# “I Spy” Windows

Princeton Public Library

Children

# “I Spy” Windows

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## Free

Byline

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When the pandemic hit, we wanted to let our community know that their library is still physically here. These windows serve as a reminder that, even though we have moved many of our services and programming online, the library will continue with many offerings inside of our building when we are safe and ready.

We wanted our community to be reminded that although online programs are great, there are many things about our library that cannot go online. As a small library, we rely on our community coming through the doors. Ultimately, these “I Spy” windows signal to our community that we will be back together, in person, soon. They also looked great during National Library Week.

As a rural town, our library is located on Princeton’s busiest street with many passersby. Since setting up the window, I have seen people of all ages stroll by

throughout the day to take a look (while maintaining a healthy distance!).

This idea is based on the classic "I Spy" book series by Jean Marzollo.

## Advanced Planning

This is a project that can be done quickly, or it can take a considerable amount of time. This window took me 2 to 3 hours or longer because at one point I stopped for the day and went home to collect more objects to bring back. More details in the window will make it fun for viewers, but the project will take longer to put together. If you have a lot of items to work with, be sure to block out time for it in your day.

Think of a theme before you begin assembling your window! The theme in our window is "spring" so I used a lot of flowers and green things with straw hats, mushrooms, and animals. Your theme should be based on whatever objects you have the most of (but don't be afraid to throw in non-thematic things). You can include library stuff, but a library theme is hard because it will end up being mostly flat items (books, magazines, CDs, cards) or office supplies that aren't very visually interesting.

Before you begin, make sure you have ample window space and a good number of smaller knick-knacks and items to make your window look busy. It will also help to visualize where you want your items to be before you start placing.

As for theme, each "I Spy" display is different and depends on the space it inhabits. In the past, I did one in a glass-front display case with glass shelves. The theme was "levels of the earth" so I did the bottom shelf underground with snakes and gophers, spiders and mice, and rocks. The next level was a forest with trees, animals, plants and buildings, and the top level was the sky, with clouds, birds, rainbows and airplanes. Getting creative with what you already have is key.

## Marketing

The windows are a piece of marketing in itself, but our Facebook page has been the best tool for letting our community know about them. We also have a widely read email newsletter, and I have my own weekly column in the local paper to boost

awareness about the library.

## Budgeting

The best thing about this project is that it can be done with no budget! I used materials from the children’s section, stuff from my own home and items people have donated. Get creative!

## Day-of-event Activity

This is an ongoing passive activity. People come and go as they please. Once completed, I posted about it on our Facebook page and that got people aware on the first day.

## Program Execution

You need lots and lots of clutter in a relatively small space to disguise the items you are hiding. Resist the temptation to space out objects.

Use containers (picture frames, small shelves, shallow boxes) to create spaces with a little depth but not too much depth — everything should be within six inches of the glass otherwise it is too hard to see.

A backdrop, like a quilt, shower curtain or paper, can give you another place to tape objects, and it helps with visibility.

When you are done building inside, go outside and make sure everything is visible from out there. Sometimes it is OK to leave things only partially visible but play fair.

Make sure you leave a space to post the list of things to find!

In the “I Spy” books, the list of things to find usually rhymes. I just didn't have the time for that for my own window! The written instructions for our game of "I Spy" is under Attachments at right.

Remember to have a written reminder somewhere in the middle of the display, large enough to read and visible to all viewers, to not stand too close and not touch the windows. This is especially important during social distancing.

## Advice

Try to tape stuff directly on the window as little as possible. When you do that you lose depth, and you could damage the window. You can use double-sided tape to secure small objects in place on shelves and in boxes so they won't fall.

Play with expectations: if you are asking people to find six mushrooms, make most of them different. Print out a couple of different 2D ones, use a magazine that has one on the cover, use 3D ones big and small, print out the word "mushroom."

If you want to get really tricky, put things in glass bottles to obscure them; use sides and undersides to hide 2D objects; and hide things in crannies only visible from certain angles or in mirrors.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

## Supporting Materials

Document
i_spy_instructions.doc
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

## Slideshow Images

Image










## More Programs

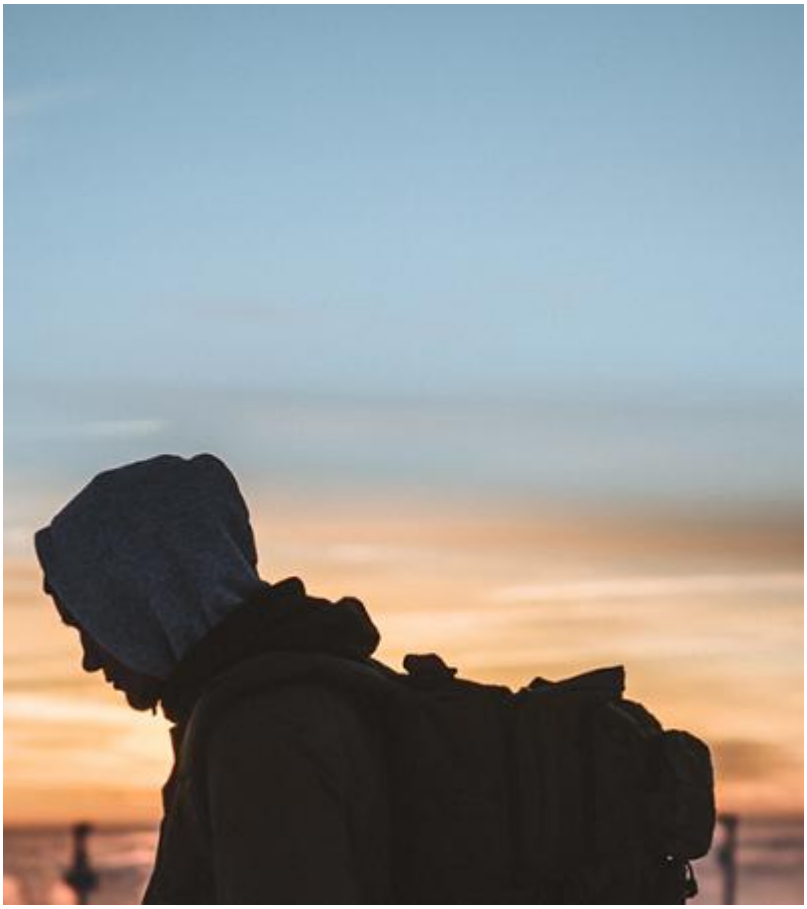
Jul 19, 2017
Children (9 and under)+ |
Image



## 5 Passive Program Ideas for School Libraries

### Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Teens (13-16)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Mar 17, 2020
+ |
Image



## Serving Homeless Patrons in a Shutdown

### Audiences:

Aug 2, 2018
+ | $$
Image




## National Library Week Caption Contest

### Audiences:

Dec 21, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



## Community Poet-Tree

### Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Feb 1, 2019
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



## A Poem a Day

### Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational