

How can I get books to students, without being a book salesman?

Q: I supplement my writing income by giving talks at schools. I provide ordering information, which includes a 40% discount, to encourage them to make books available to students either in advance or during my visit. At some schools the kids purchase more than 100 books, at others they purchase none because the school won't offer my books for sale. What can I do to see that books are offered to the students, without appearing to be a book salesman?

School policies vary on when and how products can be sold. If a school seems reticent about selling your books, or if you're not sure if they are following through, you can try getting a local bookstore involved.

If the bookstore is notified a month or more in advance of your school visit, they can contact the school and offer to handle the book sale. The advantage to the schools is that they don't need to do extra paperwork to place the order, get budget approval, worry about returns of unsold books, or handle money. The store may also be willing to run the sale as a "mini bookfair" and offer to give the school a percentage of the proceeds. This kind of cooperation can benefit both the school and the bookstore. It also means that the bookstore will know to have your books in stock before and after the visit.

Please note that this is different from contacting a local bookstore to try to coordinate a visit at the store while you are in town. A school that pays transportation cost for your visit will not want you to arrange appearances elsewhere unless the other organization is willing to share in the cost of your visit. 10:11/94