T-Shirt Tie Dye

Brooklyn Town Library

Intergenerational

T-Shirt Tie Dye

Jul 6, 2026

$51-100

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Byline

Martha Ennis, Assistant Librarian, Brooklyn (Conn.) Town Library

As a library, we are working on increasing our summer reading programming offerings. We started with a tie dye program. Participants brought their own item to dye, and we provided the dye, gloves, and rubber bands, along with post-program instructions.

Advanced Planning

We just wanted to offer a fun program to increase interest in our summer reading program and remind our community that we do fun things, too! While the idea and most of the planning took place piecemeal over months (the idea came to me at the end of summer reading last year, and I worked on finding the materials we needed

casually in the early part of the year), the truly dedicated planning took place a month before the program date.

I let my director know my program itinerary and the supplies I needed, and once she approved the program, I reached out to a neighboring church to ask permission to use their outdoor space. Our library and parking lot are too small to host a program! The director ordered my supplies, and I created post-program instructions and a program survey to put on the bags that the dyed items would go home in the week before the program.

Marketing

I created flyers and social media posts on Canva. Summer reading did not start until 11 days before the event, but we did tell people about it in person and online before summer reading started to ensure that it wasn't too last-minute for people.

Budgeting

This program was relatively low-cost. All we really needed to buy were the dye and some t-shirts (to provide to anyone who came without their own item). I provided table coverings because I had some that I was not using. If we needed to purchase them, it wouldn't have added much to the program cost.

If you need to cut costs, feel free not to have extra shirts on hand for anyone who doesn't have an item to tie dye. While it wasn't a huge cost, it was a cost. Additionally, instead of purchasing Ziploc bags for the dyed items, you could just use plastic grocery bags.

Day-of-event Activity

On the day of the event, I took over two library tables and borrowed another from the church parish house. I covered them with my table coverings (I recommend two layers). I had a check-in table where I gave attendees a quick demonstration on how

to tie their shirts and signed them up for summer reading if they weren't already. Everyone who came who was not registered for summer reading signed up.

I set up alone, but a former coworker came to volunteer just before the program started. She helped me by assisting attendees with tying, mixing and handing out dye, and getting dyed products into the provided bags. After attendees left, she helped me clean up and move everything back to its rightful place. The only challenge we faced was some dye getting on one table. Rubbing alcohol and a magic eraser took off most of the dye, but in the future, I would have a double layer of table coverings.

Program Execution

We had 21 sign-ups for the program, and 16 attended. Three people emailed beforehand to let us know they wouldn't make it, and the other three let us know afterward that they'd mixed up their dates. Even so, it was a successful program! We are a small rural library, so 16 attendees to a program is not bad.

On the day of the event, attendees were very positive about the program and patrons who attended have since come in and reiterated how much they enjoyed it. Since my only goal was to create a fun summer reading program, I felt it was a great success.

Advice

I recommend having people register for this program so you know how much dye you need- there are "super size" kits that are four times the size of your classic tie dye bottles. While we accepted walk-ins, it was good to know approximately how many people would come. Also, be very overzealous in protecting your tables from dye!

Since Programming Librarian published this article, our readers have tried the program at

their own libraries! Here’s what they have to say:

Feedback
We hosted this event on July 2nd, 2026 and had approx. 175 people attend. Our building's fire code capacity is 77, but luckily it was a nice day and we had set up outside. We supplied everything except T-shirts, but had some donated that were made available, and we did supply bandanas.
— Kaitlin Wilson, Library Assistant, Irene Ingle Public Library, Wrangell, Alaska

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

Supporting Materials

Document
Tie Dye Program Flyer (8.5 x 11 in).pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images



Image









Image



More Programs

May 30, 2025
Adults (21 and up)+ | $
Image



Hammer Dyeing with Flowers

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Feb 5, 2025
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $
Image



Awkward Art

Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
May 10, 2024
Adults (21 and up)+ | $$
Image



Balloon Smash Art

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)