



Little Free Library How-Tos

Vandalism: How to Prevent It and What to Do if It Happens

Created by the Little Free Library Organization

“Won’t someone vandalize my Little Free Library book-sharing box?” The answer is: you’ll probably deal with some minor incidents at some point. Someone may throw some books on the ground, or scribble a mean note inside.

But we’ve found that only a small percentage of the thousands of Libraries around the world are ever seriously damaged. For every story of damage, there are hundreds of others that inspire us. Wounded Libraries are mysteriously repaired or replaced, or neighbors rebuild them.

How to Prevent It

The more mischief makers believe they might be caught, the less likely they are to do damage. Try answering these questions about your Little Library:

- Will you (or someone else) be able to see acts of vandalism? Good lighting is key. Make sure your Library is under a streetlight, near your front porch or where passing traffic can see it.
- Is your Library easy to break or take? Glass can be broken; Plexiglas is a better choice and easy to replace. If it has artwork or hardware that can be removed, you are tempting fate.
- Does anybody really care? If it looks like nobody cares and your Library isn’t clean and well-maintained, someone will be more likely to do damage.

Make It Personal

Let anyone near the Library know that it has a volunteer steward who cares about it. Put a sign on the Library that says something like: “Thank you for protecting and loving our Library!” with photos of smiling neighbors and kids. Ask the neighborhood kids to be your watchdogs and make sure the Library is always in good condition.

What to Do if Your Library is Vandalized

Repair it or rebuild it as soon as possible...and be prepared to rebuild it yet again. Remind yourself to believe in the goodness of the vast majority of people. But don’t challenge those who did the damage to do it again by threatening or confronting them.

If the vandalism is specifically related to the books (e.g. someone is regularly clearing out the entire contents of your Library) then consider stamping each one and putting a book label on the spine. Don’t put large batches of new books in your Library, either; seed them in slowly and at different times of the day.

Let it be known in a positive way that a precious neighborhood resource has been damaged. Ask for help; it is amazing what people will give if you are willing to ask for help.

© Little Free Library