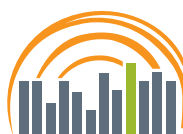


# Summer Reading: A Guide to Getting Started

Edited by Kelsy Thompson

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Planning Programs for Different Age Groups	
Early Literacy.....	3
Children .....	7
Teens .....	8
Adults .....	16
Summer Food.....	19
Accessibility & Inclusion .....	20
Preparation.....	23
Promotion and Outreach.....	26
Volunteers .....	30



**collaborative**  
summer library program™

# INTRODUCTION

## BUILDING YOUR SUMMER READING PROGRAM

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Successful programming requires careful planning. It is easier to design, publicize, and evaluate your summer program if you set goals and objectives to guide your planning. This information is also useful in reporting your programs to your director, board of trustees, and community governing bodies. The following are suggested goals and objectives, and strategies to accomplish them:

#### Goals

- Empower people of all ages and abilities to read by developing positive attitudes about reading and books
- Motivate school-aged children to maintain reading skills during summer vacation
- Encourage regular use of the library
- Attract new patrons to the library
- Promote library services and resources in the community
- Foster cooperation between community agencies
- Show young children that reading can be fun
- Encourage readers to try new literary genres
- Give libraries opportunities to highlight books of interest
- Create positive publicity for libraries
- Increase registration of library cardholders
- Increase family participation in library activities
- Reach new communities

#### Objectives

- Reach out to reluctant readers
- Reach out to underserved populations within the library service region
- Increase library card registration
- Increase circulation of materials
- Increase summer program offerings and attendance at programs
- Partner with at least one other community agency on a program
- Partner with at least one new community business or organization
- Offer exciting, new concepts and opportunities to learn to audiences of all-ages
- Provide a space at the library where all ages and abilities are welcome, accepted, and acknowledged

# PLANNING PROGRAMS FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

When you begin planning your summer programs, ask yourself, “Who is our audience?” and “Whom do we want to participate?” Traditionally, summer reading programs have been designed to encourage elementary-age children to keep reading during summer vacation, but many libraries have expanded their programming to accommodate other age groups. Your library’s audience may include pre-readers, newly independent readers, middle schoolers, teens, and adults, as well as non-English speakers, patrons with disabilities, and families.

## EARLY LITERACY

Children learn about communication, language, storytelling, and letters long before they actually learn to read and write, and this is where early literacy comes in. Research on early literacy and child development indicates that it is never too early to start preparing children for reading success. Children who have been read to from an early age have a larger vocabulary, acquire better language skills, and are more likely to want to learn to read than children who have not been read to. In addition, research has shown that children need to develop certain skills in order to fully benefit from the reading instruction they receive when they arrive at school. Library staff play a key role in helping young patrons develop those skills and in educating parents and other caregivers about their crucial role as their children’s first teachers.

There are six early literacy skills children must develop in order to increase their likelihood of reading success: print motivation (loving books and print), phonological awareness (understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds), vocabulary (learning new words and their definitions), narrative skills (storytelling), print awareness (knowing that, in English, we read left to right and top to bottom),

and letter knowledge (knowing that words are made of letters).

Certain activities encourage the development of each of these skills. For a child to fully develop the six skills for reading success, the activities must not only be incorporated into library storytimes but also be practiced in the home by the child’s caregivers. These activities fall into five categories: Read, Talk, Sing, Write, and Play.

The first practice, Read, is one of the simplest practices to introduce in a library and the most important activity for developing early literacy skills, especially vocabulary and comprehension. Every time you read to a child, you are helping to develop his or her early reading skills! This practice can be modeled by:

- Reading a variety of books during storytime
- Making diverse books available for browsing after storytime
- Providing books to local childcare centers
- Maintaining an engaging collection of books for children and caregivers to check out

The second practice, Talk, helps children develop their vocabulary and social skills. Caregivers should begin talking to their children at birth, even though babies can’t respond with words. Each time a caregiver speaks to a child, the caregiver is promoting the child’s brain development and giving the child a foundation for reading success. This practice can be modeled by:

- Asking open-ended questions during storytime
- Welcoming children of all ages and abilities to the library and library programs

- “Taking turns” when a child is talking to you—even if that talk is babble

The third practice, Sing, is a great way to introduce new vocabulary words while having fun. Children respond to their caregivers’ voices, even if the adult can’t carry a tune. Singing breaks down words for young ears, making them easier to understand, and introduces new words that might not be used in everyday conversation. This practice can be modeled by:

- Singing a variety of songs and rhymes during storytime
- Using music and rhythm props with caregivers and children
- Choosing singable storytime books

The fourth practice, Play, is vital for language and social development. Children learn about language through different kinds of play as they engage in problem solving and experience various kinds of social interaction. This practice can be modeled by:

- Including play in your storytimes
- Dedicating space for an early literacy center or dramatic play area in your library
- Providing toys for caregivers and their children during library programs
- Showing caregivers how to play peek-a-boo

The fifth practice, Write, can seem perplexing. How can a one-year-old child practice writing? Simply exposing children to words and letters and engaging them in activities involving their fingers will help them make the transition to reading and writing. This practice can be modeled by:

- Talking about shapes during storytime
- Having the letters of the alphabet visible in your program room

- Providing finger paint or crayons after storytime
- Using fingerplays that involve fine-motor movement (e.g., “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”)
- Encouraging caregivers to embrace fine motor exploration at home—allowing a baby to spread food around a tray with his or her fingers could even be considered a pre-writing activity!
- Displaying artwork by young patrons in your library and encouraging caregivers to display children’s art and writing projects at home

## STRUCTURING YOUR EARLY LITERACY SUMMER PROGRAM

Putting together a cohesive summer reading program for pre-readers does not need to be complicated. You may decide to use a log for participants to keep track of books and program activities. Logs can be made to focus on developing literacy skills by emphasizing activities that reinforce the five early literacy practices. Your log could be as simple as a bookmark, a game board, or a reading record divided into sections. Some sample activities include:

### Read

- Read a book together
- Read a poem together
- Read a book that makes you laugh
- Tell a story using just the illustrations in a book

### Sing

- Sing your favorite song
- Make up a song about your favorite animal
- Make up a song about what you did today
- Sing “Mary Had a Little Lamb” but use different animals

## Talk

- Talk to your baby about your day and ask older children to tell you about their days
- Describe to your baby what you see outside your car window, or ask older children to tell you what they can see
- Talk about the weather! Is it hot or cold? Is it raining, snowing, windy?
- Go for a walk outside and talk about the things you see

## Play

- Play peek-a-boo or hide and seek
- Play with items around your house—leave the electronic devices on the charger
- Pretend you're going to the moon! What would you bring?
- Act like your favorite animal

## Write

- Finger paint with washable paints or shaving cream
- Place masking tape on your child's high chair or on the tabletop and encourage your child to pull it up, building his or her finger and hand muscles
- Sing the alphabet song and clap once for each letter
- Look for items in your home that are shaped like squares, circles, rectangles, and triangles

For more examples of early literacy summer program logs, visit [www.earlylit.net/summerreading/index.shtml](http://www.earlylit.net/summerreading/index.shtml).

After the child and caregiver complete the activities, they can receive an age-appropriate incentive. When choosing incentives, keep in mind the risk of choking and avoid items with small pieces. Some popular incentives for babies and toddlers

are bibs, onesies, sippy cups, bubbles, and board books. Some popular incentives for preschoolers are stickers, crayons, bubbles, and paperback books. Every family would benefit from an additional (or first) book to keep at home permanently. If resources allow, consider making books the only incentive for your early literacy summer reading program.

When evaluating audiences for your library's early literacy program, keep the following age-specific levels in mind:

- Babies: Birth-24 months
- Toddlers: 2-3 years
- Preschoolers: 4-5 years

However, as children develop at different rates, these are only general guidelines. It is more appropriate for caregivers to find a storytime that meets a child's developmental stage and mobility level than his or her age.

The five early literacy practices might be intimidating to many parents and other caregivers. Here are a few simple ways you can explain how a parent or caregiver can continue using these skills after they leave your program:

- "Babies and toddlers who grow up with books around them become more motivated to learn to read."
- "Keep books everywhere—in the diaper bag, in the car, in the bedroom, all over the house—and find a cozy nook in a space where there are few distractions and make that your special reading place."
- "Babies have short attention spans. Unless your baby really wants to, you don't have to read for more than two or three minutes at a time."
- "Always try to make reading positive and fun. If your child gets restless, just put the book aside and try again later."
- "You are an important role model for your

children. They want to do the things they see you do. Let your child see you reading—talk to him or her about the recipes, newspapers, emails, magazines, or books that you read.”

