



The How-To Handbook





Welcome!

Dear Chairperson:

Welcome to our Sponsor's Guide to planning and running a successful in-school gift store program.

Use this Guide, with its simple, step-by-step instructions, handy suggestions, and sample announcements, to make running your gift store easy and fun for everyone.

Although we ask you to follow our instructions carefully in handling the gift inventory, feel free to adapt other suggestions in this Guide to your own program.

We have placed additional suggestions in the wide inner margin. Use this space to add your own suggestions and notes.

If you have any questions please call us. We are here to help.

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Planning Suggestions



Before starting, FIRST READ THIS GUIDE ALL THE WAY THROUGH, to get a good overview of our program.

1. Select your dates. For the Christmas holiday season, any time from the week before Thanksgiving to a week or two before Christmas is a good time. (See Scheduling for more details.)
2. Coordinate your dates with your school principal and our company representative to avoid any conflicts. Remember to coordinate all your plans with school authorities well in advance.
3. Plan to allow several weeks before your Shop to organize your volunteers, to publicize your gift store and print the flyers, letters and announcements needed.
4. Choose an area in which to set up your gift store where gift merchandise may be secured and where there is enough room for children to shop. An empty classroom, the library, cafeteria, or the auditorium stage are some suggestions.
5. Make copies of relevant instructions from this Guide for your volunteers so everyone knows their job.
6. Feel free to use our sample letters and announcements 'as is' or use them as a guide and adapt them to your own program.



Scheduling

SCHEDULING

1. Schedule three to five days for shopping, depending on the size of school enrollment. Decide how many classes will shop each day, allowing about 45 minutes per class. Make sure you have allowed enough days.
2. Decide whether to allow time for a preview or walk-through so students can plan their gift lists.
3. Post or circulate a schedule for teachers to select times for their classes to shop. Make sure this is several weeks ahead of time.
4. Plan dates, starting several weeks before your gift store, to put up posters, distribute flyers to students and send home letters to parents.
5. Send Budget Envelopes home with students two or three days before your gift store opens. We provide Budget Envelopes to help children plan their gift lists and their budgets together with their parents.

In scheduling classes, try to mix older and younger grades every day to better judge which items to reorder.

You may want to have special times for parents and/or school staff to shop. Some schools hold parent nights.

Volunteers - Your Team



Encourage volunteers to read this Guide. The more people who know the 'big picture', the better.

Where to recruit volunteers:

Use the flyers, letters and announcements to ask for parent and grandparent volunteers. Ask at your school's parent teacher group meetings. Ask home room mothers. Contact your Senior Citizens' center, church groups, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts and the local community college child development classes.

Make it easy to volunteer:

Make shifts short enough to be pleasant.

Serve light refreshments to volunteers during their shifts.

Organize child care if needed and possible.

1. Delegate! Don't try to do it all yourself.
2. Start recruiting volunteers **early**.
3. Schedule more volunteers than you think that you will need.
4. Give each volunteer written confirmation of their job with date, time and place. Confirm by telephone a day or two before their scheduled job.
5. In the weeks before your gift store you will need someone to be in charge of:
 - a) printing and distributing flyers, letters, etc.,
 - b) coordinating plans with the school staff,
 - c) recruiting and organizing volunteers,
 - d) running the actual gift store.
6. You will need two or three people to check in gifts from our shipment (do inventory) before your store opens and count any gifts left afterward to be returned. Complete inventory instructions come with the gift shipment.
7. It will take two or three people to set up your gift display before your program starts. The first time will take longer to set up so allow one to three hours.
8. You will need at least five people to run the actual gift store: one or two as cashiers, three or four to fill orders at the tables, and one or two to assist the children.



Promoting Your Gift Store

Promoting and publicizing your gift store will create excitement, ensure a big turnout, help recruit more volunteers, and secure the cooperation of parents, staff and teachers.

1. Start several weeks before your store dates.
2. Send letters to children and first letters to teachers. Put up our free color posters in school. (See samples later in this Guide.)
3. Send home our free color flyers to parents. Imprint the backs with your dates and information. (See sample.)
4. Closer to your gift store, send out the second teacher letter. (See sample.)
5. A few days before your store opens send home the free Budget Envelopes with parent letter. (See sample.)
6. Working with teachers and school staff:
 - a) Clear all your plans with your school principal. With her or him behind you, everything else will be easier.
 - b) Let school staff know well in advance what you will need from them. Make it easy for them to help you.
 - c) Give teachers plenty of notice about your plans and work with them to distribute flyers and letters. Make it easy for teachers to help. Ask for their questions and suggestions. An enthusiastic teacher will encourage student participation.

