

Appalachian Prison Book Project

Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome

Dear friend,

The Appalachian Prison Book Project (APBP) sends free books to women and men incarcerated in the six Appalachian states: Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Since its inception in 2004, APBP has mailed more than 8,000 books. The organization is affiliated with West Virginia University (WVU) and includes students, faculty, and staff from WVU as well as members of the Morgantown community.

“Our primary goal is simple: to get books into the hands of people who want and need them,” explained project founder Katy Ryan, a professor of English at WVU. “But to do that, a lot of things have to be in place: a large supply of books, money to pay for mailing and supplies, and volunteers to respond to each letter.”

That’s where you come in.

Use this handbook to get acquainted with the day-to-day operations at APBP and to find the answers to any questions you have about the volunteer process. At the end of your time each day, please record your time and any relevant notes in our volunteer log.

If you have additional questions or want to get in touch with APBP, please contact us:

- Email: appalachianpbp@gmail.com
- Website: apisonbookproject.wordpress.com
- Facebook: [/AppalachianPBP](https://www.facebook.com/AppalachianPBP)
- Twitter: [@AppalachianPBP](https://twitter.com/AppalachianPBP)
- Instagram: [@Appalachian PBP](https://www.instagram.com/AppalachianPBP)
- Mailing Address: PO Box 601, Morgantown WV 26507

Thank you for all of your help, and we look forward to working with you!

Letter Requests

The basic day-to-day operations of APBP consist of opening letters from incarcerated people, matching books to the requests, and wrapping the books for shipment. Special projects, such as responding to out-of-area mail or other requests, are assigned to specific members.

You can choose to perform any of these activities. A letter does not need to be opened, matched, and packaged by one volunteer; if you enjoy matching letters, you can exclusively match letters. Volunteers tend to work where they are needed if there is a deficit, but otherwise, feel free to spend your time doing the work you most enjoy.

Opening Letters

When APBP receives letters from incarcerated people, they are collected and stored in the *Inbox*. If you want to open and read letters, do the following:

1. Take the new, unopened letters out of the *Inbox*.
2. With a letter opener or pair of scissors, carefully open the letter.
Be sure not to rip the letter's return address; it is the only way we know where to send their request.
3. Staple the envelope to the back of the letter (facing out).
The staple should be over the stamp so it doesn't obscure any identifying information.
4. Read each letter carefully to see what the person requests.
5. Using a highlighter or colored pencil, mark the requests in each letter (ex: "western," "romance," "books by Stephen King," etc.) so we can easily see the request.
6. Add the request (letter and envelope stapled together) to the back of the *Letter Requests* folder.

There are some exceptions:

- If the letter has been mailed from a state other than Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia, add it to the *Out-of-Region* folder.
- If the letter has been mailed from an institution where APBP is not authorized to send packages (see *Do Not Send* list, p. 5), add it to the *Do Not Send* folder.
- If the person requests a pen pal, add the letter to the *Pen Pal Requests* folder.
- If the letter includes stamps, artwork, thank you notes, or other materials, lay them on the desk.
- If the letter includes any official documentation from the institution or prison, those documents **must** stay attached to the letter and envelope.

Matching Requests

If you want to match letters to book requests, do the following:

1. Find and open the *Letter Requests* folder.
2. Look at the return address and see if the prison is listed on the *Do Not Send* (p. 5) or *Hardback Books Allowed* (p. 6) lists.
If APBP is not authorized to send packages to that institution, add it to the *Do Not Send*

folder. Additionally, you can only send hardback books to specific institutions (see *Hardback Books Allowed* list, p. 6).

3. Read the highlighted sections.
4. Find a book in our collection that matches the request as closely as possible. APBP responds to each request with a maximum of one book and one dictionary or religious text (if requested and available).
5. Put the original letter request inside the front cover of the book and add it to the stack of books on the *Books to be Mailed* shelf.

There are some exceptions:

- If the letter includes a request for just a dictionary and there is not one available, add it to the *Dictionaries/Reference Books* folder.
- If the letter includes a request for foreign language or wiccan material and there is none available, add it to the *Foreign Language* or *Wiccan* folders, respectively.
- If the person requests a “list of available books,” you can write them a letter and include the *Book List* document.
- If the letter has been mailed from a state other than Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia, add it to the *Out-of-Region* folder.
- If the letter includes any official documentation from the institution or prison, those documents **must** stay attached to the letter and envelope.