- “Run your finger along the lines of repeated text. Running your finger along the words you are reading from time to time helps children understand that you are reading the words, not the pictures. It also helps them understand that in English we read from left to right and from the top to the bottom on a page.”
- “Being able to tell letters apart is basically a shape recognition skill, so talk about shapes with your baby. Tell him his rattle is round or his book is square. You are helping him get ready to learn his letters.”
- “Children learn better through play than through workbooks, flashcards, or quizzes. Look for ways to play with letters in the bathtub, on the fridge, and so on. Draw letters on the sidewalk with chalk or make them out of playdough.”
- “Sing songs like ‘Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,’ and point to the body parts as you sing the words. This is an active way to increase your child’s vocabulary.”
- “Talk to your baby or toddler all the time—even before she can answer you. The more words a child hears, the bigger her vocabulary will become. The more words she knows, the easier it will be for her to recognize words when she starts to read.”

Remember to have fun in your programs. Laughter is contagious! Parents and caregivers who feel relaxed and comfortable in your programs will have the confidence to continue developing these skills with their little ones at home. And please keep in mind that web content changes frequently. While we’ve included suggested web resources in this manual, please check the sites before sharing them with patrons to be sure that the content is accurate and appropriate.

This resource was thoughtfully prepared by the Collaborative Summer Library Program Early Literacy Committee to give both novices

and seasoned practitioners the tools needed to successfully implement programs focused on early literacy development. Knowing your particular audience will empower you to select the most appropriate materials to use in your programming. Continuity and repetition are essential for helping young children develop important literacy skills.

For more information on early literacy:

The Center for Early Literacy Learning  
[www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org)

Contains resources and practice guides for professionals, parents, and caregivers.

Diamant-Cohen, Betsy, ed. *Children’s Services: Partnerships for Success*. ALA Editions, 2010.

Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library  
[www.everychildreadytoread.org](http://www.everychildreadytoread.org)

A joint project of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children that encourages librarians and caregivers to engage in the five practices for early literacy with children.

Fox, Mem. *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*. Harcourt, 2001.

Ghoting, Saroj Nadkarni and Pamela Martin-Diaz. *Early Literacy Storytimes @ Your Library*. ALA Editions, 2006.

Ghoting, Saroj Nadkarni and Pamela Martin-Diaz. *Storytimes for Everyone: Developing Young Children’s Language and Literacy*. ALA Editions, 2013.

International Reading Association  
[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)  
A nonprofit global network of individuals and institutions committed to worldwide literacy.

MacMillan, Kathy and Christine Kirker. *Baby Storytime Magic: Active Early Literacy Through Bounces, Rhymes, Tickles and More*. ALA Editions, 2014.

McNeil, Heather. *Read, Rhyme and Romp: Early Literacy Skills and Activities for Librarians,*

*Teachers, and Parents.* Libraries Unlimited, 2012.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

The world's largest organization working on behalf of young children from birth to age 8.

Reading Rockets [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org)

A national multimedia literacy initiative offering evidence-based information and resources on how young children learn to read, why so many struggle, and what caring adults can do to help.

Schiller, Pamela Byrne. *Creating Readers: Over 1,000 Games, Activities, Tongue Twisters, Fingerplays, Songs and Stories to Get Children Excited about Reading.* Gryphon House, 2000.

Zero to Three

[www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-language-literacy/tips-tools-early-lit-and-lang.html](http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-language-literacy/tips-tools-early-lit-and-lang.html)

A national nonprofit organization that provides parents, professionals, and policymakers the knowledge and know-how to nurture early development.

Your state may also have an online resource—search for the name of your state along with “Early Literacy.”

## READ-TO-ME PROGRAMS

Many libraries offer a Read-to-Me program for preschoolers. A parent or caregiver reads aloud to the child and records what's been read, enabling the child to participate in the game element of the program. Read-to-Me programs introduce the “summer reading” concept to young children, promote goodwill with caregivers (who often have older children participating in the school-age programs), provide a family activity, and encourage reading aloud to children at home. They also generate positive publicity for the library.

# CHILDREN

Children between the ages of three and eight are hands-on explorers who make personal, meaningful connections with abstract materials (book and story concepts) when they are provided with opportunities to play with story themes. Effective library programming permits young children to touch, manipulate, create, and experiment. By combining active programming (companion crafts, games, projects) with passive programming (listening to a story, watching a flannel-board presentation), the unique developmental needs of both pre-readers and beginning readers can be met.

## STRUCTURING YOUR PROGRAM FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

How do you manage active hands-on programming for young children? Preparation is the key! When selecting games and songs, take care to choose them according to the age levels of the children in attendance. Complex rules and lyrics will confuse young children, and games that foster physical aggression are less appropriate than games that rely on chance or luck.

Some children do not like to participate in games or singing. Do not force them to join in. Instead, allow them to be viewers or listeners, or offer open-ended activities, which enable children to achieve success because there is no one way to make the craft or art project. Crafts that require many steps and a lot of direction can be difficult to manage with a large group of young children, so keep it simple, focus on process-art rather than product-art, and make sure you prepare ahead of time to avoid frustration.

For arts and crafts activities, ask yourself, “What's the worst thing that could happen?” and plan accordingly. Protect carpets and tabletops from the occasional spill by using newspapers, tablecloths, or even vinyl shower-curtain liners. Accidental soiling of books and other materials can be prevented if a

basin of soapy water is placed near a work area to quickly clean sticky hands.

Special arts and crafts or make-and-take programs can be offered at intervals during the summer program if your library cannot accommodate hands-on activities on a weekly basis. Alternately, by securing a larger facility such as a community center and enlisting extra volunteers, you can still present at least one or more of these programs.

Don't be afraid to make use of recycled or throwaway materials such as plastic bottles, cardboard tubes and boxes, scrap paper, foam trays, thread spools, and pasteboard (old cereal boxes). Ask a local printing company for paper scraps. You may even get end-rolls of paper that are useful for murals and other large projects.

## Independent Readers

Independent Readers are the group of children traditionally targeted for summer library programs. They are still the primary audience for many libraries. For these readers, the process is simple: A goal is set, then children read on their own, report what they've read to the librarian or record the information, and receive a reward or certificate at the end of the program. There is frequently a game element to the program, allowing children to advance on a game board, add a token to a bulletin board or mural, or put in an entry for a prize drawing each time they report on a book.

# TEENS

Too often, teens are slighted when it comes to library programs and materials. Many children stop using libraries when they enter adolescence, and enlisting teen volunteers to assist at summer library programs for younger children is one way of keeping teens involved with books and libraries. But designing a summer program to meet teens' interests is an even better way keeping them involved in the library—helping to empower lifelong library supporters.

## Why Teens Need Summer Programming

For those of us who are further removed from our teen years, it may be hard to relate to teen patrons or understand why they do what they do. The short answer: They don't have much of a choice!

Brains develop from back to front, and the prefrontal cortex is the last part to develop. The prefrontal cortex is the home of the brain's "executive function": planning, setting priorities, organizing thoughts, suppressing impulses, and weighing the consequences of one's actions.

Additionally, hormones are active in the limbic system, which is the brain's emotional center. These hormones cause teens to be emotionally volatile and lead them to actively seek out situations that will give those emotions full play. So while the brain regions that put the brakes on risky behavior are still developing, the hormones that push teens to engage in risky behavior are in full stride.

Fortunately, the library can help teens fulfill their needs at this unique stage of life. There are four traits that all stages of teen development have in common.

Teens are working to gain independence. By offering library cards and guaranteeing the confidentiality of the teen's library usage, giving instruction in how to use library resources independently, and offering the opportunity to volunteer on projects for which they are responsible, the library gives teens chances to assert their independence.

Teens are seeking excitement. While in the past, libraries may not have been synonymous with excitement, new ideas in programming and young adult spaces can offer teens a great deal of stimulation.

Teens are trying to figure out their identities. Librarians know that one of the many values of reading is that it can help readers to discover possible futures for themselves.



Therefore, a strong teen reader's advisory program, complete with both fiction and nonfiction, can help teens fully explore their potential. Additionally, programs that help teens to share their interests with others can strengthen their self-esteem and give them opportunities to explore other possibilities.

Teens are seeking acceptance. When the library provides a space for teens, a positive experience, and a welcoming environment, it is acknowledging their worth.

## Planning a Teen Summer Library Program

Before you get into the nitty-gritty of your teen summer library program, address a few basic questions:

When will you offer the teen summer library program?

Poll your staff and teen patrons to determine the best time to offer a teen sum-

mer library program. Luckily, there's no right or wrong answer. If you are overwhelmed by the thought of a program that lasts all summer, schedule a short, more manageable program of two or four weeks. There's no rule that says the program has to last all summer—however, if it's a short program, you may want to call it a "reading program" instead of a "summer reading program." Alternatively, if you want to start on the day school ends for the summer and go until school is back in session, more power to you!

Will you offer incentives?

The incentives debate has simmered for as long as summer reading programs have existed. Yes, we all agree, reading is its own reward. The question is, of course, do teens agree with us? Find out what your teen patrons want (ask your teen volunteers or do a quick poll of regular library users), what your staff and board wants, or what you want. There's no right or wrong answer to this.

If so, what will they be?

Many libraries offer an end-of-summer party for their teen summer library program finishers. If you do choose to give incentives (or reading awards), ask teens to find something they'll like.

Contact local promotional companies to get a catalog of items that can be personalized with your library name and logo. You can look in the yellow pages under promotions or advertising specialties to find these companies. If you are from a small library with a small order, you may not have enough items to get a price break. Consider partnering with another library to get bulk discounts. You could either have both libraries' logos on the item or simply use the CSLP theme artwork.

T-shirts are popular incentives. The drawbacks are that they can be expensive and it's hard to determine the correct size. Have teens put their T-shirt size on their reading program registration form so that you can have the T-shirts ready at an end-of-summer party.

Books make terrific incentives or reading awards. Cull through donations that have come into your library over the course of the year, choosing those that are in perfect condition. Don't forget to select a few appropriate adult titles for your older teens. Also, try to find some comic strip collections and graphic novels for your less conventional readers. Ask your local comics shop if they could donate a few copies for program prizes.

Scholastic Books allows you to purchase books by the box. You can select by generic categories but can't specify individual titles. There are two websites that sell discount and remainder books very inexpensively. If you are purchasing less than \$250 worth of books, take a look at <http://bookoutlet.com>. Spending more? Get more bang for your buck at [www.bookdepot.com](http://www.bookdepot.com). It takes a while to get through their catalogs, but paperbacks for under \$2 are worth a little time.

You could also offer coupons for library privileges such as thirty more minutes of computer time or

\$1 off fines or movies. You could even offer incentives for things that teens couldn't or wouldn't buy for themselves, such as a membership to a museum or pool.

How will we get money?

Prepare a budget by deciding what you will need money for: incentives, program costs, refreshments, paper and photocopying of flyers and logs, and decorations. Before you start asking around for donations, check with your administration to make sure it's okay. Not all libraries approve of asking for donations—yours may have special procedures to follow. Be sure to dot your i's and cross your t's, because you don't want to give anyone a reason to not have a teen summer library program.

Once you get approval to start asking, make a list of possible donors. Your Friends of the Library foundation should be at the top of the list, if you have one. Follow that with businesses that cater to teens—think food establishments, music stores, movie theaters, and video arcades. These businesses will often donate gift certificates or items instead of money. But if it's money you want, consider soliciting donations from banks or large corporations that have community giving programs. You may be able to get a company to sponsor your entire teen summer library program in exchange for publicity that will reach a huge teen audience.

What role will teen volunteers play?

There are many volunteer opportunities for teens throughout the summer. Many teens like organizing programs for younger children, and they can serve as role models for those children. Team up with your children's librarian to find opportunities for teens to work with the children's program. Teens might:

- direct a play starring younger children, or help with casting, set, props, or publicity
- participate in a book buddies program where teens read to younger children
- supervise a kickoff or end-of-summer party for the children's program

- create decorations for the children's room based on the current theme
- organize a game day for children related to the theme
- develop a series of craft programs for children related to the theme
- assist with registration for the children's program

Teens also can serve as role models for their peers in the library. Teens might:

- volunteer to read in the library for a set time each week during the summer and earn points toward a prize
- assist with record keeping for the teen program
- contribute to the library's social media sites, including blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube
- make a podcast for the library's web page featuring book talks
- make book trailers or book talks using web apps like Animoto ([www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com)) or Prezi ([www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com))

Teens can offer their energy, enthusiasm, and technical skills in the library or with a variety of non-profit organizations. You can even set up a volunteer board where teens can find places to do community service. Teens might:

- volunteer at a nursing or assisted-living home or senior center—reading, helping with activities, or just spending time with seniors
- volunteer at the humane society or other animal shelter
- assist adults who want to learn computer skills at the library
- volunteer at a hospital
- volunteer at any nonprofit organization whose cause interests them

How will we get teens into the library?

Let teens know why they should be in your library. To that end, target your publicity to four areas: schools, media, your library, and teen hangouts.

You have several options through the schools. Contact individual teachers or media specialists if you don't have the budget to get flyers into the hands of every student. Make contact with people who will get the word out, and let them do the work for you.

Remember to include the students in the beginning of the age range for your teen summer library program. For example, if your program is for students going into sixth grade and up, send flyers to this year's fifth-grade students. If you do school visits, keep them interesting. Book Talk a few titles that fit the summer reading theme. Pass out flyers about the program, and ask students a trivia question. Tell them they have to come to the library and give you the correct answer to win a prize. When they come in to get their small prize (e.g., candy), sign them up for the teen summer library program.

## **Social Media**

Use social media to promote your programs. Do you have a Facebook page? Do you have a blog? A Twitter or Instagram account? Have one of your teen volunteers help with the social media management—they can create the right voice for you to reach other teens.

## **Publicize Within Your Library**

Use the usual publicity resources: library newsletters, flyers on bulletin boards, and listings on community calendars and web pages. Think outside the box, too. Don't have a bulletin board? Paste flyers on both sides of corrugated cardboard and hang them from the ceiling or light fixtures with fishing line. Put announcements on computer screensavers and wallpaper. Put bookmarks in books, including nonfiction books, or place them in the books as they are checked out.

## **Send Invitations**

Put together a mailing list of regular library users: those who have attended programs, and those who participated in previous teen summer library programs. Send special invitations to participants who have recently outgrown the children's summer library program. If you can't afford to do a postal mailing, start an email list.

## **Tell the Media**

Send a media release to all media and print news organizations in your area. Don't forget to send it to public radio and public television, too.

Post flyers in businesses that cater to teens: restaurants, movie theaters, and video arcades. Contact all the businesses from which you requested donations. Is there a convenience store where area students stop after school? How about a recreation center or the parks department?

Consider other forums for teens who can't hang out in the regular places: women's centers, justice departments, family resource centers, homeless family institutions, and group housing. The added benefit to advertising in places like these is that the teens you find here will often be those who are most in need of your library's services.

And don't forget your most powerful advertising tool! Positive word of mouth can spread the information about your program faster and more efficiently than any other type of public relations platform. After all, most teens will listen to their peers before anyone else when it comes to something fun to do. Consider offering a prize to the volunteer who refers the most teens to your teen summer library program.

How do we decorate the library?

Focus on one concept from the summer reading theme and stick to it. Decorate open walls with pictures and posters. Use shelf ends, the shelf tops, and tabletops for decorations.

Consider throwing a pre-summer reading program party for making decorations, pictures, or crafts, and don't forget to get decorating advice from the

teens themselves.

How can we get good books into teens' hands?

You want to make it easy for teens to find books. If you don't have a young adult section, make one. It's not as tough as it sounds. Start by collecting the Michael L. Printz Award lists, the Best Fiction for Young Adults lists, the Quick Picks lists, and the Popular Paperbacks lists—they're available on the YALSA website ([www.ala.org/yalsa](http://www.ala.org/yalsa)).

Pull all the books listed that you have in your library. If your state has a teen book award, include the books that have won or even been nominated for that award. Find a corner of the library to make room for this selection of books—it can be as simple as shifting the rest of the collection to fill the holes on the shelves where these books were. Voilà! You have a young adult collection!

Sound too easy? Well, listen to the expert. Kimberly Bolan is a nationally known authority on creating teen spaces, especially in small libraries. In 1995 through 1996, Bolan worked on a project at the Dansville Public Library, in Dansville, New York, carving out a home away from home for teens in this small library. Circulation increased 350% just by creating this teen area and paying more attention to teen services in general.

Once you have these books in one place, make it eye-catching. Put up posters and a bulletin board for announcements of interest to teens. Don't know what will appeal to teens? Have your teen volunteers decorate the space!

## Develop genre booklists

Keep a selection on hand for a wide range of reading interests. Having trouble keeping up with your young adult reading? Go to AdLit.org ([www.adlit.org/books\\_by\\_theme](http://www.adlit.org/books_by_theme)) to find a curated selection of themed booklists.

There are two things to keep in mind when developing booklists for teens. The first is that many teens are avid nonfiction readers, so a combination of fiction and nonfiction on your lists would be

a bonus. Second, keep in mind the age range of your YA collection. If your collection is intended for 6th through 12th graders, you have a large age and developmental spread to serve. Consider dividing your booklists by age group. Also, consider developing a booklist of titles for those tweens and younger teens just beginning to read YA. Take content, such as language, sexual situations, and violence into consideration when suggesting titles for these younger patrons.

## Create Displays

Bookstores use a number of eye-catching tricks that you can adopt. They often display books face-out (just one book face-out per shelf works) and use shelf talkers, which are basically notes attached to the shelf calling attention to a particular book. They also have window displays and lots of display shelving. You may not have actual book display shelving, but you can use tabletops or a cleared area on the top of your bookshelves. Make use of the shelf ends, too, by posting brief book reviews on colorful paper or featuring a group of book jackets.

