

Getting Started

A pop-up shop is a great way to test out your bookstore concept in a temporary location.

Pick Your Pop-Up Style

- Vendor Market: a gathering of individual sellers who set up booths to sell their merchandise (i.e. Farmer's market, art fair, or craft show)
- Stationary Set up or Kiosk within another Business
- Bookmobile

Define the Kind of Experience/Values/Mission You Want to Convey

- Does your store have a mission statement or specific genre/category that you're planning to focus on?
- Are you a 501c3 non-profit organization?

Figure Out Your Budget

- How much can you afford to spend on vendor fees?
- Startup costs, operating expenses, sales forecasts, and profit margins.
- Funding: small business loans, crowdfunding, local grants, and partnerships.

Know Your Local Laws, Licenses, and Permits Requirements - [CA Department of Tax and Fee Administration](#)

- Taxes, DBA, and EIN requirements
- Business Licenses
- Zoning
- Seller's Permits (template: [track your sales for CDTFA Tax filing](#))
- Liability Insurance

Research Locations

- Markets: Farmers' Market, Art Market
- Business Partnership: Coffee/Tea Shops, Galleries, Breweries, Wineries
- Book Festivals
- Retirement Communities
- Be a good neighbor by familiarizing yourself with other nearby bookstores or book businesses- go where they are not.

Operations Setup and Inventory Curation

- Choose Inventory Supplier - Ingram and Faire are good as a starting point, but you might get better rates from individual publishers (they have various requirements before opening credit accounts)
- Get a POS system - [review CALIBA's resource page to start](#)

- Purchase Inventory
- Design Your Brand

Maintaining Your Pop-Up

Ready to Launch...or Build the Plane as We Fly It ✈️

- So your first pop-up event is here and you're not sure how many books to bring, if you can do the event as a solo-preneur, or if you have the right equipment to create a welcoming booth. Start with the basics! You can work at your table by yourself or with another person, if you'd like to fit in breaks (you can always invite a friend to drop by - for a break and maybe a sale!).
- Create a checklist once you have the hang of your pop-up process (template: [Pop-Up Checklist via Wallflower Bookshop](#))
- If you accept cash payments - be sure to have a cash box and get cash before the event
- Have an event recap for yourself to see how well you're doing, and to see which events are serving the business goals well and which events did not work out (template: [Event Recap](#))

Get the Word Out & Stay in Touch

- **Become discoverable.** Social media will help new customers find you.
- **Retain customers.** Newsletters give you control over your customer list without navigating algorithms. Start collecting customer emails at your events as soon as possible. Newsletters are a great way to communicate with your customers - you can promote upcoming events, sales, and any other info you want your customers to be aware of. Newsletters will turn a new customer into a regular.

Sell Books While You Sleep

- Join [Bookshop.org](#) as a bookseller (selling books + ebooks)
- Join [Libro.fm](#) as a bookseller (selling audiobooks)

Measure Your Level of Success

- Did you hit your sales target?
- Compare your spending vs. income for each event
- Track foot traffic to confirm whether your location is suitable for your shop.
- Are you getting return customers or customers through your social media marketing?
- If you're trying something new (new title, location, giveaway event) give it more than one attempt before you decide it's working/not working.

Know your constraints

- Vehicle size
- Weather preparedness
- Selling through inventory/Storing inventory

Planning for the Future

Creating Your Elevator Pitch

As a pop-up, customers will want to know if you have a brick-and-mortar store. Be prepared to let them know what your future plans for the business are. Are you planning to keep the pop-up business model or expand to another business model in the future? Encouraging customers to follow your journey will naturally create community engagement.

More Resources

- Professional Booksellers School: [Basic Bookselling Course](#)
- ABA BookED Podcast: [Take Your Show on the Road: Financial Stability for Pop-Up and Mobile Extensions](#)
- Shopify: [What Is a Pop-Up Shop? Definition, Benefits and Costs \(2025\)](#)
- Square: [How to Open a Pop-Up Shop](#)
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce: [A Guide to Planning a Pop-Up Shop](#)
- [CA Department of Tax and Fee Administration](#)
- [CALIBA's Resource Page](#)
- Templates
 - [Pop-Up Checklist via Wallflower Bookshop](#)
 - [Event Recap](#)
 - [Sales Tracking for CDTFA Tax filing](#)