Other Ideas For Promotion:

Make or have principal make, school P.A. announcements.

Put announcements in your school newspaper, parent teacher organization newsletter, and on the school bulletin boards.

Display sample gifts in a show case display.

Hold a contest or raffle before and during your gift store.

Decorate the door to the store so everyone knows where it is.

Setting Up - Inventory



* A Time-Saving Suggestion For Display Table Setup

To save setup time on the first day of your store, organize your gift selection now as you inventory it.

Set up and number your tables. As you inventory gifts, set a sample of each gift on a table, grouped by price category, and mark its price card from the price sheet.

Once you have filled the tables and arranged the gifts to your liking, repack the sample gifts and price cards with their respective gifts and mark each box by table number.

There! You are all organized for the first day. You even know if you need more tables, well ahead of time.

Your Gift Shipment

1. When we ship your gift selection it will be made up of several boxes. Complete delivery may be made in more than one shipment.

Tell the school secretary or custodian who will receive the shipment to make sure the number of boxes matches the number on the receipt before signing. Any missing, damaged or opened boxes must also be noted on the receipt.

2. Your boxes also contain an inventory list, price sheets, price cards, tablecloths and free promotional supplies.

3. Leave the boxes sealed until you are ready to do inventory.

Inventory

1. Inventory one box at a time, using the inventory list as a guide. Make sure the gift selection matches the list and note any items that arrive damaged. Note any discrepancies or problems.

2. Store your boxes in a secure place until ready to set up your gift store.



Setting Up Your Store

STORE SETUP

1. Set up your tables and cover with our free tablecloths. You will display a sample of each gift on the tables and sell from your stock in boxes or on tables behind you. Some smaller items are sold from their display boxes on the tables.
2. Group samples in price categories with two-sided price cards taped to table cloths. You may mark a border around each price group on the tablecloth.
3. DO NOT mark prices on the gifts. We cannot accept returns of gifts that are marked.
4. Stock tables with paper gift bags and markers to write prices on budget envelopes.
5. Place cashier table(s) near the exit. Cashiers will need plenty of change, or calculators, (preferably with tapes) and plastic tote bags.

Additional Suggestions

1. Make your store more festive. Decorate walls and entry door, play music softly, and put out bowls of fragrant potpourri. Use student artwork if possible.
2. Give volunteers distinctive buttons, hats, ribbons, aprons, T shirts, etc.
3. Put up large "Welcome", "Start Here", and "Pay Here" signs to guide your shoppers.
4. Organize childcare service for volunteers through one of your volunteer moms. Plan well ahead to see which shifts will need this.
5. Offer snacks and drinks for volunteers.
6. Put a row of chairs in the waiting area outside the store area so students can remain seated while waiting to shop.

Supplies You May Need

1. *Four to eight long tables.*
2. *Markers.*
3. *Staplers with extra staples.*
4. *Calculators with tapes.*
5. *Pencils, pens, note paper.*
6. *Masking tape and clear tape.*
7. *Decorations, music.*
8. *Name tags for volunteers.*
9. *Snacks and drinks for volunteers.*

Running Your Gift Store



You may want to appoint a team leader for each shift. Make sure team leaders are familiar with all procedures.

Overlap shift times so your volunteers have a few minutes to acquaint themselves with the gift selection and store procedures. This makes a smoother transition.

1. The first team every day will bring the gifts out of storage if you have to lock them up, neaten tables, organize gift stock and make sure all supplies are on hand.

2. At their scheduled time, teachers bring their classes to the gift store. Make sure everyone has their Budget Envelopes and shopping money. (Teachers of younger children may want to collect budget envelopes in the morning and keep them until the class arrives at the Shop.)

3. It is easier to have only 10 to 15 children shop at a time so half the class will wait, either in the classroom or outside the store, while the others shop. You may want to provide a volunteer teacher's helper to help supervise the children waiting at the store or to escort groups from and to the classroom. Decide earlier with teachers how to handle this.

6. The children shop by viewing the samples on your display tables. Your volunteers sell from the stock items behind the tables. **The volunteers place each gift in a paper gift bag** (which acts as gift wrap for the gift). They also mark the children's Budget Envelopes with gift and price.

7. Children pay for all gifts at the cashier table when finished shopping. Cashiers check gifts against Budget Envelopes, take money and make change. They then place all paper bag wrapped gifts in a plastic tote bag. For security, they may staple the tote bag shut and mark the child's name on it.



