

# How Programming Kits Work

## What are programming kits?

Shortgrass has 75+ 'programs in a box'. There is a huge variety, from tech/robotics/makerspace kits like our Sphero, VR, and Silhouette, through to storytime kits- everything you need for a storytime tossed into a bag! Member libraries can borrow these kits and use them to run programs in their library- an easy and cost-effective solution to programming.

## Where can I find info on the programming kits?

A full, up-to-date list of kits is available on the Shortgrass website:

- Shortgrass.ca
- Services for Libraries
- Consultation and Support
- Programming Kits

Or visit <https://shortgrass.ca/services-for-libraries/consultation-and-support/programming-kits>.

The kits are divided into six categories. You can browse these categories to find brief summaries of the different kits available.

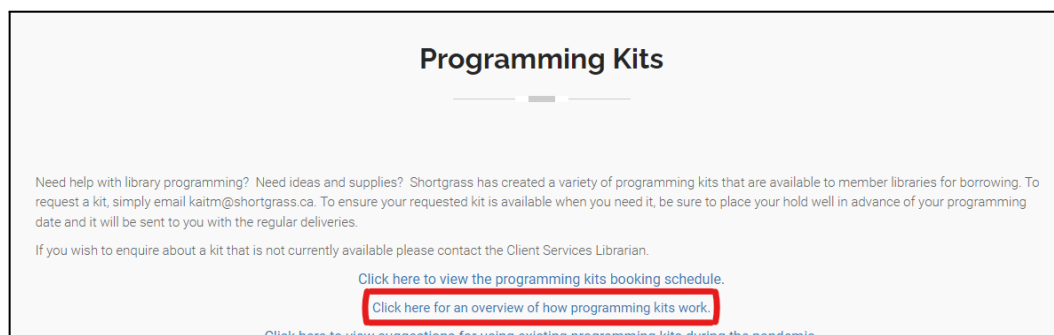
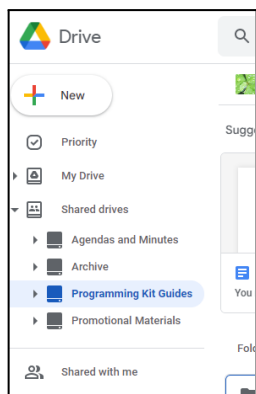
1. Storytime & Literacy
2. Makerspace (Tech & STEM)
3. Makerspace (Crafts)
4. Games & Activities
5. StoryWalks & Outdoor Kits
6. Other

## Where can I find more info on a particular programming kit?

One option is, of course, to contact the Client Services Librarian.

Another option is to check the “How To” guides. These are the digital versions of the booklets that come with each kit, that outline the kit contents, ideas for using the kits in programs, and more. All of these guides are available in the “Programming Kit Guides” shared google folder- if you do not have access to this, please contact [programmingkits@shortgrass.ca](mailto:programmingkits@shortgrass.ca) to request access.

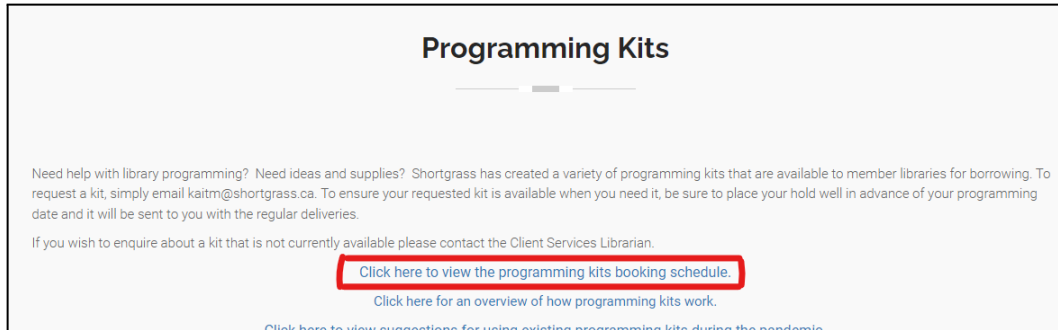
You can find this shared drive on the left-hand side of your Google Drive, or can access it via the Programming Kits webpage. See the screenshots below.