The best way to improve your book-matching skills is to practice. Our collection changes every time we send a book or receive a donation, so look through as many books as you can and use your best judgement to match a book and a letter. It will rarely be a perfect match—and if you find a perfect match, send us a photo!—but most people just want something to read. We almost never receive letters complaining that requests were not matched perfectly; people are grateful that we try so hard to meet their request.

Packaging Books

If you want to package books, do the following:

1. Choose a book from the *Books to be Mailed* shelf.
2. Look at the letter and make sure that the book is approximately what the person requested. If it is a hardback book, double-check that the institution accepts hardback books (see *Hardback Books Allowed* list, p. 6).
3. Look at the return address and double-check that APBP can send books to the institution (see *Do Not Send* list, p. 5).
4. Grab a form letter half-sheet from the tray on the table and add a short note to the person. You can explain that you tried your best to meet their request, even if it’s not the exact book they wanted. Sign the note, but feel free to use a pseudonym or “APBP.”
5. Take the original letter request out of the book and place the form letter with your note inside the front cover.
If the original letter request included any official documentation from the institution or prison, those documents **must** stay attached to the letter and envelope.
6. Find the *Record of Books Mailed* notebook and neatly record the relevant information.

7. Wrap the book(s) like they are gifts or presents using the brown paper and packing tape. Use as much tape as you can, even if it looks excessive, and make sure you tape all the corners/edges.
8. For the package's return address, either stick an address label in the top left corner or write APBP's mailing address: Appalachian Prison Book Project, PO Box 601, Morgantown WV 26507.
9. For the mailing address, write the address of the person exactly as it is written on the original letter request. Make sure their ID number is listed after their name.
10. Off to the side, write "Media Mail" so the book will get a reduced mailing rate.
11. Put the packaged book in a mailing tub.
12. Put the original letter request in the *Completed Requests* folder.

There is an exception:

- If the package will be mailed to Mount Olive, West Virginia, put the packaged book in the *Mount Olive* mailing tub. APBP ships packages in bulk to Mount Olive.

Do Not Send: List of Prisons

While many institutions allow APBP to send books as long as it is free of charge, a few prisons have regulations and restrictions wherein books can only be sent to prisoners in perfectly new condition or directly from the publisher.

The following prisons will not accept books from APBP. If you receive a letter from one of these institutions, put the letter in the *Do Not Send* folder.

Kentucky

- Eastern Kentucky Correctional
- West Liberty

Maryland

- Cumberland
- Hagerstown
- Pre-Approval Process from North Central Correctional
- Westover

Ohio

- Lebanon
- Lucasville
- Marysville
- Orient

Tennessee

- Clifton

Virginia

- Blue Ridge Regional Jail
- Hampton Roads Regional Jail
- Jonesville
- Madison Heights
- Meadowview
- Petersburg
- Portsmouth

West Virginia

- Beaver
- Beckley
- Bluefield
- Charleston South Central
- Greenwood North Central
- Hazelton
- Potomac Highlands
- Regional Jails

Hardback Books Allowed: List of Prisons

Most institutions will not accept hardback books from APBP. However, there are a few exceptions. When you are matching a book to a request, look at the city of the return address. If it is one of the following cities, hardcover books are accepted at that prison.

Kentucky

- Lexington
- Pine Knot

Maryland

- Hagerstown

Ohio

- Chillicothe
- Conneaut
- Cumberland
- Dayton
- Grafton
- Lima
- London
- Lucasville
- Mansfield
- Marion
- Marysville
- Nelsonville
- Toledo

Tennessee

- Clifton
- Henning
- Memphis
- Mountain City
- Nashville
- Pikeville
- Tiptonville
- Whiteville

Virginia

- Mitchells
- Petersburg
- Pound

West Virginia

- Glenville
- Grafton
- Hillsboro
- Huttonsville
- Morgantown
- Mount Olive
- St. Mary's

Aull Center

Since 2006, the Aull Center has generously donated space to our organization. Since this building has important ties to the history of Morgantown, West Virginia, please adhere to the following guidelines while volunteering:

- Do not mark or hang anything on the walls.
- If you are playing music as you work, please keep the music at a moderate level or close the door.
- Refrain from running up and down the corridor or stairs.
- If the space is too hot or cold, please ask the attendant downstairs before adjusting the hallway thermostat.

For more information about the Aull Center, visit the Morgantown Public Library's website at morgantown.lib.wv.us.

Other Materials

In this binder, you will find scrapbooks, thank you notes, artwork, volunteer correspondence, and hourly schedules. Additionally, you can see example highlighted letters for your convenience.