

Using Tickets for People to Attend Library Programs (Compiled on pubyac listserv)

Giving tickets just to those registered for summer reading:

Well, since you are checking that kids are signed up for summer reading anyway when issuing tickets, you could make a list of those kids who got tickets at the same time (and check it off as people present their tickets at the door—thus also finding out if you have repeated no-shows...) Actually you could eliminate the ticket part if you are worried about people losing them and just have sign up sheets for the programs (requiring that each person signing up bring you their summer reading log as verification) and checking people off the sign up lists as they enter the program room.

When people forget their tickets:

If people want to come but all the tickets are gone & they've forgotten theirs, we tell them they can wait until all the ticket holders are in and then if there is room we will let more in. You could try that if a lot of people forget their tickets.

Logistics of giving out tickets:

1. The libraries make between 10% and 25% more tickets (depending on the attendance history) than the number of kids a room will hold. This allows for no shows. Tickets are given out on a first-come first-serve basis. If a daycare comes and wants 50 tickets and the library has them, they get them. Parents who go in the room (required by policy for children under 7) and babies in strollers also have to have a ticket. This way everyone has equal chance. The tickets are given out beginning on the date that is two weeks before the performance. If they forget their tickets or do not have any, they can wait outside the room until most of the ticket holders have had a chance to come. When the arrival of ticket holders slows down, usually a few minutes before the start time, we let non-ticket holders in the room if there is a place for them. We have one staff person working the door along with a teen volunteer to take the tickets.

For craft programs and programs for performers who require an even more limited audience, the procedure is the same. One of the same branches does crafts for 100 kids so they make 125 tickets to give out to kids. Usually they have between 95-100. When supplies are a problem, we make the numbers less. We have done sign ups for small programs, but even with a call the day before, you get about the same turn out.

2. We have 150 tickets available on the morning of the program. Those are given out on a first come basis and it has worked well. We tell people to get there at 9 a.m. for the 10 a.m. program. We have 2 programs back to back and give out the 11 a.m. ones as soon as the 1st 150 for the 10 am program are gone.

3. One week and one day before the program we start giving out tickets. We also started limiting the number of adults who could be in the room, hoping to leave more space for kids who would be OK unsupervised.

4. We do in-person registration for the program where patrons register their name and telephone number about a week before on the first day of summer reading registration. I type up the tickets with each registrant's name on them & on the day of the program, I put the tickets out near the door. For patrons who don't register, we tell them they could come in that morning and get a numbered standby ticket. We were able to see that at least 40 or so of the 120 who had

registered did not show up. In the long run, patrons who are inclined to register for programs and then not show up aren't going to be any more responsible with this method. But it does allow you to admit people who phone that day and are probably more interested than those who registered a week or more ahead of time.

5. For programs requiring registration we allow people to register over the phone but they have to stop by to pick up the ticket BEFORE the event. On the day of the event, any unclaimed tickets are available on a first come, first served basis. We've found that having to make the effort to pick up the ticket makes people think twice about if they really will be coming. We've been doing this for about 3 years now and people are becoming very good about calling if plans change at the last minute.

Forgotten tickets don't worry us too much because these are usually programs with 30 or less people so we can check the list and see that the ticket was picked up.

6. Here is how we do it: When registration begins parents must come into the library (there is no phone registration), fill out a registration form and sign up for the events that they want to attend. They are then given a reading record on which to log the books read and all of the tickets for the events they signed up for. If they are unable to make an event they signed up for, we encourage them to let us know so that somebody else may fill that spot.

While there is always an adjustment period, this new system works wonderfully for us and we have often wondered why we did not do it sooner.

7. This summer we are opting to give out free tickets 30 minutes in advance of the show until fire code capacity is reached. The idea is that after getting tickets they can go use the library and check out books instead of disruptively waiting in line outside the meeting room doors. Plus, we really want to encourage the program to be for those that use the library, hence setting it up so that those who come early and use the library get the tickets.

8. We just have laminated tickets (up to 90 since that's our limit for the room) and we advertise for people to come 1 hour before the program starts. The tickets are first come, first served, and we then collect them as people enter the room. It works very well. We re-use the same tickets each time, & don't have to worry about any lists.

Using tickets for kids to "shop" in the good basket at end of summer reading:

A couple of years ago, we issued tickets to participants in the summer reading program for our final "reward" program—a carnival game program. Every week when a child reported their completed reading for the week, they received two tickets. We put them in an envelope with the child's name on it. The more reading a child did, the more tickets. When he/she arrived for the final program, we gave him/her all the tickets in the envelope, and they went in and "spent" them. Parents loved not having to keep track of the tickets. The envelopes worked very well for two years, but we discontinued doing it because so many people were disappointed because they were out of town that day and never got to use their tickets. That might not be such a factor for what you're planning; presumably folks wouldn't ask for a ticket if they weren't expecting to come. We would not hesitate to use the envelope system for another situation. However, you'll probably want to issue 5 to 10 % more tickets than you have room for because at least that many won't show up.
