



Tips,
Tools and
Resources for
Organizers

How to Hold a Used Book Sale

Arranging a community used book sale is a great opportunity to help others in your community. Donated books will be sold and the proceeds will help provide funding for local community programs. It is also a wonderful opportunity to help others in need through the world of literature, while meeting folks in your community and having fun.

INCLUDED IN THIS KIT:

- 1 Overview**
- 2 The Basic Steps**
- 8 Check-Out Tip Sheet**
- 9 Publicity Tip Sheet**
- 11 Sample Promotional Flyer**

How to Hold a Used Book Sale Overview

The Problem

Local community organizations often have a specific need that can be filled through a donation of money. In addition, local libraries are often looking for more books to support their collection. Many individuals are looking for book bargains, and there are plenty of books collecting dust on a bookshelf that would make a great bedtime read for someone else.

The Solution

Organize or participate in a community used book sale. Proceeds from the sale can support an identified community need. A used book sale provides affordable literature for readers of all ages and gives people the opportunity to clean out their bookshelves with already-read books. Plus, libraries or nursing homes can add to their collection if they can use some of the books not sold in the book sale.

Time Commitment

The estimated commitment for the organizer is approximately 10 to 15 hours over the course of eight weeks. Other volunteer roles can take 2 to 10 hours.

Great Reasons To Do This Project

Raise funds to support community programs in need, promote reading in an affordable way, encourage community volunteerism and involvement, and recirculate materials in environmentally responsible ways. Having used book sales also helps to promote a love of reading and learning.

Who Can Do This?

Anyone with a few hours or more to volunteer.

Special Considerations

None.

The Basic Steps

Plan the Sale

1 Determine where the profits from sale will go.

- a. Reach out to the local community center, schools, fire department, etc. to see what specific need or programs they would like to pursue but lack funds. Choose a need that's compelling in your community. Set a realistic goal of the amount of money you might raise for this cause and identify what that might purchase (e.g., purchase school supplies for # children; dinner at the women's shelter for # weeks; needed parts for the volunteer fire truck; weatherization supplies to warm homes for # frail elderly persons; etc.)
- b. Note: This activity is suggested as a way for individuals or groups to get involved in volunteerism and give back to the community. This proposed activity is not one that involves charitable donations resulting in tax deductions, for any individual or group.

2

Develop a list of volunteers who can be involved in this project.

- a. Consider your friends, work colleagues, neighbors, library volunteers, etc.
- b. Make a list of volunteer roles. The size of your sale will determine the number of volunteers needed. Engage volunteers to gather books at their place of faith, school, and community center. For the sale day, plan for a greeter, one or two cashiers, a book organizer to keep stacks neat and extra volunteers to help shoppers. Recruit enough people to cover any last minute cancellations and/or large crowds of buyers.



Section Topics

- Plan a Sale
- Promote in the Community
- Prepare and Price
- Setup for the Event
- After the Sale
- Additional Resources

THE BASIC STEPS, continued

3 Identify the location for the book drop off and sale.

- a. Ideally, hold the sale in the same location as the drop off to minimize the laborious process of moving books.
- b. Consider local community locations such as the library, school or community center.
- c. If possible, identify extra space in a cool, dry area to store the books.
- d. Ensure that someone will be at the location at all drop-off times.

4 Determine what guidelines or restrictions you will provide. For example, will you only accept books?

Many used book sales accept new and gently used books, DVDs, CDs, vinyl records and comic books. Some do not accept magazines, law books, Reader's Digest condensed books, removed library books, romance novels, damaged books (mildew, water, fire, ripped...) or encyclopedias more than 10-years old.

5 Arrange for a place to donate any unsold books.

- a. Offer the books to the local library, nursing home, hospital, etc.
- b. Recycle remaining unclaimed books through established community recycling programs.

Promote in the Community

1 Develop a flyer for the program.

- a. Provide a date, time and location for the book drop off and sale, where books can be donated, where the proceeds will go and who to call with questions.
- b. Schedule the drop-off deadline at least one week before the sale so there is plenty of time for book sorting and prepping.



See Sample Promotional Flyer on last page of kit.

THE BASIC STEPS, continued

- 2 Solicit for books to be dropped off.**
 - a. Reach out to family, friends, community organizations, schools, faith organizations, libraries, etc. and ask them to ask others in their community to drop off books for the sale.
 - b. Explain the program, the timeline and how they can make a difference.

- 3 Promote the used book sale – both the donation and purchase of books – to the community.**
 - a. Reach out to family and friends through word of mouth; use message boards throughout the community; seek out the support of a local radio or TV station or contact other non-profits that may want to partner with you.
 - b. Reach out to community organizations, schools, faith organizations, libraries, etc. and ask them to promote the book sale.

- 4 Create large signs to be posted on the day of the sale with all the relevant information.**



Check the Tips for Publicity in this kit for more suggestions on how to promote your sale.

Prepare and Price

- 1 As books are dropped off, begin organizing them in the following categories:**
 - a. Paperback/hardback
 - b. Fiction/non-fiction
 - c. Adult/children's

More categorization by genre will be needed if you have a very large sale.

THE BASIC STEPS, continued

2 Price the books.

a. Recommend simple pricing such as \$1.50 for hardcover, 50 cents for paperback and 25 cents for children's books – this will prevent the need to individually price each book and will simplify transactions during the sale.

3 **Check with your state or local tax authority** to determine if the used book sale is exempt from sales tax or not. If you need to charge tax, try to locate a tax price sheet to help the volunteers at check-out.