You can also do themed displays or have your volunteers fill the display area with their recommendations. A simple and surprisingly eye-catching strategy is to assemble books with the same color on the cover—they don't have to be related in any other way.

Put sticky notes in books indicating read-alikes or other books in the series. For series information, go to the Kent District Library's What's Next site (<http://ww2.kdl.org/libcat/whatsnext.asp>).

## Solicit Book Recommendations

Offer teens a reading preferences questionnaire. Teens fill out the form, and library staff or volunteers compile a list of suggested reads based on their likes and dislikes. This is a good service to offer online, as well, although you may want to offer this only to your local patrons. Remember, any service on your website will be accessed and used by people all over the world if you let them.

## Book Talking

One of the best ways to create interest in books is through word of mouth. Make book talking an integral part of your day on the reference desk when you are one-on-one with teens. Or make it one of your specialties when talking to groups of teens—at schools or as part of teen programs.

Nancy Keane's Book Talk Quick and Simple (<http://nancykeane.com/booktalks>) offers book talking tips and a huge selection of sample book talks by interest level.

If you have access to NoveList, an online reader's advisory tool, you will find book talks written by YA luminaries like Patrick Jones. What a find! If you don't subscribe to NoveList, try to find the funds. It's an invaluable reader's advisory tool. For more information, go to [www.ebscohost.com/novelist](http://www.ebscohost.com/novelist).

## Create Book Discussion Groups

You can do reader's advisories through your programming, too. Offer a book pass or book discussion group. A book pass is the more informal choice: teens gather together and take turns telling each other about good books they've read.

Add a bit of cohesiveness by doing genre book passes—one month everyone reads fantasy, the next everyone reads a mystery, and so on. The advantages to book passes are that they require little preparation on your part, there is no cost, you don't need multiple copies of titles, and teens can choose their own books to read.

Book discussion groups are more formal. Teens all read the same book, and someone leads a discussion of that book. You don't necessarily need money for a book discussion group, although it is nice to be able to provide copies of the books to the participants. You can lead the discussions yourself, or your teen participants can take turns. You could also have a core group of volunteers who share the task of leading the group. Another technique that encourages participation is to put pre-written questions in a hat and pass the hat around. Every

participant picks one question, reads it aloud, and responds before opening discussion to the group.

For more resources on making a YA space that teens will love:

Kimberly Bolan, *Teen Spaces: The Step-by-Step Library Makeover*, American Library Association, 2009.

Michele Gorman and Tricia Suellentrop, *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-To-Do-It Manual*.

Renee Vaillancourt, *Bare Bones Young Adult Services: Tips for Public Library Generalists*.

How Will We Run the Program?

## TYPES OF TEEN PROGRAMS

You still need to decide how teens are going to earn the honor of saying, "I finished the teen summer library program!" There is no right or wrong answer to this question, just like every other decision that comes with offering a teen summer library program. It's up to you to decide if you'll require teens to read specific genres or titles. What you should require, though, is that teens read ability-appropriate books, not just age-appropriate books. If you have a teen who reads at a second-grade level, by all means allow him or her to do so for the teen summer library program. It's more important to encourage their reading habit and to include them in the summer fun with their peers than to try to increase the YA circulation statistics. Here are a few options for how you might run your teen program:

## Counting Books

**How It Works:** Decide how many books teens must read. When they've read the books, they get their reading award.

**Advantages:** It is very easy for you and the teens.

**Disadvantages:** Limited-ability and reluctant readers may have a difficult time finishing.

Prodigious readers may finish in the first weekend.

Variations: Once teens have read the minimum requirement, allow them to put an entry into a drawing for additional prizes for every additional book (or five books) they read.

## Counting Pages

**How It Works:** Similar to counting books, determine how many pages teens must read. Once they've completed them, they get their reading award.

**Advantages:** Readers of adult fiction and other weighty tomes (Harry Potter or Eragon, anyone?) won't be penalized by reading big, fat books. They can savor the thickest books and not have to rush through them or bypass them altogether in order to read a certain number of books.

**Disadvantages:** Record keeping in this program can be tedious. You'll probably want to double-check the math of each teen who turns in a log. However, that could be a teen volunteer opportunity, if you wish!

**Variations:** As with counting books, you can offer prize drawings for teens who read over the minimum amount.

## Counting Time

**How It Works:** Teens are required to read for a certain amount of time.

**Advantages:** Teens can read absolutely anything: novels, magazines, newspapers, web pages, even cereal boxes. This is one case where you might want to rescind the ability-appropriate rule. Not only does the time option even the playing field as far as reading level is concerned, but also both parties benefit when teens read out loud to younger siblings. This method encourages the reading habit, which will hopefully carry over past the end of the teen summer library program.

**Disadvantages:** Registration will have to end once you reach the point where it's physically impossible to do the required reading in the remaining time.

**Variations:** Your time requirement can be per day

(e.g., 15 minutes per day for 20 days), per week (e.g., 3 hours per week for 4 weeks), or over the course of the summer (e.g., 30 hours). Again, you can still offer additional prize drawings for teens who read over the minimum time.

## Reading Log

**How It Works:** Similar to counting time, give teens a calendar covering the days of the teen summer library program. Each day they write down how many minutes they read. Or if you are requiring a certain number of minutes per day, they just cross off the days when they meet the requirement.

## Point System

**How It Works:** Assign point values to whatever you want teens to do: read books, magazines, or newspapers, attend a special event, write book reviews, volunteer, etc. Once teens have amassed the point total you set, they win the incentive.

**Advantages:** Teens can encounter the whole library experience. You can even require them to answer a trivia question using library resources!

**Disadvantages:** Record keeping can be time-consuming. Decide if you want teens to earn a certain number of their points by reading—otherwise, you may have teens finish the program without cracking a book.

**Variations:** This whole method is about choices. You can give teens a menu of options, limited only by your imagination.

## Contracts

**How It Works:** Each teen sets his or her own reading goal and signs a contract agreeing to complete the requirements. It's a good idea to have suggested goals available, since many teens won't have any idea what is appropriate.

**Advantages:** Since finishing requirements are set for each teen, this program eliminates any difficulties based on ability.

**Disadvantages:** Record keeping is up to each teen and may be complicated.

Variations: You can have minimum requirements, but teens who want to challenge themselves can do so. Teens can keep track of pages, time, books, or whatever they want.

## **Can We Do Extra Things for Teens?**

Congratulations, you have a teen summer library program. Now that you've laid the groundwork, you can add some extras if you want. Ask yourself:

- What sort of information, if any, do I need to collect from teens?
- Do we want to offer special events?

## **INFORMATION COLLECTING**

A teen summer library program gives you a golden opportunity to gather all sorts of information about the teens in your community. It's not necessary—you can do a very low-maintenance teen summer library program by putting a stack of reading logs out for teens to pick up. You may want to number the logs to see how many get picked up. However, if you do face-to-face or online registration, there are different types of information that you can collect.

### **Name**

Aside from the obvious benefit of knowing who has enrolled in and/or completed your teen summer library program, it's always nice to be able to welcome teens by name. Teens who are greeted at the library by name feel more welcome and are more likely to use the library. Anecdotal evidence shows that this personal touch may be the single most effective way to prevent inappropriate behavior.

### **Grade**

You can expect more participants at the middle-school level than the high-school level. Keep an eye on the age of your participants and choose your book displays accordingly.

## **School**

Consider contacting the schools whose teens participated and ask them to acknowledge the finishers again in the fall. Not only does this give the teens even more positive feedback, but it also reminds the schools that you support them in their educational mission.

## **City of Residence**

Whether you are in a multi-city library system or have a one-branch library, you are probably drawing patrons from multiple locations. Keeping track of where teens live lets you map your actual user base, allowing you to target publicity effectively.

## **Address/Phone Number/E-mail**

Contact information can be used to tell teens about special events, remind them about upcoming deadlines, and ask for volunteers.

## **Gender Identity**

The library should be a safe space for teens of all gender identities. Make sure your programming is inclusive for non-binary patrons and that your book lists include LGBTQ+ titles.

## **Ethnicity**

Especially in locations with large ethnic populations, knowing your user base can help you to develop a foreign-language collection that will be particularly useful.

## **Library Card Number**

While this probably isn't realistic for larger programs, you could offer a service where you place books that you think teens will like on reserve for them. You will also have contact information for your teens.

## **Branch Library**

Your multi-branch library may have a large disparity in the number of teens participating in the teen

summer library program. Identify the branches with high enrollment, and find out what they're doing differently. It may be something as simple as a location near a school, but it may be that their staff is much friendlier or the times they offer special events are more compatible with teens' schedules.

## Logging and Tracking the Information

It's pretty simple to set up a spreadsheet or database to house your teen summer library program statistics, making it easy to generate reports at the end of the summer. However, unless you have more than one computer at the desk where you're doing registration, it may be unwieldy to type your registration information directly into the database when teens sign up. Make a form that your staff will fill out and photocopy it on scratch paper, or write each teen's information on old catalog cards. A volunteer can put the information in a database during off-peak hours.

