



# How to Organize a Literacy Kit Assembly Event

United Ways can tailor the experience of creating literacy kits to fit the interests and needs of volunteers as well as beneficiaries—the schools, organizations or individuals and families who receive the kits. Key steps include:

**Establish goals.** Literacy kit projects can build relationships with people in your community through volunteering, advance your United Way's work on early childhood success and even generate revenue. To ensure a good return on your investment, it is helpful to establish specific goals with respect to the number and type of volunteers you seek to engage, the number of children and families you want to reach and the amount of revenue you expect to generate from providing a customized volunteer experience.

**Identify beneficiaries.** Consider which early childhood program could benefit from having literacy kits and which books and items will make the kits most useful. Kits may be used in one-on-one situations or with groups of children. Determine how many children will participate and plan to create a kit for each child.

**Determine where to create kits.** Reference the number of volunteers you chose earlier to help decide how much space to reserve for this project. Pay special attention to seating capacity and table space.

**Collect age-appropriate books.** The number of books in a home and the number of words a child is exposed to are predictors of later school success. United Ways can purchase books at significant discounts by becoming a Scholastic Literacy Partner. First Book distributes new books for free to children in need via eligible organizations. Virtual or community book drives also work well to collect the books needed for literacy kits. If your United Way has a strong relationship with a particular company, or affinity or faith-based group, you could encourage them to purchase or donate books to be included in the kits.

**Decide what to include in your kits.** Literacy kits will include a book, of course, as well as props, games and helpful information and resources for volunteer readers, teachers and parents to use before, during and after reading the book. For each children's book in this Guide, there are typically two group/classroom activities and two take-home activities. A list of needed materials for each activity is included. You also might consider including literature about your United Way.

**Choose the container.** Containers should be attractive, easy to carry and store, and capable of holding all the items included in the kit. Backpacks, bags or even clear plastic bags may be used, but it is important that containers provide volunteers an opportunity to decorate the container and display the United Way brand as a way to reinforce our role in early childhood success.

**Assemble arts and crafts supplies.** A list of needed materials for each activity is included. Purchase or collect donations of all materials that will be needed to create the props, manipulatives and games related to the book's title or theme. Determine the number of children or small groups you are purchasing for and use the Assembly Instructions for each activity to gather all your materials.



**Recruit volunteers.** Creating literacy kits is a great way to help volunteers understand, experience, and feel connected to United Way’s work. Volunteers can be recruited from schools, faith-based and affinity groups, companies, a volunteer center, or through United Way partners. The experience can be customized for any group. United Ways should capture contact information of the volunteers and include additional community impact information when following up with each volunteer.

**Confirm details with beneficiary.** Confirm dates and time with the early childhood program for volunteers to disseminate and do activities with children. If needed, confirm that the beneficiary will be available to pick up the kits and to provide personal remarks on how the kits will be used.

**Create the kits.** Hosting the project at United Way’s office or having United Way staff introduce the project at a company’s workplace or beneficiary site will help volunteers understand that the project is being led by United Way. The United Way staff member should welcome volunteers, give a brief informal presentation about United Way and explain why the literacy kits are relevant to the community and United Way’s focus on education. Provide instructions on how to assemble the kits using the materials provided, assign books to volunteers and ask that they identify and create props for the kit that corresponds to the story, or use some variation of these two approaches.

**Celebrate.** Post photos on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook or other social media sites. Set aside time with the volunteers during the project to reflect on their experience and to thank them for investing their time to help advance United Way’s work. Be prepared to encourage volunteers to consider supporting a community-based reading program. Follow up with a thank you note that highlights the outcomes of the literacy kit event.

**Deliver the kits.** Coordinate with your beneficiary organization in advance to schedule a time for United Way and volunteers to deliver the kits. Alternatively, invite the beneficiary to pick up the kits right after volunteers have created them, allowing time for interaction between the two groups and providing volunteers with a stronger connection to the people who will benefit from their effort.