

Book signings

Most bookshops, including branches of the big chains, have some space for local writers in their shop. Many of them are happy to hold book launches and book signings on the premises.

Approaching a bookshop about a signing

Take a copy of your book and ask to speak to the manager. Show them your book and ask about the possibility of having a launch or book signing in their shop. While you are there, ask if they have a local writers' section and would be willing to stock some copies of your book.

Preparing for a book signing

Before the signing:

- 1) Why not check if there is another local writer who would do a joint book signing with you? The presence of two local writers in the bookshop creates an atmosphere of a local literary event. Potential readers may also feel more comfortable about approaching a table with two writers present rather than just one. The bookshop manager or your local writers' group may be able to put you in touch with another local writer.
- 2) Is there a local drama group in your area? Perhaps a local actor from this group would be willing to read excerpts of your work at the signing, in return for you publicising their latest production during the event. An actor will probably find it much easier to hold an audience's attention – after all, they will have a lot more practice than you.
- 3) Don't forget to invite the local press to your event. Give them a week's notice for a daily publication and more for a weekly publication. It is worth contacting them and asking what their lead time is for stories before you book the date for your signing.
- 4) Invite all your family, friends and colleagues to the signing. Encourage them to come at different times throughout the day, so there is always someone around your table. But make sure you don't spend all your time talking to them and ignore potential readers!

Questions to ask:

- 1) How long will the book signing last?
- 2) What percentage of the cover price does the bookshop want for each copy sold?
- 3) Will the bookshop promote the event in advance?
- 4) Can you have a poster in the shop window to promote the event?

On the day:

- 1) Have some leaflets with information about the book, including your website and podcast address, to give out on the day. Even if someone doesn't buy the book on the day, make sure they take some information about it away with them.

2) Create an email mailing list and invite people to sign up. You could offer members discounts and news about future events and appearances. If you collect email addresses on the day make sure you are within the law on data collection and privacy. Check <http://www.ico.gov.uk> for more information. If you can reassure people of this they will feel more relaxed about giving out their details.

3) In the happy event that you run out of copies of your book during the signing, how will you handle other potential orders? Take some padded envelopes so that interested readers can write their address on the front and then pay you in advance for the book. You can post it to them when you get home.