## Online Registration

It's relatively easy to offer online registration. Teens can send you an email with the required information, and you can send back a reading log as an attached file. You can also put up an online form for teens to fill in, and, once it's submitted, direct teens to a printer-friendly log. Check out Evanced Solutions ([www.evancedsolutions.com](http://www.evancedsolutions.com)) for summer reading software.

Remember, any service on your website will be accessed and used by people all over the world if you let them. So, unless you're prepared to ship your finishing incentives to Great Britain, require some sort of library visit. Don't know how to put up a website? Millions of teens have websites that they've designed themselves. Maybe one of them uses your library.

## Special Events

Special events bring new teens into the library. They give us the opportunity to present the library as a fun place. They let us show teens all that the library

has to offer. And, certainly not to be discounted, they're fun for you!

## Look Online for Examples

Go online or lurk on the YALSA discussion lists—you'll hear about all sorts of ambitious, fabulous special events. This will have one of two effects on you: it will inspire you to share the same fabulous programs with your teens, or it will scare the willies out of you. Not everyone has the time, the space, the staff, or the money to offer elaborate special events. The good news? You can always come up with something to fit your resources.

The key here is a little creative thinking. When you hear of a nifty event, break it down into its components and adapt them as needed.

# ADULTS

Adults look forward to summer as much as kids do. They can relax, take vacations, and catch up on reading, and that makes summer a great time to offer special programming for adults. You may catch some parents who are already coming to the library with their children, or hook some newly retired folks who have a little more leisure time, or even attract busy singles who just want to try something new. Think about any broad goals or specific objectives you want to achieve this summer and plan accordingly.

Adult summer reading programs can offer adults the opportunity to have fun, explore new interests, and interact with one another while also providing a good model for children enrolled in summer reading programs.

Potential goals and specific objectives might include:

Attract new segments of the adult population to the library and increase registration of parents as library cardholders by registering twenty-five new adult patrons during the program.



Offer outreach services or programs to one new segment of the adult population, such as Spanish speakers, care-facility residents, or twenty-somethings by creating targeting programming for those demographics

Support the reading needs of the whole community by collaborating with at least one new community business or organization

Here are some considerations for planning your adult summer library program:

## HOW WILL WE RUN THE ADULT PROGRAM?

### Program Presenters

Will you have presenters for programs? Begin a list of possible presenters who fit the theme. This will require a budget, an understanding of hosting responsibilities and added publicity, and follow-up documentation.

### Reading Goals

Will you have specific reading goals for your patrons? You may set no goals or limits, or you may require participants to read a certain number of books in various categories or spend a certain amount of time (minutes/hours) reading. Also determine if audio books, magazines, newspapers, or the back of the cereal box count.

### Inclusivity

Will you reach out to people with special needs, minorities, or other underserved groups? If so, will this require staff to have programs off-site? Is the library equipped for patrons with special needs?

### Registration

How will you handle registration? You may have people sign up during a specified period. Or you may plan a registration event—a party or open house.

### Budget

Do you have a budget? Consider money needed for presenters, food and decorations, prizes that are not donated, and publicity. Are there theme-related books or other library materials that you want to add to your collection?

### Documentation

How will you document your program? The number of participants registered, number of logs completed, number of books read, time spent reading, attendance at programs, and cost are all things to document for evaluation and future planning. Film highlights of your program for your archives, for future planning, and for supporting budget requests. Keep a notebook or scrapbook of promotional pieces and photos.

Here are some program suggestions based on successful programs around the country:

### Reader-of-the-Week Prizes

How It Works: Start simple. “Reader of the Week” participants read a book, fill out a prize entry form, and then put the form in a theme-related box or container (e.g., a box covered with a patterned paper, or a musical instrument case). Hold periodic drawings for prizes during the summer and/or for a grand prize at summer’s end. Readers can enter as often as they like. The simplicity of this program works well in libraries with small staffs.

### Book Reviews

How It Works: Ask participants to review the book(s) they have read or audiobooks they have listened to. Count each review as an entry for a prize drawing. Post the book reviews on a bulletin board, in a notebook for patrons to browse, or on your library’s website or Facebook page. Smaller communities may have a local newspaper that will publish library news. Sharing book reviews creates a community conversation about reading—a great library service.

## Reading Logs

**How It Works:** Provide reading logs for participants. Either set a minimum reading requirement (e.g., read five books to enter for a prize drawing) or ask participants to read as much or as little as they like. Readers might use the reading logs as their entry for a prize drawing, or, after reaching their goal, they can enter their name for a prize drawing. Participants may want to keep their logs after the program, but you might also ask if they want to share their summer reading lists. If so, create a bulletin board display after the program titled “What We Read This Summer” and post the reading logs there.

## Related Programming

**How It Works:** Offer one or a series of programs in conjunction with the reading program. Consider an end-of-summer program or party. Think of the presenters you would most like to have, then contact them in the spring with your request and two or three possible program dates and times. If a fee or honorarium is appropriate, be sure it's within your budget. Consider offering door prizes for summer reading program attendees as an added incentive.

You can also do a Google search for “summer library programs” to find information about individual programs. There are many library sites written by librarians about programs that have worked in their communities.

*Check out these books and websites for more ideas:*

Five-Star Programming and Services for Your 55+ Library Customers by Barbara T. Mates

Adult Programmer's Handbook by the New York Library Association

Adult Programming: A Manual for Libraries by the American Library Association

Adult Programs in the Library by Brett W. Lear

Bringing the Arts into the Library by Carol Smallwood

Collaborative Summer Library Program. [www.cslpreads.org/programs/adult-programs.html](http://www.cslpreads.org/programs/adult-programs.html)

Makerspaces: Top Trailblazing Projects by Caitlin A. Bagley

The Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association. [www.ala.org/rusa/](http://www.ala.org/rusa/)

Adult Reading Program at the New Milford Public Library. [www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Adult\\_Reading\\_Program\\_at\\_the\\_New\\_Milford\\_Public\\_Library.html](http://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Adult_Reading_Program_at_the_New_Milford_Public_Library.html)

A Year of Programs for Millennials by Amy J. Alessio, Katie Lamantia, and Emily Vinci

## Families

To encourage families to read aloud together, consider a family reading program. Children may join the summer reading program alone or participate with their families. This is similar to a Read-to-Me program, but is expanded to encourage caregivers to read aloud to older children as well. This is also a way to encourage the participation of reluctant readers, who may be less intimidated knowing that they will be reading with someone.

Invite families to join in game activities designed for the program as a whole, or create separate activities for them. For example, collect tokens for books read and use them at the end of the summer for a family prize drawing. Prizes may include a gift certificate to a local restaurant, free admission to a local museum, or a book for the whole family.

# SUMMER FOOD

Hungry kids don't read. They can't concentrate; their physical, social, and emotional well-being suffers; and they don't participate successfully in library activities. Every summer, 12.5 million US children who live in food-insecure households lose access to the free or reduced-price meals they can receive in school. During the summer, many students also lack the other benefits of school, including engagement, learning, adults supervision, and a temperature-controlled environment—all things libraries can provide.

The USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) makes free healthy meals and snacks available to young people in communities with high rates of poverty. Many public libraries already participate as meal or snack sites, or provide programming to nearby feeding sites. Libraries can incorporate their summer library program and other fun, literacy-based activities to support child well-being and send children and teens back to school ready to learn.

Your library can be part of the solution to childhood hunger. Become an SFSP site or partner with existing sites, publicize the program, and connect your young patrons to healthy food. If your community is not eligible for SFSP, you have other options for helping to feed young people. The CSLP Child and Community Well-Being committee has created a brief toolkit to help libraries get started. <https://www.csllpreads.org/libraries-and-summer-food/>

Food brings an added dimension to library programs. If your library is providing food for a program, consider the following:

## Library Policies

Be aware of your library's food policies. Where will the food be eaten? Will children take it home or to a designated eating area?

## Food Safety

Consider food safety. Illness can be spread through contact with food. The best policy on handling food is not to handle anything ready to eat with your bare hands. Use utensils or wear gloves. Your maintenance department may be able to supply you with gloves they use.

Consider food allergies, special needs for diabetics, and individual likes and dislikes when choosing the food you offer.

## Takeaway Treats

Remember, you can always send recipes for treats home with children. Print them on colorful paper, or play with interesting shapes—for example, a recipe for carrot cake printed on orange paper, a cookie recipe printed on a circular piece of paper, or a recipe printed on a square of paper and folded into an origami shape. If you make the recipes clever and attractive, they become like a prize—and may have more lasting value than a small plastic toy.

# ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

## Patrons with Disabilities

Library staff seek to make services and programs available to patrons of all abilities. Keep foremost in your mind that patrons with disabilities should be treated as you treat all other patrons—with courtesy and respect.

