



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY.ORG™
TAKE A BOOK • RETURN A BOOK

The Insider's Guide to Starting a Little Free Library

Who Can Start a Little Free Library?

The answer is simple: anyone! Your neighborhood association, service club, school, non-profit or local government can lead the way. Maybe you just have some free time on your hands and love to read. Or your book group wants to get involved. We welcome your enthusiasm and are excited to help you establish one or several Little Free Libraries near you. If you're not sure how to get started, there is a step-by-step chart on [this page of our website](#).

The Most Important Step: Registration

Before we get too far along, we need to remind you of one crucial element to this process: registration. There are tons of benefits to registration, but one key benefit is that you get to legally use the name Little Free Library in accordance with our registered trademark.

If you plan to purchase a Library through [our online catalog](#), then your Library is automatically registered and will arrive with an official charter sign already attached to it. You **do not** need to register and purchase a charter sign separately.

If you plan to build your own Library or purchase one somewhere outside of [www.littlefreelibrary.org](#), then you will need [register and purchase an official charter sign](#). There is a one-time payment of about \$43 per Library to register.

Here's what you get when you register:

- **A steward's packet** of proven tips to make your Library successful
- **An official charter sign** engraved with a unique charter number
- **The option to add your Library to the [world map of Little Free Libraries](#)**, which receives millions of views each year
- **Access to [a private Facebook group](#)** where you can get advice and support from thousands of your fellow Little Free Library stewards
- **A subscription to our weekly e-newsletter** with book giveaways, special product offers, tips for stewards, cool Library designs and more

- **Access to brand new, deeply discounted books** through [First Book](#) for stewards in low-income areas
- **Access to exclusive resources**, such as our Complete Guide to getting FREE, High-Quality Books for your Library (only available in the private Facebook group)
- A **How Does This Library Work?** flier for your Library

When should you register?

As soon as possible! If you plan to build your own Library, then go ahead and register right away, even if you are still early in the process of building your Library.

It will take a few weeks for your registration materials to arrive and there is no reason you cannot take advantage of the resources we offer right away. (We highly recommend that you join the [private Facebook](#) group ASAP, which is a great place to get inspiration and support while you are building your Library.)

Build Interest and Find Partners

Promoting literacy and a love of books is an appealing cause to nearly everybody. That's good news for you if you are looking to bring others in on your Little Free Library project. So, where should you start?

Logistical and Promotional Help

Who is going to help you plan this project? Even if you want to plan it on your own, it's good have a larger network of enthusiasts spreading the word to the community. But who should you reach out to first?

Your friends, family and neighbors. Find people who love to read and want to strengthen their community. Draw on their diverse skills and interests. Maybe your neighbor is a do-it-yourself wood worker willing to build a few Libraries, or a colleague is a good organizer and speaker. Start spinning your web of supporters!

Public and school librarians. Don't forget about retired librarians too!

Local schools. Talk to students and school clubs, as well as principals, teachers and counselors. Maintenance staff and crossing guards can have a stake in Little Libraries, too. Many Little Free Library stewards are current or retired teachers who are passionate about reading. Mention that you are looking for Library hosts and partners.

Neighborhood associations. Most groups thrive when they have active projects that benefit their members, and Little Free Libraries are among the most neighborly projects we know of. Try approaching a **local PR firm** and asking if they would volunteer their skills to promote your project. It's a great way for them to give back to their community!

Builders

If you are looking to build Little Free Libraries but don't want to build them all yourself, who could you ask?

Local carpenters and artists. Little Libraries are great promotional tools. A Library they build or decorate could be a constant advertisement for their work in the community. A modest sign on the Library itself can acknowledge the builder, artist or sponsor.

Local businesses. Try hardware, home and garden or building supply stores, paint companies; any business that could build a Library and is interested in promoting themselves through community service. Coffee shops and restaurants can offer ideal indoor or outdoor locations for Libraries, especially if the Libraries are decorated with their brand. Realtors like to point out that Little Free Libraries enhance a neighborhood's friendly appeal.

Girl and Boy Scout Troops, 4-H Clubs, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Jaycees, Altrusa, Masons, and other service-oriented organizations. Little Free Libraries are great community service projects for one day, once a month or as long as each group might like.

High schools, colleges and universities. If your high school has a woodshop class, propose that they build Libraries to be donated to the community. Art students could decorate them. You could even create a Library design contest. You'll be surprised to learn that elementary school classes are often excellent sources of ideas, books—and parents with skills.

Organize a Group Build Day

You can build one Library or many! Our [Amish Shed Kit](#) was designed with group build days in mind. This is an especially popular project for Eagle Scouts or Girl Scouts working on their Gold Award. ([Here is an example of how one Eagle Scout built 4 Little Free Libraries in Indianapolis.](#))

Just One: The Madison, Wisconsin Children's Museum started with an unpainted Amish Barn Wood Library as a craft activity in the Wisconsin Book Festival. Parents and kids covered it with beautifully colored wet tissue paper over several days, then auctioned it off to raise funds.

Four Libraries. Folklore Village in rural Dodgeville, Wisconsin brought families together from across the U.S. between Christmas and New Year's Day to construct four Little Free Libraries from found objects and recycled materials. In three days they transformed old cabinets, a dollhouse and scrap lumber into four unique Libraries that were donated to local residences.

