

# What can I do to help my booksignings go smoothly?

Q: When my Christmas book came out last year, three bookstores agreed to have me do book signings. When I arrived, I found they had no notice of the event in the window, no sign at the front of the store, and no way of directing people to where I was seated. It would have been easy to bring a sign, but it might have seemed I was overstepping my boundaries. What could I have done?

I agree that bringing your own sign might have seemed like a criticism or an imposition, particularly if you did so without notice on the day of the signing. It would be better to find a way to collaborate with the store in advance.

Even though it's more work for you, I would suggest creating a "promotion package" that stores could borrow from you to announce your store visits. The promotion package can be done inexpensively and can include items that are reusable, so you can change the date and time listed for each occasion. This could be offered on loan to stores when you agree to do the signing and could be tied to a discussion of what they do for author events. You can also ask if there are other ways for you to help promote the signing.

The promotion package could include special signs for the window and front of the store, a box containing window display materials appropriate to the subject of the book (ie. Christmas decorations, or gift-wrapped boxes for last year's book), and one or more easel-backed signs to set up at the register or on tables. You could also enclose a list of your previous books, biographical material, and a professional photo for publicity use.

The idea is to offer a service in advance rather than just trying to fill a gap at the last minute. In this way, you can help make the bookseller enthusiastic about your visit and let them know you are anxious to work together. You can't guarantee that everyone will take you up on your offer, but those who do will probably get a better response and will remember you when you offer to come back. 12/93:1/94