Here are some suggestions to help you identify and serve this audience:

Wheelchairs and lead dogs signal disabilities, but developmental disabilities, motor control disorders, and hearing or vision impairments can be difficult to recognize. Sometimes schools, both public and private, can help you include children who might not otherwise feel welcome by distributing brochures about library programs to these students and their parents. Caregivers can be your greatest source of information, and honesty is the best policy when you seek information about the needs and interests of their children. When dealing with older patrons with disabilities, remember to treat them with kindness and respect.

Be sure to make it known in news releases, brochures, and program flyers that “patrons of all abilities are welcome.” It’s also important to tell them how to let you know if special accommodations are necessary, for example,

“The \_\_\_\_ Public Library welcomes the opportunity to serve patrons of all abilities. If you or your child requires a program to be in an accessible format, please call Children’s Services (phone number) at least 48 hours in advance so arrangements can be made.”

When you speak of people with disabilities, it’s better to say “a person who is blind” or “a person who is visually impaired” instead of “a blind person” because it emphasizes the person, not the disability.

As with any patron, begin by speaking directly to the child rather than through the parent or

caregiver. Always ask whether or she needs help before helping him or her.

There are many ways of adapting programs to accommodate patrons with disabilities. Allow a patron who is unable to read at an age-appropriate level to read lower-level books to complete reading goals. Listening to someone else read or listening to audiobooks also allows patrons of all reading levels to participate in the program. Make large-print books or videos based on books available.

You can provide kits for caregivers to take home to those who are unable to attend the programs. The kit may include books, music CDs, and craft supplies with directions. Make sure these patrons participate in whatever prizes, awards, or incentives you offer for completing steps of the program.

Be flexible. Many people with disabilities are all too aware of their differences. Inclusion can mean respecting their integrity and privacy. Sometimes a parent may feel it is necessary to attend programs with a disabled child to help the child participate in alternate ways if mobility is an issue, or to assist with the physical needs of a child, or to help keep a child focused on the program. Extra staff may be necessary in these situations. Use this as an opportunity for volunteers to assist with wheelchairs or with crafts or projects.

For additional resources on maintaining an inclusive library:

Literacy Is for Everyone: Making Library Activities Accessible for Children with Disabilities, published by the National Lekotek Center, a division of Anixter Center. This excellent manual has information on including children with special needs in storytimes, selecting books for children with disabilities, adapting computer equipment, and much more.

For more information, visit their website, [www.lekotek.org/resources/informationon toys/packets.asp](http://www.lekotek.org/resources/informationon%20toys/packets.asp), which offers free informational packets on a

variety of matters on play and children with disabilities.

Youth with Special Needs: A Resource and Planning Guide for Wisconsin Public Libraries outlines goals for serving youth with special needs and includes hints for getting started in a few minutes a week. It is available online at [http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld\\_ysnpl](http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld_ysnpl).

## Inclusion Considerations

In order to be as inclusive as possible, consider the following in the planning, facilitation, and evaluation of your summer library program.

Look at the materials you're using as part of your summer library program and ask yourself:

Do patrons see themselves in the books you're reading and recommending?

Are various family structures represented? Are people with varying abilities celebrated? Are people with diverse backgrounds being represented?

Do patrons see their home languages represented in the books and materials you are sharing?

Are books in a variety of languages on display? Does library signage indicate that non-English materials are available? Do you share rhymes or sing songs in languages other than English as part of your programs (by reciting or singing yourself, playing a recording, sharing a video, or encouraging one of your adult caregivers or another library staff member to share)?

Do children and their caregivers see that reading is valued in multiple ways?

Are reading nonfiction books, listening to audiobooks, and reading magazines encouraged on reading logs?

Listen to the way you typically talk to library patrons and run programs:

Do patrons hear you talking respectfully to people and about people?

Think about whether you could incorporate some of the following phrases:

- "Welcome, friends" versus "Hello, parents and children."
- "Let's make some space for our friends who use wheelchairs and walkers."
- "You can write a letter to a friend or family member who lives with you, nearby, or far away."
- "Raise your hand or click your device if you think the wolf is wearing a disguise."
- Person-first language: "Children with autism" rather than "autistic child."

Do children hear you speak positively about all kinds of reading materials and ways to engage with printed material without making assumptions based on grade level, age, or gender?

- "Before we do our science experiment, I'm going to read a poem about bubbles from a new poetry book."
- "You can tell your own story based on the illustrations—you don't need to read the words to understand the story."
- "What is the last story you read or listened to and enjoyed?"

Do you offer patrons the opportunity to actively engage with the program?

Do you use simple, concrete language when addressing library patrons or leading a library program? Do you pause after asking a question to give adults and children time to think and respond? Do children and their caregivers encounter multiple ways to engage with the environment, program, and participants? For example, do your programs include books, music, movement (fingerplays as well as whole body action rhymes/songs), and hands-on activities?

Sense what being part of the library space and programs feels like.

Do patrons feel welcome and encouraged to get comfortable?

Is there a designated spot to take a quiet break during the program? Is the approach to the program room (possibly a doorway or an aisle) wide enough to accommodate participants using wheelchairs or walkers? Have you provided a variety of seating options for adults and children?

Is your space set up so that adults and children know what to do when they walk in? Are your materials prepared in advance so that you can greet adults and children when they arrive? Are activities approachable and easy to understand? Try this:

- “You can see all of the activities we will be doing today on the picture schedule. The activities are posted in order so that you will know what to expect first, second, third, and last.”

Sense what your programming space and materials smell and taste like.

- Can participants expect a smell- and taste-neutral environment?
- Try these approaches:
- “Please refrain from wearing fragrances in the programming room.”
- “Many library users have tree-nut allergies. Please enjoy your snacks containing nuts in this area only.”
- “Please put library toys and materials that need cleaning in this box.”

Are tastes and scents contained to sensory experiences and learning experiences?

Try these approaches:

- “Next week’s program will include food preparation and tasting. Speak with the librarian if you have allergies or food concerns.”
- “The passive program table features guess-the-scent boxes for the month of February.”
- “Please label your summer library program celebration potluck item with the ingredients used in preparation.”

Are foods and aromas considered in an inclusive and multicultural context?

Say “What smells do you associate with winter?” instead of “Cinnamon is a holiday smell.” Honor food as a limited resource, rather than a throwaway commodity (for example, use beads instead of beans in a sensory bin). Avoid making assumptions about patrons’ familiarity with food brands (call foods by their names rather than by brand names) or experiences (for example, the assumptions that popcorn is eaten at the movies or that everyone eats three meals a day).

## Public Performance Rights for Movies

To show a film in your public library you need to obtain public performance rights. A Public Performance Site License is a site-based license that allows entertainment films that are produced for “Home Use Only” to be exhibited in a public setting.

To obtain public performance rights for showing films or videos, there are several companies you can contact. Many of these companies rent the films along with the public performance rights. Two sources are MPLC (Motion Picture Licensing Corporation) and Movie Licensing USA (a division of Swank Motion Pictures). Their websites are [www.mplc.com](http://www.mplc.com) and [www.movlic.com](http://www.movlic.com), respectively. More information on the subject of public performance rights is available at [http://lbstat.dpi.wi.gov/lbstat\\_coplicen\[LC\(1\)\]](http://lbstat.dpi.wi.gov/lbstat_coplicen[LC(1)]). Contact your state library if you have further questions.

# PREPARATION

## DESIGNING YOUR PROGRAM

The first step in designing your program is to create a plan. To do that, answer the following questions. Include your director and appropriate staff in planning, and get their support from the beginning. In-house enthusiasm and cooperation will go a long way to creating a successful program.

### What are your goals and objectives?

Your goal might be to introduce an adult summer library program, and your objective might be to get 50 people to sign up for it.

### How long will your program run?

Consider running your program within the same dates as the children's program to maximize promotional efforts. Or run it for a month in August, after the children's program.

### How will you structure the program?

Determine how you'll record or measure participation in the program. Reading logs for number of books read or time spent reading, prize drawings, and special programs are all things to consider. Will you offer any activities or special events? How many? Will programs be held in the library or off-site?

## SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM PLANNING TIMELINE

### October-December

Summer library program manuals arrive. Take a peek! As you read through the manual, jot down other ideas for stories, games, crafts, or programs that come to mind. Are there new books that complement the ideas presented here? Plan a brainstorming session with area librarians. You have lots of time!

### January through March

If your budget allows, this is the time to contact potential performers.

### February and March

Call schools to schedule visits in the spring.

### April

Details of summer programs should be finalized in order to prepare flyers and other promotional literature. Contact local businesses and organizations for sponsorship support.

### May

Visit schools—mail summer library program promotional literature.

### June through August

Have fun with your summer programs!

### September

Give yourself a pat on the back! Send thank-you notes to summer library program sponsors and thank all library staff and volunteers who helped out during the summer. Send press releases to local media regarding summer library program participation. Report all numbers and success stories to your administration and/or other appropriate funding or statewide agencies.