# How do I book a programming kit?

It's easy!

1. Check the booking schedule. You can find this on the programming kits webpage:



2. Take some time to check if the programming kit that you want to book is available on the dates that you want to request.
3. Once you've found dates the kit is available, email [programmingkits@shortgrass.ca](mailto:programmingkits@shortgrass.ca) with the request!
  - a. Please include the complete name of the kit that you wish to book, and the date range you want to request (e.g. Board Games #1 from March 1 to 8).
  - b. We recommend planning for the kit to arrive several days before the program so you have time to prepare and familiarize yourself with the kit contents.

*A note from your Client Services Librarian: Please make sure that you send me the request via email. I'm happy to chat via phone if you have questions about the kit, but the actual bookings need to be via email, as a written record reduces the risk of errors. You can email me directly, or email [programmingkits@shortgrass.ca](mailto:programmingkits@shortgrass.ca).*

## I'm struggling to tell which dates the kit is available for.

- The easiest way to check is probably to select the 'list' view, so you can easily see which kits are already booked on specific days.
- If there are a lot of bookings (for instance, during the summer!), you might want to make use of the 'CTRL + F' function. Search for the kit you want to book, and you'll be able to see which dates it is already booked for (and thus infer which dates it's available on!).
- If you are struggling to tell if a kit that you want is available, contact the Client Services Librarian, let them know which kit(s) you are interested in, and they will provide you with their availability. When there are a lot of bookings, the calendar can be tricky to navigate.

## How long can I book a kit for?

The default booking period is one week, but that can be extended where needed. Just let us know when booking how long you need the kit for and we will see what we can do. Some kits (for instance, the Silhouette Cameo, which has a bit of a learning curve) are better suited for a longer booking period.

## Can I book kits multiple times?

Of course! All kits can be booked multiple times throughout the year. There are a few kits with expensive consumables, such as the button maker, for which we only include supplies once per year, but you can still borrow these kits multiple times- you will just need to purchase your own supplies.

## Can I book a kit to “test it out”?

Some libraries may want to book a new (or new-to-you) kit to see how it works. This is useful for planning what a program using this kit would look like in your library- who will run the program? What items in the kit will you use?

This is completely fine- with the caveat that the kits should primarily be used for actual programming. ‘Practice’ bookings should be of as short a duration as possible, and may not be available at all during the summer, when kits are in high demand.

## What do I need to do when I receive the kit?

1. When the kit arrives, the first thing to do is review the kit contents. Each kit has a laminated inventory list taped to the inside cover. You can use this list to check off items and ensure that all the contents are there. It’s a good idea to check the kit contents as soon as you receive it, so that you can notify us if anything is missing.
2. Next, make sure that you plug in any electronics to give them time to charge. We do not guarantee that electronics (robots, iPads, etc.) will arrive fully charged!
3. You can also check the Programming Kit Guide to review program details, such as any materials you may need to provide for the program, and tips for running the program successfully. You will also want to practice with the kits, if applicable- for instance if borrowing a robot, make sure you know how to operate it!

## What do I need to do when returning the kit?

1. First: please make a note of the 'due date'. On the top of each kit, we tape a 'due date slip'. It's really important that kits are returned on the due date, as we often have some tight turnaround times! If you forget to return a kit (or think there is an error with the due date), please email [programmingkits@shortgrass.ca](mailto:programmingkits@shortgrass.ca) as soon as possible.
2. When you pack up the kit, you may want to use the checklist on the kit's inside cover to ensure that everything is included.
3. Finally, please complete the included feedback form, and return it with the kit. Shortgrass staff read every form that comes back and make improvements/modifications to the kit as needed. It's really valuable to know how the kit is being used, if you have suggestions for improvements, or any other feedback!
  - a. Examples of how we have recently (2022) used this feedback: our VR kit has new games, our perler beads have extra black beads & plastic tweezers, our duct tape now includes nonstick scissors, and we doubled the number of robots in our Sphero Bolt kit, thanks to feedback that you all provided!