

# PACKING YOUR BOOKS - THE ESSENTIALS

Packing your books well is critical to ensuring your library gets to your matched school! Don't skip any steps. Poor packing leads to collapsed boxes and lost books.

- Before getting started you'll need:
  - Boxes
  - Packing tape
  - Large plastic bag for inside box (not for Kenya book drives)
  - Mailing labels
  - Markers
  - Air packs or other packing material to go in empty spaces in the boxes
- Try getting the above items through in-kind donations.
- Be mindful of the weight of each box - Small and medium boxes that weigh under 40 pounds handle and ship the best. The United States Postal Service will not accept Media Mail boxes over 70 pounds. Post office also does not accept boxes previously used for alcohol. Just crossing out the name is not enough.
- Use packing tape to reinforce all seams on the bottom and on the side edge of box
- Line box with a clean, dry trash compactor bag (the books go inside the garbage bag). This protects the books from moisture. **Do NOT do this for boxes to Kenya - there is a national ban on plastic bags.**



# PACKING YOUR BOOKS CONTINUED...

- Organize the books according to size and pack as many books as possible into the box. This may take several tries, but a box that is loosely packed may be crushed in transit to Africa. Boxes that are overpacked will rip open.
- Count the number of books as you pack and write the total number of books in each box somewhere on the outside of the box to keep track.
- Before you close the box, place one Packing Slip in each. This is for the students & teachers to know where the books came from. Include a special message and pictures of your group to add a little personal touch!
- Carefully fold the trash compactor bag shut and tuck the edges down the inside edges of the box. **Do not do this for boxes to Kenya.**
- Close and tape the box securely with multiple layers of tape.
- Securely tape a mailing label to each box. The mailing label and packing slip will be provided by your container manager. Go in number order of the labels (e.g. Box 1 label, Box 2 label, etc.). Completely cover the mailing label with tape or a sheet protector - otherwise rain can make it illegible.



## HELPFUL TIPS

- Line the bottom of the box with a second layer of cardboard for extra strength.
- Include your group's name, address, and email address on your Packing Slip so your library knows where the books came from and can contact you.
- If you like, include pictures or letters from your group to your African school match. Some African libraries post these letters, photos and messages in their new libraries to put a personal face on where the books came from.
- The United States Postal Service will not accept Media Mail boxes over 70 pounds.
- 12x12x12" boxes are preferred. When full, they are less than 40 pounds and they are pretty easy to handle. Home Depot double walled 14x14x14" boxes are also good. Double walled means they are super strong. 12x12x16" are also good and are actually smaller in volume than the 14x14x14" size. Starbucks boxes are free and small.