablet. Simplicity and convenience are the most important attributes of any system you choose.

## **Exercise: Making your first contributions (20 minutes)**

Today, most people have some kind of online presence. Search the Internet for people on your list and see what you can find. Look for a Twitter account, a LinkedIn account, a blog, or other online content they've produced. If they have a Twitter account, follow them. Following someone on Twitter is different from Facebook and LinkedIn in that it doesn't require the other person to do anything. That's one reason why Twitter is often the simplest and most effective way to take a first step in forming a connection.

If you see a website in a person's Twitter or LinkedIn profile, go to that website and look for content. If you like any of it, let them know by hitting a Like button. If you want to keep receiving updates, look for a Follow button or the ability to subscribe by email. There's no need to worry about what to say or write. For now, all we're looking for is an unobtrusive way to move the relationship from *they have no idea who I am* to *they've seen my name*. For each person on your list, include where you found them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discussing contributions among the group (20 minutes)**

Before you start your discussion, take a moment and read The Generosity Test (the suggested blog post above). Discuss how each of you did on the test.

Now talk about your contributions. Did you have trouble coming up with ideas for certain people? If so, others in the group should offer suggestions. This is where the learning happens and you should actively try to include everyone in the discussion. You don't need to share everyone's entire list. The goal of the discussion is to ensure everyone understands the basic idea of contributing to their network.

### **Checkout for Week 2 (5 minutes)**

1. Confirm the time and place for the next meeting.

2. Remind each other to read the Week 3 circle guide and suggested reading.
3. Ask: “What will you do this week?”

That last question makes each person mindful of what’s coming up. It could be simply reading content from people on your list, making more contributions, or doing the exercises below. A brief answer is enough, perhaps a minute or less

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: Is it better to do the exercises during the meeting or in between meetings?*

The answer is *whatever increases the chances of you actually doing the exercises*. Some circles feel it’s best to use the time together for discussion and to do the exercises outside of the meetings. That’s great, unless one or more of you never get to it. So feel free to consider your circle meetings to be working meetings. Doing the exercises quietly for a few minutes is totally appropriate.

*Q: What if I’m having trouble finding people?*

Don’t limit yourself to people you know. Play Internet Detective and start looking for people and companies related to your goal. Search for relevant online communities or organizations. Include people who write, speak, or provide services related to your goal. Once you find one person, try to see who that person is connected to. Keep following the trail of connections.

## Bonus exercises

### **Easy: Something you can do right now in less than a minute**

Pick someone on your list and @-mention them on a public platform or on your enterprise social network. For example, you could post this on Twitter:

*“I’m in a Working Out Loud circle! Hello @johnstepper”*

When you do that, I’ll be notified and will respond with my own tweet, showing you how even a simple nine-word contribution can create a connection.

### **More challenging: Something you can do in less than 10 minutes**

Create an account on LinkedIn (or Xing in Germany). Just add a photo and at least one place you’ve worked for now. You can add more later. If you already have an account, take a minute to install the app on your phone and review your profile. If you’re part of an organization that uses an enterprise social network (like Jive or Yammer), then use the same photo to update that profile too.