## REGISTRATION

It's a good idea to require registration for your special events. For craft programs, it's almost mandatory, as you'll need to know the quantity of supplies to provide. Libraries have many ways to handle registration. Some are experimenting with online registration.

Most libraries ask participants to register formally in order to keep statistics on how many joined, participated in, and completed the program.

Set a time during which patrons can come in to register. For example, allow school-aged participants and their families to register anytime after the last day of school. To simplify the registration process, use an index card for each participant, with the child's name, address, phone number, grade, and school. If you want to keep track of the number of books read, place a mark for each book at the bottom of the card.

Another time-saving method is to simply hand patrons their time log or book log when they come to the library. After they complete a goal such as one hour of reading or two books, they return the log. That's when they are registered. You keep the log for statistics (file them by last name) and give them another log. This way, you don't spend time registering patrons who never show up again.

Here are some ideas for registering program participants. Remember, keep it simple, since adults are often in a hurry.

- Register patrons with basic information: name, address, phone number or e-mail address, and library card number.
- Register participants during a two- to four-week period prior to the start of the program.
- For convenience, consider registering parents and guardians at the same time they register their children for the summer program.
- Consider a registration kick-off event, like an open house or theme-related program.
- Provide a registration packet (perhaps a book bag) with an explanation of the program and schedule of events. Include a reading log, a sample book review form if you use them, a bookmark, and perhaps a small incentive, like a coupon for a free book at the next library book sale.

## REQUIREMENTS

There are many methods in practice among librarians to determine when a patron has completed the summer library program. Note that many libraries now keep track of minutes or hours read rather than the number of books.

Here are some options:

- The librarian determines a set number of books a child has to read. This method may discourage beginning or reluctant readers from participating because they don't feel they can meet the requirement. If you plan to use this method, set a low number required, such as six beginner books for children in the first through third grades, and three novels for older children. Adjust teen and adult requirements similarly, and remind patrons they can always read more!
- Have the patron determine how many books or minutes or hours he or she will read during the summer. In this self-directed method, each person sets a personal goal and signs a contract with the librarian at the beginning of the program. If the patron completes the contract before the end of the program, he or she can continue reading but will be assured of having met participation requirements.

## Prizes

Incentives may include but are not limited to:

- Small novelty toys or items
- Bookmarks, buttons, stickers, etc.
- Coupons for ice cream or fast food
- Cash prizes or gift certificates for a fun activity
- Tickets to movies, museums, or zoos
- Passes to state parks or historical sites
- Books (some libraries give a paperback book to each child finishing the program— consider travel or cultural-themed books, etc.)
- A party at the end of the program for those who completed it



Here are some ideas for door prizes, drawing giveaways, and competition winner gifts.

- Local businesses may donate items, or your Friends group may fund some of your purchases.
- If you will be doing a giveaway or offering prizes as part of your summer library program, talk with concert venues to see if they can donate tickets to upcoming shows later in the summer or fall to be given as door prizes.
- Print coupons for free books at a library book sale or waivers for overdue fines.
- Create gift baskets (or a backpack) of books and gift items as drawing or door prizes. Baskets might include a gift certificate to an area attraction, a local bookstore, or a local music store. Other items might include an adult coloring book, markers, crayons, or colored pencils or pens.
- Stock up on theme incentives: book bags, mugs, note cards, and so on.

- Other incentives:

- E-reader or tablet, audio device
- A gift certificate to a local business such as a spa, a bookstore, or a local attraction
- Gift membership to a local museum or other attraction
- Blank journal

## FUNDING

You can solicit incentives from local businesses, who are often accustomed to being asked for donations as a form of community support. Be specific about what you want, what you intend to do with it, and what you will do in return. Consider utilizing the sample solicitation letter below when requesting donations.

---

Dear (Community Business):

We need your help! The \_\_\_\_\_ Library is offering a summer library program to the children of our community to encourage them to read for pleasure during the summer and to retain their reading skills. This year's theme is \_\_\_\_\_.

To add to the fun and to create a sense of challenge that will keep kids reading, we'd like to offer incentives and contest prizes at various times during the summer. Because of our limited budget, we cannot afford to offer this without help.

We appreciate any donation you care to make. Possible donations include items to give away as prizes, such as small toys, coupons for free goods or services (admission tickets, fast food coupons), or cash to buy prizes to offer as a grand prize. We will mention the assistance you have generously donated in our publicity.

If you can help us in any way, please contact me at the library (phone number). We hope to include you in our summer plans. Many thanks!

Sincerely,

# PROMOTION AND OUTREACH

How can you advertise this great library program?

There are many valuable resources in your community that are often overlooked. These could prove essential in marketing your program. Create a flyer to post on a bulletin board in the grocery store or convenience store, at a discount store or WIC office, at apartment complexes, in coffee shops, or on any other community bulletin boards. Promote the program in childcare centers, preschools, houses of worship, parenting groups, parent meetups, pediatricians' offices and health clinics, the local YMCA or YWCA, social services organizations, home visitation programs, and food banks or food pantries. Of course, you should also use your library's website and social networking sites.

We encourage you to think creatively and collaboratively and use every opportunity that arises to get the word out about your program. Work with community partners and ask them to spread the word about your program, too—they may reach parents or caregivers who don't use the library.

## Community Partnerships and Outreach to Young Children and Their Families

For many reasons, some families don't come to the library. Research shows that these are often the families that need library services the most. Between limited resources (including staffing) for outreach services and serving an audience that you don't see at your library, reaching these families can be challenging. However, your efforts will be worthwhile, as you can truly change lives.

- Partnering with other community organizations and working with existing infrastructures that serve parents with young children are a major key to success.
- Potential partner organizations:
- Preschools

- Childcare centers, including FFN (Family, Friends and Neighbors) facilities
- Headstart/Early Headstart
- Reach Out and Read clinics and pediatrician's offices
- Religious institutions
- Local social service providers (food banks, WIC offices, local government services, etc.)
- Nursing home visitation programs
- Literacy nonprofits (Raising a Reader, Imagination Library, etc.)
- Parent mentor groups (PAT [Parents as Teachers], HIPPY [Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters], etc.)
- Migrant education programs
- New immigrant support groups
- Summer Food Service Program
- Obstetricians' offices and prenatal programs

## Tips on reaching this critical audience:

- Present outreach programs in locations and times convenient for busy working parents and in conjunction with existing programs that serve low-income families. Your partners from the above list can help determine the best locations, times, and events.
- Leverage the online environment to promote and deliver early literacy services— low-income parents report using the Internet and social media sites for information on parenting.
- Reach out to expecting parents (especially first-time parents) at community prenatal

programs and events, or hold events at your library focused on early literacy. Events such as a community baby shower, during which community members can either donate or discreetly request new or gently used baby clothes and supplies, may work well.

- Arrange or host early literacy peer support groups for parents. Provide research and methods about early literacy to the groups based upon members' existing knowledge, encourage an influential parent to be the informal group leader, and check in from time to time to provide more tips and evaluate progress.
- Promote your early literacy programs and services, as well as early literacy awareness in general, widely throughout your community. Consider locations widely accessed in your community such as large department or discount stores, gas stations, post offices, public transportation, shopping malls, convenience stores, and all of your community partners' locations.
- Provide early literacy services in languages common in your community—partner organizations may be able to help. Suggest quick, easy ways for parents, who may be very busy, to incorporate early literacy activities into their daily lives, and remind them that this really does make a difference

Make a list of people and organizations to contact. Remember, you are trying to reach adults as well as children. Adults include parents, teachers and other school officials, day care providers, church group leaders, and leaders of local clubs such as Boys and Girls Clubs or Girl Scouts. You will also contact the media: newspapers, radio, television, and so on. Promotional activities should begin before school is out for the summer.

### **General promotion ideas include:**

Displaying and distributing posters, bookmarks, stickers, buttons, balloons, and banners

- Posting information on your library's website

and social media pages, or starting a summer reading blog

- Advertising through press releases and TV and radio spots
- Setting the scene in the library with bulletin boards, murals, props, signs, and the like
- Visiting schools to explain the summer reading program to children
- Participating in summer "overview" nights for area camps, classes, activities, and so on

### **Flyers**

Distribute flyers to schools and local businesses.

### **Press Releases**

A press release is a basic tool for communicating your message to the media. Newspapers will print announcements of upcoming events if you send them clearly written releases within a deadline. Keep announcements short and to the point for calendar listings. When you want to promote a special event such as a kick-off program, customize the message. Don't limit yourself to one newspaper. Try your school and library newsletters, church or preschool bulletins, and other outlets.

If you have a local cable television channel that posts announcements, make sure your events are included. Be sure to contact the media for visually attractive events, such as a pool party or a craft program, so they can send a photographer or cameraperson for TV. Any program that involves a large group of children has potential appeal.