Running Your Shop - Reorders

8. After shopping, children return to class with their gifts. If classrooms do not have lockers to keep gifts out of sight, you may want to supply each classroom with a large bag or box in which students can store their gifts until they go home. This helps teachers get their students 'back to business' more quickly after shopping.

9. At the end of the day, tidy up display tables and gift inventory. Note gift items that are in low supply that you might want to reorder. (See 'Reorders' next page.) Count the day's money using a calculator and remove from the school. Note any supplies that need replacing for the next day.

What To Do If You Run Out Of Gifts

1. Occasionally you may run out of the more popular, lower-priced gifts. For this reason we have provided you with four or five items in each of the lower-priced levels. Therefore, if you sell out of one or two items in that price category, simply remove the out-of-stock display samples from the table, rearrange your remaining items and continue the sale. The children still have a broad selection of items from which to choose.

2. If however, you sell out of a popular higher-priced item for which there are limited selections, you may want to take orders for these sold-out items from the children, place a reorder and distribute these special order purchases when your reorder arrives.

Younger children may need some assistance shopping, so two or three volunteers may act as helpers. Helpers do not shop for the children but assist them if they need help making a decision, counting money, or budgeting to make sure everyone on their list has a gift. The goal is to let all little shoppers experience the feeling of accomplishment from choosing gifts themselves.



Secure Your Dates For Next Year!

Reserve your dates early to ensure you get the dates you want next year. See the Questionnaire and Early Sign-Up sheet at the end of this Handbook.

Don't forget to thank your volunteers and school staff for making your gift store a big success!

Reorders

1. You may reorder at any time during your sale with FREE next business day UPS delivery. when you order before 1PM Eastern Time.
2. If you have any questions about items or quantities in your reorder, our Customer Service Representatives will be happy to assist you in reordering most efficiently.

After Your Gift Store Is Over

You will find detailed instructions with the Inventory Sheets.

1. Do a final inventory of remaining gifts following instructions with the inventory sheets. Note damaged or broken gifts on the inventory sheet and include them in your return total. You will not be charged for these.
2. Pack up gifts to be returned.
3. Figure out your bill. Make out your check as instructed.
4. Keep copies of the forms and your check for your records.
5. Hold a quick meeting while the program experience is still fresh, to make notes for next year about what worked well, ideas for improvements, etc.



Sample Schedule

SAMPLE PLANNING SCHEDULE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
WEEK 1	Planning meeting Form committees	Start recruiting volunteers			Distribute Weekly Planner
WEEK 2	Prepare letters and announcements	Meet with school officials	Plan store location, reserve tables		
WEEK 3	Send first Teacher letter	Send home Student letter			Progress meeting
WEEK 4	Imprint flyers	Put up posters at school			
WEEK 5	Merchandise delivered this week	Count boxes, inventory gifts	Send second Teacher letter		Progress meeting
WEEK 6	Start P.A. announcements				
WEEK 7	P.A. announcement	Send home color flyer	Hold volunteer's run-through meeting		Send home budget envelopes
WEEK 8	Set up Shop	Shop day 1	Shop day 2	Shop day 3	Final inventory Pack up, return

Planning Calendar



	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
WEEK 1					
WEEK 2					
WEEK 3					
WEEK 4					
WEEK 5					
WEEK 6					
WEEK 7					
WEEK 8					

PLANNING CALENDAR



(Sample letter to students)

Dear Students:

In a few weeks, our parent group will be holding a gift store for you and we want you to be the first to know all about it. This is a store that will be set up at school, where you can do your own gift shopping for family and friends. The store will be open during school hours and your class will have its own special time to shop. We will have parent helpers at the store ready to help you if you need it.

There will be lots of wonderful gifts to choose from, all at low prices that students can afford. There will be many gifts just for moms, dads, sisters, brothers, grandmas, and grandpas, to make it easy to find a gift for everyone on your list. You will be able to take your gifts with you from the store. Colorful gift bags will help you keep your gifts secret once you get them home.

Start thinking about your gift list now, and we will have more details for you soon! Please ask your parents to read this letter too.

Sincerely,

Your School Parent Group

P.S. Parents and grandparents, we are looking for volunteers. If you can spare a few hours of your time, please call:

at: _____



(Sample first letter to teachers)

Dear Teachers:

Our gift store program will be coming to school soon and we invite your students to participate. Sponsored by our Parent Group, this gift store gives children a safe, supervised environment at school in which to choose gifts for family and friends. Children shop from a large selection of quality, family-style gifts at reasonable prices and our parent volunteers are there to help.

