

Tip sheet on
Making your story child-friendly
Let the Children Come

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When Jesus told his disciples, “Let the children come to me,” the situation involved children and families who had come to ask Jesus to bless their children. They had *come*; they expected that Jesus would want to see them.

But when a store thinks about attracting children and families with children as customers, the situation is a little different. The children and families you want to attract need to feel *invited*—and that happens largely by the environment they experience when they are in your store.

So what are some of the ways you can invite children and families with children to be at home in your store?

1. Create a space for young children to play. Set up a train table with plenty of small cars and engines for little ones to manipulate. Or place wooden puzzles and other manipulative toys on a low table. If there’s room, add a kitchen set with lots of plastic food and cookware. For older kids, set up a cozy chair or two next to some craft supplies or board games, current issues of magazines like *Clubhouse* and *Highlights*, and maybe an iPad or iPod loaded with approved apps, music, and games.

Sometimes moms (or dads) just need to get out of the house with their kids. Your store can be a destination for them if there’s a welcoming place to play when they arrive.

2. Host a preschool story time on a regular schedule. Find someone who loves kids to read stories and sing songs. Include books and music that you carry but mix in some perennial childhood favorites too. Give punch cards out and punch each child’s card each time he or she attends. Offer a discount on purchases when a card is filled.

3. Keep the shelves in your children’s department well stocked and well organized—just like you do the rest of your store. But don’t be upset if things don’t always stay in their places. It really doesn’t take that long to set things right again.

4. Take advantage of seasons, holidays, and even events in the news to create special displays of children’s books. For example, around Valentine’s Day, feature books about love. Create displays around Black History Month, St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

5. Once or twice a year, have a Kids’ Day at your store, with special activities and author or illustrator signings. Use local media and social media to help get the word out.



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