Press releases should be double-spaced and typed on one side only of each sheet, and should include answers to the five W's: who, what, where, when, and why.

## Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Take advantage of public service time on radio and television to announce summer library activities. If a radio station agrees to provide free air-time, a 30-second radio announcement can generate a lot of community support in a short time. You may be surprised at how much can be said in 30 seconds. Write your own or use one of CSLP's downloadable audio PSAs. There are versions in English and Spanish. For information on CSLP's audio and video PSAs visit [www.cslpreads.org](http://www.cslpreads.org), click on "Programs," then click on "Public Service Announcements."

## Informing Caregivers

You might be surprised to know that not every parent or caregiver knows about the fantastic summer programs at your library. A short letter to caregivers that accompanies your flyer or schedule of events may help some families who aren't regular library users to take advantage of the programs. Adapt it to your needs. You might, for example, want to target native Spanish speakers in your community.

## Outreach to Special Groups

Many communities have summer camps, park programs, summer schools, and day care centers whose staff are interested in the library's summer reading program for their participants. To accommodate these groups, consider a separate outreach program. You might provide each group with a group packet that includes a poster, a group sign-up sheet, a list of literacy projects (reading and writing and other activities), a booklist, and possible small prizes for all children who complete/participate in the activities. Each time children complete an activity they can add a sticker, stamp, or thumbprint to their poster. Children can be encouraged to join the individual summer library program with their families, too. Be sure to include your library's name on all materials!

## Local Business Involvement

Ask local businesses to post flyers, distribute bookmarks to customers, or donate appropriate incentives or prizes. It's always better to do this in person rather than by letter. If you have to write a solicitation letter, be sure to include your city or county tax ID number— take the number with you if you visit businesses personally.

Tell businesses what's in it for them. For example, offer "compliments of" or "donated by" acknowledgments on donated items or credit on the library's website, in its newsletter, and in displays. Mention that this is a win-win. Businesses like the public goodwill that comes from supporting local programs and events— library patrons love to support local business that give back to the community.

Invite businesses to publicize their specific products or services by providing in-kind contributions that can be readily identified with them, such as printing services (with a credit line on the printed materials) or travel supplies labeled with the store's name. Also, consider asking appropriate businesses for possible program presenters or helpers among their staff or customers.

Make sure you credit businesses for their support. Have a display with the names of businesses contributing to the summer program. At the end of the program, write a letter to the editor or place an ad in local papers, thanking participating businesses. Send thank-you notes to the businesses.

## Space Considerations

Space in libraries over the summer can be at a premium, particularly if you're negotiating meeting or community room space with a kids' or teens' summer library program. Here are a few ideas for how to embrace the CSLP theme when you have limited or busy program space:

Go off-site. Benefits include working with potential new partners, engaging patrons who may not be regular library users, and not worrying about booking library space for peak program hours.

Keep it simple. A fun summer at the library can be had without elaborate events and programs. If you're absolutely cramped for space, find a nook or two to dedicate to a materials display and an interactive bulletin board.

Utilize your library's intercom system (if you have one) to highlight a different artist in your collection at a particular time of day throughout the summer (15 minutes before closing, for example, or first thing when your doors open). Take patron requests.

Take up virtual or print space, and highlight library resources where you can.

# VOLUNTEERS

It takes effort to recruit, train, and supervise volunteers. But enlisting the help of volunteers during summer library programs may help you do a better job of programming and/or expanding the programs you offer. Many libraries get teens involved. Think about planting the idea among your older middle school participants, and you may develop a crew of volunteers for the following summer. Other ways to recruit volunteers include flyers distributed in the library or through the schools and newspaper articles. How about your library Friends group? They may be willing to spread the word.

Special events are where your volunteers will really shine. They can help set up and tear down, do publicity, and supply refreshments. Mature teens and adults can take an entire program from conception to fruition with just a bit of guidance from you. In one library, the teens planned an entire fashion show—something the librarian would never have tackled on her own. It was a huge success.

If you want to get teens (and even many adults) involved, the jobs you offer need to be interesting! Given adequate training, young adults can:

- Offer and/or assist at craft or story programs
- Take book reports
- Help children with reading games
- Read to young children
- Teach computer classes
- Put on puppet shows and creative dramatics programs
- Help decorate the library

Prepare a list of what volunteer jobs and skills are needed. For example:

## Arts and Crafts

Grades: 6 and up

Skills: Crafting, cutting, pasting, drawing, and patience

## Reading Club Sign-Ups

Grades: 7 and up

Skills: Be able to stay in children's room and help elementary school kids sign up for the summer reading club

## Brown Bag Storytelling Teams

Grades: 8 and up

Skills: Good at working with young children and enjoys storytelling

Stress to all of your volunteers that they are making a commitment to show up when they sign on as volunteers. Volunteer work should not be a substitute for paid staff work but treated as a way to enhance your summer library programs and an opportunity to provide meaningful volunteer work for people in your community that will give them experience and enjoyment.

Don't forget to recognize their hard work, either. Host a party for volunteers at the end of the summer with pizza and a movie. Give them a certificate that can be added to their school records (useful during college application time), and write letters of recommendation that can be used in applying for paying jobs.

## Data Collection and Evaluation

Finish your program with flair! Plan an event that includes both adult and youth program participants, or host an open house. Serve refreshments, share highlights from the summer, thank everyone, and make your grand-prize drawing announcement.

Here are some considerations:

- Contact your state, county, or city roads department to find out how to sponsor a highway litter pick-up event, then have everyone return to the library for refreshments
- Thank everyone involved, including library building maintenance staff, support and professional staff, program participants, program presenters, your Friends group, supporting businesses, and volunteers
- Issue certificates of appreciation to volunteers and key community players
- Write letters to the editor or place ads in appropriate newspapers, thanking businesses, organizations, and program presenters
- Post a complete list of program supporters in your library and on your website and Facebook page

After thank-yous are complete and everyone takes a breath, have a staff meeting to compare program statistics and experiences with your stated goals and objectives. Generate a report based on that evaluation. Along with assessing statistics and objectives, consider subjective results such as new bonds forged with community organizations, new staff and community talents discovered, and new friendships formed for the library. This report will be a valuable tool in future planning. It will also be ready for state and/or system year-end reports and evaluations

Make sure you keep a written account of what you did in order to evaluate the effectiveness of your program. Keep a scrapbook of activities, which can be used in future summers to request extra funds

from the town, trustees, and Friends of the Library and to justify your program. Include the goals of the program, the planning required, and statistics: the numbers and ages of participants, number of books or minutes read, the number of special programs you offered, the cost, and more.

The following are a few suggestions on keeping statistics:

## Percentage of Participation

Divide the number of patrons in the program by the total number of patrons or residents in the targeted age or grade who live in the community. It may be more important to know what percentage of children participated, rather than just the number of children in the program.

## Per Capita Circulation of Juvenile Materials

Divide the number of materials circulated during the program by the number of patrons or residents in a given age group or grade in the community. Repeat this calculation for the same number of weeks during a time when the library doesn't offer programs to calculate the impact of programs on the circulation of materials. Or compare days when there are programs in the summer with days that are not program days. Libraries can also compare the overall circulations on program and nonprogram days because adult circulation may be affected on days when programs are offered for children.

## Books Read per Participant

If the library keeps track of the number of books each patron reads, divide the total number of books read during the program by the number of patrons participating. This per participant calculation can also be done with recorded minutes or pages read

## Program Completion Rates

Divide the number of patrons who completed the program by the total number of patrons who signed up to join the program. Not all libraries register summer readers, and not all give certificates. But if

your library does set a minimum amount of reading for “completion,” you can figure out the percentage of completion.

Often if a library offers incentives for signing up, many patrons come initially but then drop out of the program as summer progresses. How well does the library do in keeping the patrons coming back throughout the summer? That may be a more important figure to know than how many signed up, because it tells the library how effective their efforts are in encouraging patrons to read all summer. Comparing sign-up totals with completion percentages can be used to measure overall success.

## **Per Capita Direct Costs**

Divide the money spent on the program by the number of patrons who participated. Use only the costs directly related to the program, such as money spent on supplies, printing, prizes, posters, reading records, and so on. This can often show library boards and the community that at a very low cost per patron, the library offers an excellent program and is a great bargain for the community.

These statistics are helpful and can be used in several ways:

- To indicate the success or failure of a specific program
- To document results
- To compare with other years
- To aid in planning future programs
- To defend the current level of funding for the summer reading program budget or to justify increased funding

Librarians provide an invaluable service to their communities by encouraging people to read. Librarians need to make sure their communities, including the local government officials, finance boards, trustees, school committee, and parents, are aware of their contributions. This is especially important in times when fiscal resources are tight. Send information to these valuable allies, and keep statistics on the success of your activities. Make sure everyone is aware of the importance of your work so that the fun of this summer reading program translates into a lifelong love of reading, knowledge seeking, and libraries.