

Preteen Space Planning Guide

This age is often referred to as middle childhood, tween or preteen years. It's the time between childhood and young adulthood and is one of rapid change — physical, emotional and social. Children this age have varying degrees of self-confidence, emotional maturity and interests — and it's often challenging for them to know how they "fit in," and how they can find their place in the world.

This is also a time of self-guided discovery, independence, added responsibility and new experiences. In addition, technology — like the internet, mobile phones and social media — can significantly influence how preteens communicate with their peers and how they learn about the world. Successful library service to preteens means encouraging exploration, experiential learning and personal growth.

The following checklist will help you evaluate your space for preteens.

Create Lifetime Users Through Dynamic, Age-appropriate Services

Space

Excellent library service means understanding this age group's needs and interests, as well as appropriately planning services and spaces that attract kids while keeping them engaged and coming back for more. Integrating a separate area for this age group within the children's library acknowledges they are not "babies," and are seen differently than preschoolers and young school-aged children. Many are already thinking of themselves as teens and long for all the amenities of a great teen area. **Note:** Many of the items listed here are things that can be shared with other age groups, especially young school-aged children, when space is thoughtfully planned.

- A popular collection area featuring high-interest materials such as new fiction and nonfiction, graphic novels, manga, comics, audiovisual materials, magazines, etc.
 Note: This area is typically a shared space located near the entrance of the children's library that is appropriately designed for all ages and caregivers.
- A quiet area for studying and recreational reading. In larger public facilities and schools, this often comes in the shape of small group meeting rooms or semiprivate meeting areas created with dividers.
- Social space for chatting, hanging out, etc.
- Interactive areas for active gaming, problem-solving activities, art and literature sharing, etc.
 Oftentimes the social space and interactive space flow together.
- Collaboration space for group work, teaching/tutoring opportunities, small group programming and instruction.
- On-the-floor programming and creation space for ongoing passive programming. Again, this is a type of "space" that flows together with social and interactive space.
- A collaborative computing area where two people can work together at one computer.



[Ann Antolini Middle School, CT](#)

This zoned library offers a variety of seating and spaces for all students.

Preteen Space Planning Guide

Decor

Age-appropriate decor will set the tone for this age group and show them that you don't think of them as toddlers. Finding a general decor for the room that is welcoming, cohesive and can transition from babies to preteens is key to any successful children's library space and goes a long way in making preteens feel welcome.

Note: Many of these concepts are also found in the Youth Checklist (ages 5–8).

- Choose a general color scheme that is attractive and inviting to this age group.
- Use carpet tiles and/or area rugs to help define the space and add color/interest.
- Add interest and color through posters, gallery space for displaying their artwork, etc.
- Make signage attractive and easy to follow. Good signage will enhance the look of the space as well as help build independence and confidence. Organize and label materials in a way that promotes kids making appropriate selections and encourages them to explore.



Engaging spaces bring kids in and back again.



Draw kids in with spaces to safely connect and explore interests.



Flexible, casual seating creates a hangout space.

Furnishings & Fixtures

Attractive and comfortable furnishings are a big deal to this age group. Not only do these items define the use of the space, but they are also there for practical purposes — supporting this group's developmental needs. Furnishings that help foster independence and collaboration, education and recreation are all essential.

- Incorporate comfortable seating in all areas.
- Include ergonomic seating and tables for computing and technology areas.
- Include adult-sized tables and chairs in all areas.
- Include chairs with 14"H seats paired with 22–25"H tabletops.
- Keep shelving at a maximum height of 66", especially for interior shelving. If necessary, perimeter shelving on the walls can go up to 72"H, but 66"H is preferred.
- Incorporate face-out displays in combination with spine-out shelving in all collections to enhance visibility and accessibility of all collections — not just the ones in the popular collection.
- Purchase items on casters (tables, shelving, chairs, etc.), keeping things as portable as possible to allow the space to grow and adapt as needed. No matter what size space you have, or what type of environment you're in, flexibility in furnishings and shelving is a must.



Providing activities and space can bring kids together to find common interests.

Preteen Space Planning Guide

Technology & Interactivity

Offering interactive, age-appropriate technology can attract this age group to your space and help develop important skill sets.

