

# The Easton Area Public Library is now Fine Free!

We no longer charge fines for overdue items, which helps ensure our community has access to library materials and services and supports our mission to “promote literacy, to advance lifelong learning, and to contribute to the development of an active and informed community of citizens.”

## What this means for you!

- Any overdue fines that accrued before we went fine free have been eliminated from your account.
- You will no longer receive a daily late fine on overdue items.
- *No fines* doesn't mean *no responsibility*. You are still responsible for returning your items.
- The Library will send reminders to return your items when an active email address is on file. Update your account today!
- Replacement charges for lost or damaged items still apply.
- Materials that are 14 days overdue are assumed lost and you will be automatically billed for the replacement cost. If items that are considered lost are returned, the replacement costs will be cleared immediately from your account.

## Fine Free FAQs:

### What is a Fine Free Library?

Fine free libraries are libraries that do not collect money for materials that are returned after the due date. Many libraries choose to become fine free to make services and resources more accessible to everyone in the community. Under this model, users are still required to pay for/replace lost and damaged items

### When did the Easton Area Public Library become a Fine Free Library?

Wednesday, June 1, 2022

### What is the difference between a “fine” and a “fee”?

“Fine” refers to funds owed for overdue items. “Fee” refers to funds owed for replacement items and other manual charges. EAPL is a Fine Free Library, not a Fee Free Library. Patrons are still required to replace lost or damaged items.

### **Does this policy change mean patrons can keep library materials forever?**

No, all library materials still have a due date. We know library patrons are busy and sometimes an item comes back a few days late and we want to make using the library easy and inclusive for all patrons. Now patrons do not have to worry about their items accruing overdue fines, but the item still has to be returned.

### **What will the checkout process look like for patrons?**

Upon checking out materials, patrons will receive a paper or email receipt with the due dates for each item. Patrons with an active email address will still receive a 3-day courtesy notice. As long as the item does not have holds, they can continue to renew items up to two times.

### **What happens when there is an overdue item on an account?**

Once an item becomes overdue, the patron will not be able to check out additional materials and will receive notification by mail or email that their item is overdue. Patrons may continue to use eResources and the computers during this two week overdue period.

Once an item is two weeks overdue, the status of that item will automatically be changed to "Lost" and item replacement charges will be added to the account. At this point, the patron will be unable to use their card until the balance is paid or items are returned.

If a patron returns an item anytime after its due date, there is no fine collected and patrons regain full card privileges immediately.

### **Won't this policy negatively impact the library's budget?**

No, fines for overdue items are not a sustainable or dependable form of revenue and make up about 1% of our annual budget. In fact, money collected from fines has steadily decreased over the last seven years and we hope to fund the Library's budget from sources other than late fines.

### **If patrons are not charged overdue fines, what is the incentive to return items in a timely manner?**

As most library patrons are responsible users, we expect that the majority of items checked out will still be returned within a few days of the due date. In addition, courtesy notices will continue to be sent and overdue notices will go out once an item is not returned and there are no renewals left. Patrons will not be able to check out more items with overdue items on their account. The incentive to return items is the ability to continue to fully use the library and check out additional materials.

**Isn't it the library's job to teach civic responsibility with overdue fines?**

Easton Area Public Library's mission is to "promote literacy, to advance lifelong learning, and to contribute to the development of an active and informed community of citizens." We believe this policy change will help us better accomplish our mission, and research has shown that fines do not effectively teach responsibility.

**Will the library eliminate previously accrued overdue fines?**

Yes, along with the policy change to cease charging overdue fines on materials, we also granted an amnesty on all overdue fines accrued under the old policy.

**Will the library change the wording or process of our courtesy notices?**

Yes, we have updated the language on our courtesy and overdue notices.

Notice	Method	When
Courtesy Reminder	Email only	3 days before an item is due
Overdue Notice #1	Patron preference	5 days after an item was due
Overdue Notice #2	Patron preference	10 days after an item was due
Billed Notice	Patron preference	14 days after an item was due

**Will the library change the fee limit at which we block accounts?**

No changes will be made to the current limits at which the library blocks account privileges. Blocking occurs if more than \$0.01 in fees are owed.

**Will materials accrue a daily overdue fine?**

No, there will be no accruing charges.

**Will items from the other libraries still accrue daily overdue fines?**

Patrons can checkout materials sent from other libraries to Easton Area Public Library without concerns of accruing fines. However, fines are generated at the point of check out and are subject to the lending library's fine policy; EAPL materials checked out from other libraries may still have fines.

**Will the library give refunds to patrons who paid their overdue fines before this change?**

No, the library does not refund overdue fines previously paid under the old late fee policy.

**Are other libraries fine free?**

Yes! Many libraries around the country are now fine free to reduce access barriers that disproportionately affect their communities.

The Easton Area Public Library is proud to be part of a growing group of local libraries going fine free. This includes Eastern Monroe Public Library, Pocono Mountain Public Library and the libraries of the Lehigh Carbon Library Cooperative (LCLC):

- Catasauqua Public Library
- Coplay Public Library
- Dimmick Memorial Library
- Emmaus Public Library
- Lehigh Area Memorial Library
- Lower Macungie Library
- Palmerton Area Library
- Parkland Community Library
- Penn Kidder Library
- Slatington Public Library
- Southern Lehigh Public Library
- Whitehall Township Public Library

