

# Advice for Donating Books to Organizations

I have a bunch of books I don't want anymore, where should I start?

## Start by sorting

It may be daunting depending on the number of books you are dealing with, but please go through them before you donate. Look at them, check to see if any contain any items stuck between the pages (old photographs, postcards, family recipes, handwritten notes, etc.), or if any are old yearbooks or other items you would like to remain in your family. You may also find a book or two belonging to a local library or something you meant to return to your neighbor.

## Types of donations not accepted:

### Physically damaged books

First, books that are physically damaged can cause damage to other books if added to a collection. If you have books that fit into any of the following categories, please dispose of them rather than donating them to a library or organization:



**Anything water-damaged** - This includes anything that's moldy or has visible water damage, even if there's no mold you can see. Water is the enemy, and even if the water damage is old, it can spread molds that ruin other books and even cause sickness.

**Anything smoke-damaged** - If anyone smoked inside the house, garage, or other space where the books were kept, or if books have been in a building that had a fire, those books have picked up the smell of smoke and can transfer that smoke damage to other books around them, making whole portions of the library collection undesirable and unusable for patrons.

**Anything damaged by pets** - If you have cats, dogs, or other pets that have damaged books or caused them to have an odor, those books can damage other books in the collection and even cause illness.

### Books and other media that contain out-dated information

- Reader's Digest Condensed Editions
- Encyclopedia sets
- Textbooks - Not sure? Check with a local college bookstore and if they are unwilling to buy them back, chances are they will not be accepted for other collections either.
- Old issues of *National Geographic* or other magazines.

### Bootleg copies of audiobooks or movies

Libraries and organizations will not add items to their collections that are illegally obtained or violate copyright law.

## Check donation policies



When you've sorted out damaged items and set aside items to keep in the family or return to their respective homes, check out the donation policies of organizations to which you are considering making a donation. Most places either have a policy posted or you can call to ask them what types of books they accept. Sort through your books and only donate items an organization has said they can actually use. Do not drop off items an organization has stated they do not accept.

We know you want to find a good home for your books and are eager to have someone take them off your hands – preferably someone who can use them. However, leaving donations without checking first, not pre-sorting, or dropping off donations in spite of being told the items cannot be used end up costing organizations a large amount of time and money – time and money they are then unable to put toward their missions.

Most organizations do not have a full-time (or any) library staff, and although there may be one or two people who help tend to the collection, it takes time and resources to sort through the hundreds of books received as donations. You may be reluctant to dispose of unwanted books yourself, but when you donate items that an organization cannot use or does not have room to store, the organization then has to pay to dispose of them. (If you are uncomfortable recycling the unwanted books, another option is to have a yard sale and donate the profits from the book sales to the organization of your choice.)

Sorting your donations in advance and checking policies before donating allows organizations to more efficiently identify and add new items to their collections, saving them time and money and ultimately leading to stronger library collections the whole community can enjoy.

ADAPTED FROM A LITREACTOR COLUMN BY PETER DERK, MARCH 27, 2017