

ENP's Little Free Library Initiative



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Thanks for your interest in Little Free Libraries!

Starting your own Little Free Library can be a super simple process, but first I want to tell you why this is important!

One of the biggest challenges for low-income families with regard to literacy is the lack of access to books in the household.

61% of low-income families have no books at all in their homes for their children. That includes children and adult books! What we know is that the only measure that correlates significantly with reading scores is the number of books in the home. An analysis of a national dataset of nearly 100,000 United States school children found that access to printed materials—not poverty—is the “critical variable affecting reading acquisition.”

This is not just a home issue, but a neighborhood issue. One study found that in middle-income neighborhoods the ratio is 13 books per child; in low-income neighborhoods, that ratio is one book for every 300 children. [1]

Fresno Unified is made up of just over 74,000 kids. Over 18,000 of them are English learners, and 86% are living in poverty.[2] How do we make a difference in a city and a school system that has so much need? How do you go about changing the future of Fresno? Help a kid learn to read.

Little Free Libraries play an essential role by providing 24/7 access to books (and encouraging a love of reading!) in areas where books are scarce.

[Every Neighborhood Partnership](#) (ENP) was started over 10 years ago. Inspired by The Well's partnership with Susan B. Anthony Elementary, ENP had the goal of creating church-to-school partnerships for every elementary school in Fresno. Currently, we have 52 such partnerships. As

we consider how the church of Fresno/Clovis can change a generation, we believe helping every kid learn to read is one of the best investments we can make.

Along with our [Literacy Mentoring Program](#), Little Free Libraries are one of the many ways we are working to do this!

In this guide, we will lay out options for acquiring a library, stocking your library, and building community support. We will rely heavily on content from littlefreelibrary.org.

Step One: Identify a Location & Steward

How to Pick a Site and Install a Little Free Library



Click on video link above

Step one: Think about a location to set it up. What are your options? Are you setting it up at your home? Or another location? We have noticed high "foot traffic" areas are good, with proximity to a home or office so users can tell who cares for the box. If the box is behind a fence in the yard, people assume it's a private piece of yard art and usually won't open a gate to get a book. Boxes right on the sidewalk, along a normal foot traffic route get the most traffic. Boxes outside homes also build a space for relationship building and opportunity for hospitality. It may take a little while for your neighborhood to "see" the box and use it. If you register your box with the Little Free Library (see last step), you can get regular emails with advice on how to create "foot traffic" to your box.

Designate a Steward to Keep the Library Running: Who will be the steward of your library? If you're reading this, chances are good that it will be you. But, if not, be sure to designate one. A steward makes sure that a Little Free Library is always stocked, clean, and maintained. You will find, however, that a successful Little Free Library belongs to the community and that others, oftentimes anonymously, will restock and tidy up.

Step Two: Get a Library

ENP has created a lot of local partners to make the process of acquiring a library easy.

Free: ENP is partnering with the Fresno Bee to turn old newspaper boxes like the one on the right into Little Libraries. They need to be painted and secured to the ground, but other than that they are ready to go!

Build: If you want to build your own: Please check out Little Free Library's build page for plans and tips at littlefreelibrary.org/build. Check out Google Images of [Little Free Libraries](#) for ideas. We have seen everything from renovated phone booths to a shelf of books inside coffee shops.

Buy (Support Local Kids): Neighborhood Jobs provides mentoring and job skill training for teenagers with barriers to employment. By learning skills in trades like plumbing, welding, and woodworking, we equip them to provide excellent work for homeowners who have odd jobs that need to be completed. Neighborhood Jobs can also build beautiful, high-quality Free Little Libraries at a competitive price. Request a quote below. By hiring Neighborhood Jobs to build your Free Little Library, you are providing an opportunity for a teenager to prove their potential. Pricing starts at \$300 for a box shown here and can be customized for your desired result. They use high quality cedar, birch, and poplar and all libraries are waterproof and durable. Learn more at neighborhoodjobs.info/library



Step Three: Stock Your Library

You can't have a Little Free Library without books, so before you launch, you'll need to collect books to seed your library. Two good suggestions for collecting books are to hold a book drive, where friends and community members can donate their gently-used books, or hold a fundraiser, to purchase books from the local thrift store.

Note: don't try to buy new books for your library. It will be far too expensive and is unsustainable. It also takes away from the community spirit. Remember, this is a project you want everyone to participate in.

Here is where ENP and our growing partnership with [Reading Heart](#) comes in. Reading Heart is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) book donation program dedicated to serving children in hospitals and in areas with limited access to books. When we help set up a new Free Little Library we are working with Reading Heart to keep you stocked with books. We will have books available at our ENP Warehouse for pick up and will work to find drivers that will deliver several boxes of books to your library once a month.

If you need extra books, we recommend you reach out to local bookstores and thrift shops. Approach local bookstores to see if they would be willing to donate. Explain what your Little Free Library is and ask if they would be willing to give you a discount or let you sort through their excess inventory. If you register your box with the International Little Free Library you get access to "First Book"--a nonprofit that sells brand new books at extremely low costs.

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

Managing a Little Free Library is a marathon not a sprint. And for the first few months (maybe a year or longer) you may not see people sharing books beyond what you and your team share. That's ok. Think of your Little Free Library box as a bucket of water in a desert....so many people are thirsty for words they will drink them right up. And that's a good thing. Share with no expectations of seeing those books again!

Step Four: Build Support

Get your community involved! Contact the local paper, radio and TV stations. Send out a press release. Tell your friends, family and neighbors in-person. Use social media to engage your community with the Library and be sure to follow Little Free Library's blog for insider tips and resources. The more people who know about your Library and support it, the better.

Recommended Resources:

- [Sample Press Release](#)
- [Maintaining a Little Free Library](#)
- [Just for Stewards \(free printables!\)](#)

Step Five: Register & Map Your Library

If you want to register your Free Little Library to be on the Free Little Library you need to purchase a sign/license #. You can see the global map [here](#). When you register, you gain access to network of support and benefits, including an official charter sign engraved with a unique charter number.

Hold a Grand Opening Ceremony and invite your neighbors to kick off the Library in style! Have a ribbon cutting, provide snacks and exchange books. Take lots of photos and add your Library to the world map. Join the private stewards' Facebook group to share tips and ideas with your fellow stewards!

THANKS!

Please keep us in the loop as you keep moving forward! We will probably add a section to our ENP website about Little Free Libraries, but for now just let us know how we can support you!

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