

Frequently Asked Questions

Everyone has questions, including your patrons—and they deserve answers! Equip your staff to answer the weeding questions that are most likely to pop up. We've compiled a few of them here with suggested talking points for the discussion.

What is “weeding”?

The term “weeding” refers to any library’s ongoing efforts to keep their collection fresh by removing books that are collecting dust instead of being checked out by their community.

Why are you taking books out of our library / away from our community?

Over time, some books that were once in high demand and regularly checked out may stop circulating and start collecting dust. Other books become overly worn through regular use and need to be replaced. In both cases, it is our duty to remove them from our collection and replace them with books our patrons want. Our library wants to serve our constituents by being good stewards of the selection in circulation.

Where do weeded books go?

Our weeded books are shipped to Better World Books, a company that sells them on [BetterWorldBooks.com](https://www.betterworldbooks.com) and across 50+ other online marketplaces to generate funds for our library and a nonprofit literacy partner. Better World Books specializes in finding new homes for books that are collecting dust on our shelves—this way, we are able to make room and receive funding for books that our community actually wants.

How do you choose which books to remove from the collection?

(Here are some of the criteria that suggest a book should be weeded—feel free to edit to reflect your specific criteria.)

- **Misleading:** Some older books may have egregious factual inaccuracies.
- **Bad condition:** Wear and tear take their toll, and perennial classics need to be replaced after being too “well loved.”
- **Newer edition:** Sometimes updates in a new edition of a book renders an older edition undesirable or obsolete.

- **Irrelevant:** Our community simply isn’t interested in reading everything. Why keep it if nobody wants to check it out?

- **Easily found elsewhere:** Keeping a copy of certain materials at the local library seems redundant, and isn’t adding value to the community.

Are any of the weeded books thrown away?

Better World Books NEVER throws away a book. If, for some reason, a book does not sell across one of over 50 online marketplaces, it is donated. For every book purchased on [BetterWorldBooks.com](https://www.betterworldbooks.com) one is donated, Book for Book™. Books unable to be sold or donated are recycled. Their business model ensures that no book ever goes to waste.

Why not just hold a book sale?

In some cases, libraries will still hold book sales and the items which do not sell go to Better World Books. But there are a number of reasons why libraries prefer to send their books directly to Better World Books rather than organize a sale:

- Books that haven’t been popular in circulation (for free!) are unlikely to sell within the same community. But Better World Books can expose them to a wider audience that is more likely to want them.
- With limited staff hours, it’s costly for libraries to spend the time and money organizing the sale themselves, and volunteers are not always available. Libraries would rather use that time to enhance the collection and create new programming to benefit the varied needs of the community.
- Storage of the material prior to the sale is a challenge. Proper storage and working space is often unavailable.
- Success story: Baltimore County Public Library saved 5,460 staff hours annually across 17 branches by removing their book sales while still raising funds for the library, as well as helping to fund their My First Library Card program, by partnering with Better World Books.