

WHAT IS A THIRD SPACE



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What is a Third Space?



Third Spaces are informal gathering spots such as coffee shops and cafes, libraries, parks, and even run clubs.

The term was coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg in 1989 in his book *The Great Good Place*. The third place is an alternative to home (the first place) and work (the second place). This neutral space can free people from the social conventions and obligations they find at work and home, making it easier to discuss ideas and better understand social and civic issues.

Third places can also be a “social leveler,” meaning they bring together people from many different backgrounds who may not normally come together in the same space.

Third spaces are not a new idea. They have existed across time and places, such as agoras in Greece and English coffee houses, also known as “penny universities,” as people could go there for the price of a coffee.

Discussion Question: How could spending time in third spaces help us listen to different perspectives and better understand people in our communities? Have you found any third spaces in your community?

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