



Little Free Library How-Tos

How to Spread the Word, Build and Sustain Support

Created by the Little Free Library nonprofit organization

Here's the best way to start building awareness: let people see your Little Free Library book-sharing box! Install it in a place where as many people as possible will notice it. They will be curious, look inside and tell their friends and family what they saw. So be sure that they can find good books inside from the very first day.

Spread the Word

Gathering a network of neighbors and friends who are invested in the well-being of your Little Free Library is key to your long-term success. Start by spreading the word. Remember, you don't need to wait until after your Library is installed to start promoting it.

- **Share the work.** Ask your friends to be co-stewards and help to spread the word! Recruit help for keeping the Library stocked with good books and well maintained; neighborhood kids are often excited to be co-stewards and to regularly straighten shelves, re-stock, and generally keep an eye on the Library.
- **Have a Grand Opening Ceremony, a potluck supper or a picnic.** Let everyone know that the Library belongs to the neighborhood, not just you. Have several neighbors co-host the gathering. Invite your neighbors a week or two in advance, and be sure to have it at a time when kids and adults can attend. Ask them to bring a few books to stock the Library; have activities like sidewalk chalk or coloring bookmarks for kids, and don't forget to have an official ribbon cutting!
- **Invite people in print or in person.** By far the most effective way is to leave a handwritten invitation or flier at the front door of everyone you want to invite. Put a notice in the neighborhood newsletter (print or electronic) or mail postcards to the whole community. If your neighborhood has a Facebook page or is on Nextdoor.com, post a notice there, too. And don't worry about looking "professional." Remember, friendly faces and friendly places are what these Little Libraries are all about.
- **Tell community media.** Newspapers, TV and radio stations, websites and organizational newsletters. Send them short messages that include your name, Library location, the names of people who can talk about the Library and what they like about it, and how others can participate. Use the sample press release available for free download at LittleFreeLibrary.org—we created the template for you, you just need to fill in the details!
- **Tell your neighbors in person and ask them to tell others.** When you meet your neighbors on their daily walk, ask them if they have seen the new Little Free Library book-sharing box yet. They'll ask you what you mean, and you can fill them in.

- **And finally, make sure your Library is registered with a charter sign so you can put it on the world map!** Each year, hundreds of thousands of people use the world map at LittleFreeLibrary.org/ourmap to find Little Libraries and share books. It may be the most important step you can take to get people to visit your Library! Learn how to register and how to get on the map by visiting LittleFreeLibrary.org and clicking on **Register** in the main menu.

Build and Sustain Support

Many Little Free Libraries, especially those in communities where books are scarce, can't sustain themselves in the long run. That's why having a dedicated team of volunteer stewards is so important! Being a steward means being a long-term literacy and reading advocate through your Library.

After the initial excitement and rush of book donations wears off, what can you do to keep people interested and keep your Library full of books?

1. **Communicate from the start that this is an effort for the common good;** that giving offers as much satisfaction as taking.
2. **If one person or organization buys or starts the Library, make sure that the stakeholder base starts off with lots of people sharing the pleasure and rewards.** That's why having a Library building event or welcoming party can be so valuable. Like a potluck supper or block party, such events offer a chance for everyone to contribute something.
3. **Follow the key principle of real estate: location, location, location.** Put the Library in a place where you will have lots of pedestrian, bike or vehicular traffic. Have a sign that says "This is a gift from the Library staff and Friends to the neighborhood. If for some reason the Little Free Library doesn't work as you would like, move it.
4. **Welcome participation in all ways.** Thank people in writing and in person. Keep a notebook in the Library so that anyone can offer suggestions, comments, recommendations or requests.
5. **It's not just the content of books that matters, but also the memories and thoughts that books generate.** Keep your Little Library clean and inviting; create positive interactions and people will keep coming back.
6. **Build a backup reserve of books by involving book lovers** --book clubs and discussion groups, and people who have big home libraries as well as friends of public libraries and used bookstores.
7. **Other sources of books: nearby Little Free Libraries!** It's fun to make the occasional rounds of Libraries to see what they contain. Anyone can move books from one to the other. You don't have to ask permission.
8. **Don't burden Little Library users with lots of rules, do's and don'ts.** Accept the fact that all people are not always respectful and some vandalism may

occur. But if you have enough good, caring people involved from the beginning, you will have established the norm of respectful Library use. Your friends and neighbors will support you if you ask for help.

- 9. Respect freedom of expression and diversity.** But also feel free to keep a balance of books available. If a Little Library becomes source of religious proselytizing and political rants, you will probably lose a lot of interest.

- 10. Have a good steward who is not afraid to encourage others to pitch in.** The steward is not supposed to do all the work. In fact, in some neighborhoods, the best insurance for success and sustainability is recruiting kids or adults to be neighborhood Library champions. They can provide a valuable service and build self-esteem by visiting and checking the Libraries regularly.