



ABA EDUCATION

Education for Authors: How to Work with Independent Bookstores

The American Booksellers Association — the trade association representing independent bookstores nationwide — works closely with its member stores and with authors to help book buyers find their next great read. A big part of that includes author events in indie bookstores. The following best practices were formulated by booksellers to help authors better prepare for a successful event.

THINGS TO DO

Before your event:

- Know your strengths and weaknesses. Prepare yourself to interact, answer questions, and sign books for a line of customers.
- Link to either an independent bookstore or Indiebound.org on all of your sites, posts, and social media.
- In the weeks leading up to an event, use your social media accounts to repeatedly promote each event. Be sure to tag each store and your publisher for maximum sharing. Make sure you tag the *correct* store/venue if the bookseller has multiple stores. You can schedule these in Facebook and Hootsuite ahead of time.
- Partner with a local indie for a pre-order campaign to sign copies upon release.
- If you are going to read, know what you are going to read before you arrive at the bookstore and practice reading before the event.
- Energize your family and fan base and invite them to the event. Don't underestimate people or how eager they may be to support you.
- The store will do everything it can to publicize your event and you should do the same. The most successful events are those that have the full support of both author and bookstore.
- Be familiar with the store you are visiting. Review the store website and learn something about the store and the community.
- Confirm the details of your event and let the store know about any requirements - ie specific backlist titles you will mention, screen/projector for PowerPoint, microphone, easel, etc. If you are bringing food or catering the event, inform the store.
- Seed the audience with a friend who can start the question and answer period.

During your event:

- At some point, explain how important bookstores are and how glad you are to sign books purchased at the store that day.

- Be gracious to booksellers — they'll continue to sell your book long after you've moved on to the next store.
- Bookstore owners and staff come in contact with a lot of authors. Be kind to them and they will remember it.
- Talk about yourself as a reader; culturally, it reinforces the value of reading and inspires audiences to be like you. Readers are a community and the common thread is a powerful thing.
- Follow time limits if they are set by the bookseller, and if the staff member running the event cuts off audience questions, follow his or her lead.

After your event:

- Introduce yourself to the staff and thank them.
- Buy a book from the store! This speaks volumes to the staff.
- Keep in touch with the store. Relationships sell books!

THINGS NOT TO DO

Before your event:

- Don't arrive inebriated.
- Don't be a 'no-show.' If you have an emergency, please contact the store.
- Don't wait until the day of the event to promote it.

During your event:

- Don't ever mention buying a book from a non-indie retailer while you are at an indie bookstore.
- Don't use the word "Amazon" in any context (sales, reviews, etc.)
- Don't give away all the details or plot of your book at the reading; save some for people to experience themselves.
- Never disrespect the bookstore, the booksellers, or the audience.
- It is fine to have a drink at the event, but never do a reading under the influence of alcohol or other substances.
- If you are not a good reader, don't read! Find a way to create an event that makes you shine.
- If you are going to read, don't read more than a few brief passages. Remember that the story about the story will make the audience want to read and buy it.
- Don't let the question and answer period drag on or people will feel trapped and will head for the door instead of stopping to purchase the book.

After your event:

- Don't ask how many books were sold. Booksellers know you want to know, and we will tell you if we are proud of the results. Otherwise, leave that information to be given to you by the publisher.