

The reasons for programming on the cheap are not new to this economic downturn; they have existed in libraries for years. Small libraries with little or no budget for programming as well as fledgling teen and YA librarians just starting out have been doing this dance for years. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Use what you have readily available or can get for free or low cost.

Read on for ten easy tips for low and no-cost programs for teens.

1. Keep your projects simple

You can find lots of great craft ideas created for younger kids that you can adapt for older participants. Teens can always improve on something easy, but if it's too hard, they tend to get frustrated and give up. Just keep your age group in mind as you choose your projects.

Example: Pet Rocks

Needed supplies: clean rocks, all shapes and sizes (collect on walks or have teens bring in their own), acrylic paint and paint brushes, or permanent markers. Optional supplies: wiggle eyes, pipe cleaners, fabric scraps, tacky glue. Let the teens create fantastical pets by painting or using markers to add details to their rocks. Ta-da—Pet Rock!

2. Have the proper supplies on hand

Nothing sinks a fun time faster than finding out you don't have the right kind of glue or have run out of green tissue paper. Choose projects only if you have all the needed supplies on hand. Make a checklist and use it—check off each item as you collect it. Recycle, reuse, and repurpose all materials that you can.

Crafting Cheap and Successful Teen Programs

By Charli Osborne

Example: Sock or Glove Creatures

Needed supplies: socks (finally an opportunity to use all those single socks that are orphaned by dryers everywhere) or gloves, sewing thread, needles, scissors. Optional supplies include: wiggle eyes, fabric scraps, fabric glue, pipe cleaners, bits of old jewelry, polyester batting, or cotton balls. Let the teens create traditional sock puppets or let them stuff their creatures with batting or cotton balls.

3. Try registration

If you register your teens, you'll know how many people to expect and prepare for. This is especially helpful if you have

multiple components to your program that need to be gathered, bought, and set up in advance. It also gives you the opportunity to contact participants, either by phone or e-mail, the day before the program to remind them that they signed up. This reminder can keep you from having a disappointingly low turnout at a program.

4. Limit the number of teens per program

Believe it or not, this can create more interest in your programs! If registration is required and limited for a program, it sounds exclusive and special and teens love exclusive and special. It's important to

The core concepts of cheap and crafty programming have been very useful to CHARLI OSBORNE, Head of Teen Services at Oxford Public Library in Oxford, Michigan, in growing her teen section from two shelves of YA stickered books in the children's area in 1997 to a lovely 1,200 square-foot teen area, complete with a teen service desk, a 10,000-item collection, and four staff (one full time and three part time), in 2009.