While the gift store gives children the thrill of selecting their own gifts, it also provides a practical, hands-on educational experience as they count, add, subtract, decide how to budget, and literally learn the value of money. It will also give you an opportunity to show your pupils, in a very practical demonstration, that the things they study in school, like math, can be useful in the “real world”.

Our store will be held during school hours, with each class shopping at a scheduled time for about 30 minutes. Because we plan to schedule extra volunteers to help the youngest children through the store, we would like to schedule the lower grades first. Our volunteers will be happy to assist you in any way we can.

A suggested time for your class to shop is listed at the bottom of this letter. We hope to avoid scheduling conflicts by planning early, so if this time is a problem for you, please call our school liaison coordinator, listed below.

We will be giving out more information about the gift store program in coming weeks and will appreciate your help in distributing take-home materials to your class.

If you would like more information about the program or have suggestions, we would be happy to hear from you. Thanks in advance for your help in making our gift store a big success. We can't do it without you!

Coordinator

Your class is scheduled to shop on _____ (date) at: _____ (time)

If you need to reschedule or have questions, please call:

_____ (name) at: _____ (phone)



(Sample second letter to teachers)

Dear Teachers:

Our gift store is coming soon and we want you to be familiar with the store procedure.

The students will take home Budget Envelopes to help them plan a shopping list and budget, shortly before the gift store opens. Parents and children will agree on a budget for the child's gift list and use the envelope to keep shopping money safe.

Your students will bring their Budget Envelopes to school on your scheduled shopping day. If your students are very young, you may want to collect their Budget Envelopes until shopping time to make sure none get lost.

At your scheduled time, bring your class with their Budget Envelopes to the gift store location. We will give each child a plastic tote bag and explain the shopping procedure. Your class will have about 30 minutes to shop and about 10 to 15 children will go through the store at a time. Children will pay for their gifts at the cashier and take their gifts with them in the tote bags. We will have extra helpers to assist the youngest children.

If you have any questions, please call the School Liaison Coordinator listed below. Once again, thank you for your help.

Coordinator

This confirms that your class is scheduled to shop

on: _____ at: _____

If you have questions, please call:

at:(phone) _____



(Sample note to volunteers)

Dear Gift Store Volunteer:

Thank you for your participation in our Gift Store program. It's going to be a lot of fun but it will get quite busy so we really appreciate your help.

This is to confirm that you have volunteered for:

—

Date(s): _____

Time(s): _____

Please try to arrive a few minutes before your shift starts.

If you missed our run-through meeting, attached you will find some information about gift store procedures. If you have any questions, please call me at the number below.

Once again, thanks for your help!

Sincerely,

Volunteer Coordinator

Telephone: _____



(Sample school P.A. Announcements)

Please customize announcements from choices shown or use as a guide to make your own announcement scripts.)

Good morning (afternoon) students. This year our school will be holding a gift store. This is a holiday store set up here at school and run by parent volunteers so that you can do your own holiday gift shopping for family and friends.

You will be receiving: (a letter telling you more about gift store program) (color flyers)(Budget Envelopes) in the next few days (or today) that will give you more information. Please take them home to your parents.

Look for the big color posters in school too and keep listening. I'll have more announcements soon about the gift store. Have a good day in school.

Good morning students. This is a reminder that gift store program starts (continues) tomorrow and the following classes will be shopping: (list classes scheduled to shop). Students who are scheduled to shop, please remember to bring your Budget Envelopes and shopping money. (or classes to shop today are: list classes). Thank you and have a good day.



(Flyer reverse side with school information)

School Presents

(program name or clip art of logo)

ON: _____

IN: _____

Dear Parents and Grandparents:

If you would like to volunteer to help out at this year's gift store program, please call :

at: _____



Questionnaire - Early Signup

Questionnaire

We work hard to make every gift store program a wonderful experience for both you and your young shoppers. You can help us continue to improve on the high standards we set for our quality and performance by giving us your comments on your gift store experience.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the brief questionnaire below and return it with your final inventory forms. Thank you for your valuable comments!

1. Would you add any items to the selection? _____

2. What worked best about the program? _____

3. What needs improving? _____

4. What Guide instructions, if any, would you like added or explained in greater detail?

5. Tell us what ideas your group came up with to promote or run the program that worked well for you:

6. Any other comments? _____

Early Sign Up

Because the most popular dates for our gift store program fill up rapidly, we offer a special service to our valued customers. As a current customer, you are entitled to a special Advance Reservation for next year's gift store program, to lock in your dates ahead of regular sign up time.

Sign up now and ensure that you get exactly the dates you want for next year!

Dates _____ -- _____ School _____

Address _____

Group Contact Name _____

Phone _____