- Create a collaborative computing area. The computing model has moved away from “one person per computer” to the “collaborative computing” model. This new model enables children to work independently, with a friend or with an adult and is fundamental as project work in school increases for this age group. When planning this type of space, it’s important to allow adequate workspace and seating. It’s also one of those areas that can be shared with the young school-aged group.
- Incorporate technologies beyond traditional computers. Such things may include iPads®, listening devices like iPods®, interactive whiteboards, online resources, software — as well as access to digital creativity resources like audio and video production tools. The library is the place to pull it all together!
- Feature interactives beyond technology that allow for increased socialization, problem solving and collaboration. Items may include traditional whiteboards and other types of interactive walls, board games, magnetic poetry and ongoing passive programming that changes out from day to day or week to week.



[Sioux Center Middle and High School, IA](#)

Multifunctional library accommodates academic needs for a range of ages. Students can study, hang out or collaborate with their peers.

Approachable & Welcoming Service

Approachability and positive communication, along with the ability to listen and understand the needs of this older age group, are the base of developing strong relationships and lifelong library users.

- Create a centrally located, friendly service point.
- Include a self-check station for kids to check out their own materials.
- Incorporate homework assistance (in-person and over-the-phone) and other engaging programs for this age group. Remember that programs don’t have to be “formal” or delivered in a traditional sense like storytimes. Consider this age group’s needs and schedules, and think a little outside the box.
- Engage in good merchandising techniques like creating a popular children’s library or incorporating face-out merchandising throughout the area.
- Include digital signage to highlight programs and events that will bring them back for new library experiences.



Natural light, vibrant colors and simple signage encourage preteens to get lost in a good book.



Select the right scale of furnishings and you can pack a lot in a small space.



This space offers a bit of everything for teens — technology, writable walls and flexible seating.



Ideas + INSPIRATION

from Demco

Get INSPIRED! Find programming ideas, professional development resources, community engagement tips, space design concepts and more to help your library transform at ideas.demco.com.

MONTHLY PROGRAMMING

Teen Activity Calendar

Make connections with teens through programming that taps into their interests.



WEBINARS

Make It Last: Choosing Colors, Fabrics & Finishes

Not sure how to choose enduring colors and finishes for your spaces? Looking for practical advice on how to make your library dazzle yet hold up to the raucous demands of everyday use? This webinar provides the guidance you need.



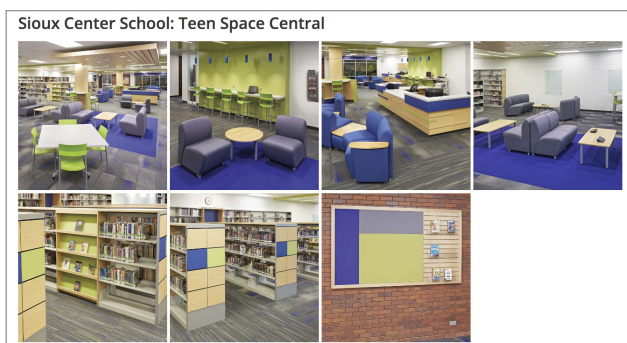
IDEA GALLERIES

Ann Antolini School

See how the Ann Antolini School Library is now a warm and welcoming place for students, parents and staff.

Sioux Center School: Teen Space Central

See how the new library at Sioux Center Middle and High School shines as a 21st century teen space that allows students to read, study and collaborate.



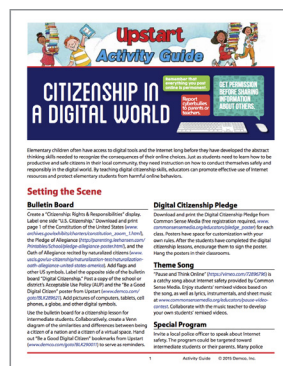
ACTIVITY GUIDES

Be a Good Digital Citizen

Help students become good digital citizens. Download a free activity guide from Upstart that includes interactive activities, online video references and games.

Gaining STEAM at Your Library

Go full STEAM ahead at your library! Download this free activity guide for a plethora of hands-on projects that encourage students to think outside the box and use their imaginations to create.



Create Inspiring Spaces

Demco offers a complete range of interior services and an extensive collection of furniture designed for learning environments. No matter what stage you're at or the size of your project, our interior services experts will collaborate with you and your partners to create spaces that are full of lifelong learning opportunities.

800.747.7561 demcointeriors.com