

Fine-Free Policy

Purpose

To make the library more equitable, the Ford City Public Library (FCPL) is a fine-free library as of January 1, 2024. Eliminating fines ensures that all people have equal access to library materials and resources, encouraging the pursuit of life-long learning.

Goals for a Fine-Free Library

- I. To conform with current fine-free trends in a digitally advanced world
- II. To increase access and encourage prior users to come back to the library and attract new users to utilize the resources and services the library offers
- III. To remove barriers that prevent patron usage due to fines that could accrue
- IV. To improve customer service and the patron's overall library experience

Fine-free Guidelines

- I. All Ford City Public Library owned materials will no longer generate overdue fines.

Fee Guidelines

- I. Lost Materials
 - i. Materials can be checked out for 3 weeks. Patrons may choose to renew materials up to 2 times, for an additional 3 weeks each time (9 weeks in total). Renewals are allowed as long as no other patron has placed a reserve on an item.
 - ii. Receipts with due dates are printed at the time of check out (or emailed to patrons if they have opted for this delivery method). Patrons may also opt-in for email or text reminders of an approaching due date.
 - iii. Once an item becomes overdue, FCPL provides a 1 week courtesy period during which the item may be renewed or returned.
 - iv. Once an item is 1 week overdue, library staff will attempt to notify patron by phone. At this time, materials are declared "LOST," and the replacement cost will be added to the patron's account as a pending charge.
 - v. If a lost item is returned at this stage, the replacement cost will be removed from the patron's account.
 - vi. Once an item is 3 weeks overdue, the replacement cost charge becomes final, and a bill with the replacement cost and associated processing fee (\$5.00 per item) will be mailed to the patron. At this time, the patron is required to pay the replacement cost and associated processing fee(s) per lost item.
 - vii. Patrons with an account balance of \$35.00 or less may continue to check out library materials.
- II. Damaged Materials
 - i. Patrons will be charged for items that are returned damaged and declared unsuitable for the collection.
- III. Interlibrary Loan Materials
 - i. A minimum fee of \$25.00 will be charged for lost or damaged materials obtained through Interlibrary Loan.

Courtesy Reminders

- I. FCPL will send patrons a courtesy reminder on the following schedule:

Notice	Method	Timeline
Reminder	By Email or Text *By patron sign up only	2 days before the due date
Overdue	By phone call *Patron must ensure correct phone number on file	1 week overdue
Bill	By mail *Once a bill is mailed, the replacement cost cannot be removed from a patron's account	3 weeks overdue

Patron Responsibilities

- I. Patrons will no longer accrue a daily overdue fine on late materials. Patrons are still responsible for all borrowed library materials and are encouraged to return all items in a timely manner as outlined in this policy.
- II. Patrons who accrued overdue fines with FCPL before December 3, 2023 are required to pay these fines.
- III. Patrons are responsible for ensuring their contact information and opt-in services are correct in the library account.

FAQ

Doesn't the library make money from charging late fines?

The short answer is no. Out of the library's total budget, late fees account for just 0.05%. The cost of ordering duplicate materials, mailing multiple late notices, and staff time required for tracking down and notifying patrons of late materials far exceeds this amount.

Doesn't charging late fines encourage patrons to return library materials?

Research has shown that late fines do not help encourage patrons to return library materials. In fact, libraries that have implemented fine-free policies have seen an increase in the rate materials are returned. Additionally, research has shown that as the threat of fines is removed, patrons who may struggle financially come into the library for the first time or return to the library after a long absence, as it seems more accessible to them.

Paying a late fine makes me feel less guilty when I'm late returning my books!

We understand – and appreciate – that you feel responsible for the materials you check out! While we won't be charging late fees anymore, we appreciate your support and humbly accept monetary donations at your discretion.

Adopted by the Ford City Public Library Board of Trustees on October 4, 2023.