Still More: Pat Wizbynski and Scott Gelzer wanted to create a long-lasting memorial to their son Brandon, whose 29th birthday would have been in 2012. They organized artists, builders, carpenters and friends for a citywide building day, a celebration and painting day, and 29 Little Free Library installations at nonprofit organizations.

Reach Out to Local Media

If you're not a PR expert and don't know anyone who is, that's just fine. You can still promote your Library project like a pro, or maybe even better because you have a personal commitment to the project. Here are some tips:

Send out a Press Release

Local media is your best friend when you launch your Little Library. Send out a press release ([like this one](#)) to your local radio and TV stations, newspapers and neighborhood newsletters, announcing your Little Library.

Tip: Make it easy for reporters to find you and your Little Library. Offer unique story angles and new, unusual, funny or timely information in your press release. You can send out more than one press release as there are new events or developments at your Library.

Use Social Media

Social media is a fantastic, free tool you can use to spread the word and ask for book donations if you need them.

Start a social media page specifically for your Little Library. We recommend Facebook or Instagram.

Tip: only start a Facebook page or Instagram account for your Library if you are going to update it regularly! People will quickly stop looking at your page if you rarely post anything. Don't know what to post on your page? Here is an example of [an Instagram account](#) and [a Facebook page](#) run by successful stewards.

Tell People Face-to-Face

This is probably the most powerful method you have to spread the word. Knock on doors, post fliers or mail out postcards to your entire neighborhood announcing your Little Free Library. Invite them to stop by for a Grand Opening Celebration where you provide snacks, have a ribbon-cutting and invite people to celebrate your Library.

The goal is to get lots of people involved from the beginning and encourage a sense of shared-ownership, which is key to making your Library successful in the long run.

Raise Funds

Regardless of the size of your project, you are likely to need to raise funds for supplies and materials.

Host an awareness event and ask for contributions.

Example: Host a Sunday Afternoon at the Movies! Screen one of the many free news pieces or documentaries on Little Free Library available on YouTube. We like [A Small Wooden Box](#), by Gwen Briesemeister. Provide snacks and ask people to bring "a buck and a book" to the screening to support your Little Free Library. This is a great way not only to educate people about Little Free Libraries, but to network with people who may want to help you as you move forward.

Reach out local businesses and organizations. [This how-to document](#) covers dozens of local resources you can use to get donations and raise funds to start your Little Free Library.

Find Books

Worried about having enough books to stock the Libraries? Here are some proven strategies from stewards:

Reach out to local bookstores and thrift shops. Approach local bookstores to see if they would be willing to donate. Explain what your Little Free Library is and ask if they would be willing to give you a discount or let you sort through their excess inventory.

Organize a Book Swap. You don't have to organize a massive citywide campaign. In fact, sometimes smaller events work better because they only require a relatively small group of organizers who invite friends, neighbors and colleagues. Some communities hold book swaps every few months and have centralized places where Little Free Library stewards can donate and take books any time. If you have any kids in the neighborhood, ask them if they could help you run a book swap at their school.

Contact the public library and Friends of the Library groups. Most public libraries and Friends groups have book sales throughout the year to get rid of excess books and raise a little money. Ask if you could sort through their books or take a bag of books for free to support your Little Library. Offer to partner with the public library and promote their events at your Little Library; some stewards have even organized events like field trips or story times with the support of their local public library staff.

Tip: When you register, you get the option to join the [private Facebook group for registered stewards](#). When have a complete guide that shows you how to get FREE, high-quality books for your Little Free Library only available in the Facebook group files!

Keep People Interested

Now that you have your Libraries up and running, how do you keep people interested? Here are some ideas that have worked fairly well to date:

Little Free Library bike or walking tour. This could even be a treasure hunt for kids. These can be one-time events or you can design routes for tourists. [Seattle, WA area families have already held several bike tours.](#)

Summer Little Free Library camps for kids. For two years 10-13 year olds in one city have combined arts, crafts, community observation, reading and organizing into five days of fun. The first year they built one Library on the theme of kindness, and found lots of ways to experiment with acts of kindness. The second year they built four Little Free Libraries, prepared books for distribution and visited dozens of locations.

Bi-weekly or monthly story times. In good weather, have everyone gather by a Little Free Library, pick their favorite books and read aloud to each other. Or schedule monthly readings at coffee shops or community centers.

Arts and crafts events. Create bookmarks and tiny books that can be placed in Libraries in your area.

Geocaching. If you haven't heard of this international treasure hunt yet, [check it out here](#). Little Free Libraries make perfect hiding spots for geocaches and many stewards have reported immediately receiving new visitors within hours of adding a geocache to their Library.

Want More?

Our [blog](#), [website](#) (especially the section [just for stewards](#)), [Facebook page](#) and [private Facebook group for registered stewards](#) are great resources at your disposal.

Be sure to [sign up for our mailing list](#), as well, even if you aren't a registered steward. You can still stay up-to-date on the latest exciting news in the Little Free Library world!

So what are you waiting for? Let's spread the joy of reading to every corner around the world!