

TEEN PROGRAMMING: GETTING STARTED

WHAT DO TEENS WANT?

Independence!

Make sure teens have library cards, and emphasize that their borrowing histories are confidential. Show them how to navigate library resources on their own. Ask them what books they want to see in the library.

Excitement!

The primary question to keep in mind for in-person teen library programs: Is it fun? Plan active games that give teens a chance to move around and interact with each other.

Empowerment!

Give teens opportunities to grow by leading their peers, planning and executing library programs, and communicating and refining their interests.

Acceptance!

Run icebreakers and games that help teens get to know each other. Encourage acceptance of different opinions. Have a zero-tolerance policy for bullying.

ENGAGEMENT TIPS

- Teens love learning from each other. Provide opportunities for them to teach their peers.
- Consider offering prizes to teens who recruit the most friends for your programs.
- Invite college-age students to run programs or workshops.
- Solicit book recommendations from teens using short forms or bookmarks, and then share those recommendations in the teen section.
- If teens are not into a program, be flexible! Have a backup plan.
- Consider combining teen advisory board meetings with program times.
- Teens make great volunteers, especially around younger children. They can organize programs, create decorations, be book buddies, or help with social media promotion.
- Ask teens to evaluate your programs, and integrate their feedback.
- Stay on top of media and technology trends. For example, Discord is very popular with teens right now. Can you host a library discussion group on Discord?

Ideas for teen incentives:

- Coupons for library privileges, such as extra computer time or credit for library fines
- Free passes or memberships to local museums, pools, or makerspaces
- Donations of graphic novels or comic books from a local comics shop
- Notebooks or art supplies
- Gift certificates to gaming stores
- Free books (be sure to include adult choices for older teens)