4 Develop a staffing schedule for the day of the book sale.

a. Two to three-hour shifts are best.

b. Develop a schedule. [Click here](#) for an example of a schedule that can be used to help organize your sale.

c. Provide some beverages and snacks for the volunteers. You may even want to sell some beverages and snacks to raise additional funds.

Set-up for the Event

1 **Post signs near and at the location, and at key gathering places close by.**

2 **Check out the Used Book Sale Check-Out Tips for suggestions on how to organize check-out.**

3 **Have a pre-sale meeting with the volunteers to explain your mission, roles and responsibilities and solicit any last-minute questions. Provide a place for volunteers to lock up their belongings.**

THE BASIC STEPS, continued

- 4 Have change ready, including coins and \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills. And don't forget shopping bags or boxes.**
- 5 Clean up during the sale so the area is appealing for shoppers.**



Enjoy the sale – this is a fun event that is the result of a team effort!

After the Sale

- 1 Arrange for the drop-off or pick up of any unsold books.**
 - a. If libraries, nursing homes, schools, etc. have previously identified which type of books they'd like to have, take those there.
 - b. Recycle the remainder.
- 2 Donate the proceeds to the selected community program.**
 - a. Total the funds collected and arrange a time to make the donation.
 - b. A money order is a helpful way to provide a record of the transaction.
 - c. Consider requesting a letter from the organization stating the amount collected and its intended use, so that you can share it with volunteers and others.
- 3 Sincerely thank all the volunteers for their time and effort**
 - a. Inform them of the final donation amount provided to the community program, and what that will achieve for this important cause.
 - b. Ask the community program coordinator for stories about the project your donation funded, so you can share it with the volunteers and your community through the media in the coming weeks and months.

THE BASIC STEPS, continued

- 4 While the program is still fresh in your mind, develop a list of lessons learned so you can implement any modifications in the future.

Additional Resources

The links below share information on other community used book sales throughout America:

www.millvalleylibrary.org

www.friends-library.org

www.essexlib.org

www.tclib.org

www.friendsofspl.org

www.monterey.org

www.ftppl.org

After the Event

Visit **CreateTheGood.org** to share your story and any lessons learned. A simple used book sale can help build ties in a community and maybe it can become an annual event for your community. To keep up the momentum, stay in touch with volunteers and the community program coordinator. Perhaps there will be another great program to fund next year.

Check-Out Tip Sheet

Follow these simple guidelines and train volunteers to ensure a smooth check-out process.

Here is how to make your used book sale a positive experience:

- Designate a table for the check-out area and gather your cashier supplies. Make large price signs for the check-out area (and provide sales tax price tables, if needed)
- Review security measures for the cash box. For example, the cash box may be most secure on a table behind the volunteers and the check-out table.
- Make sure there is adequate space for two lines to form during busy times.
- Designate a highly responsible adult to be the volunteer “banker.” This person should always stay with the cash box, and periodically empty the proceeds and place a voucher inside to indicate how much was collected, at what time, and by whom. The collected money should be placed in a locked, secure place or carried in a waist pack worn by the volunteer banker.
- Design your check-out system to accommodate shoppers quickly. During peak hours, recruit an assistant cashier to call out prices, bag purchases and assist your shoppers.
- Start each day with \$50–\$100 in bills and change. Include an ample supply of coins and \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills. And don’t forget shopping bags or boxes.
- You may want to have an organization stamp to speed up check writing.
- Deposit proceeds in the bank or a safe place.



Follow these tips to help lines move more quickly.

Note: Remember to check with your state or local tax authority to determine if the used book sale is exempt from sales tax or not.

Publicity Tip Sheet

Reach the Largest Audience

Use your local newspapers, magazines, community guides, the web, radio stations, and television and cable access channels to help spread the word about your used book sale to expand your audience. The local press welcomes information about community events. Many radio and TV stations and news outlets offer online forms to simplify event promotion.

Publicizing the Sale – Before and After

- Use the attached sample Promotional Flyer as a guide to create your own.
- Ask permission to display flyers, posters or postcards at coffee shops, local libraries, malls and local businesses. Invite local businesses to participate with you (as volunteers or co-sponsors).
- Ask local community members to promote book donations and the book sale through their local place of faith, bowling club, community group, etc. People are most likely to do this if they're motivated by the charity that will benefit from the sale.
- Invite a local celebrity – a congressional representative, your mayor or a radio show host – to give a talk about one of their favorite books.

Contact the Media

- Solicit volunteers that can help develop a local media list of editors and reporters with their names, phone numbers and email addresses. Most newspapers and radio and television stations will list newsroom contact information on their websites. The reporters most interested in your announcement will be community editors.

PUBLICITY TIP SHEET, continued

- E-mail basic details of the event, using plain text without any fancy graphics.

Put the event's date in the subject line. The e-mail should include:

- o Name of event (_____ Used Book Sale)
 - o Complete dates and times of the event
 - o What organization is being supported, and how much money you are hoping to raise for a specific cause
 - o Any special guests or events
 - o Contact information for volunteers
- Send your announcements at least two weeks before the sale.
 - Follow up with reporters several days after the event to announce the total number of books purchased and the approximate number of visitors you had to your sale, as well as the amount of money raised, and what that amount of money is expected to purchase. Send this information to the same media list.



The best time to send media announcements are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Community Used Book Sale

Dates: _____

Times: _____

Location: _____

Proceeds to benefit: _____

**Pre-owned and pre-loved books,
CDs and videos for .25 - \$2.00**

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music or movies for a fraction of the cost!
Go green by buying pre-owned.**

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- Adult Fiction and Non-Fiction
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Sponsored by: _____

If you have any questions, or would like to donate books or volunteer, please contact (name/email/phone).