

Gary Public Library

Fine-Free Policy

A. Purpose

To make the library more equitable, the Gary Public Library will no longer charge late fines on most materials (there are some exceptions). Eliminating fines ensures that all people have free access to library books, materials and resources, encouraging the pursuit of life-long learning. As a welcoming place for all, our goal is to increase access and eliminate financial barriers that keep community members from using the library. We want to make it as easy as possible to use the valuable resources we offer the community. Beginning March 15, 2023, all overdue fines will be removed from patron accounts and overdue fines will no longer accrue. Historic fees for lost or damaged items will still remain.

B. Goals for a Fine-Free Library

1. To conform with current fine-free trends in a digitally advanced world.
2. 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.
3. To remove barriers that prevent patron usage due to fines that could accrue.
4. To improve customer service and the patron's overall library experience.
5. To model our neighboring libraries, which have changed their policies and are now fine-free.

C. Fine-free Guidelines

1. All Gary Public Library owned materials will no longer generate overdue fines. The exception will be:
 - a. Hotspots (This is due to the need to keep these items in circulation to increase Internet access for our community).
 - b. Interlibrary Loan items that are set by the home library.

D. Fee Guidelines

1. Fees for lost materials
 - a. Materials that are 30 days overdue from the original due date are declared "LOST," and the patron will be billed for the item.
 - b. A lost item on your record will prevent you from checking out additional physical items (but not digital ones!) until the fee is paid or the item is returned.
 - c. The patron is required to pay the replacement cost and associated \$5.00

- processing fee(s) per lost item. The fee is the original retail price at the time of purchase.
 - d. Lost items may not be replaced by the patron in lieu of paying the fee.
 - e. If a lost item is returned, the replacement cost and processing fee will be removed from the account.
 - f. If a patron locates a lost item after paying for it, a refund will be issued for the replacement cost minus the processing fee.
 - The request must be made within 30 days of the payment.
 - Patrons who request a refund must **provide** the original receipt that was issued by the library at the time of **payment**.
 - Refunds will be issued within **14 days**.
2. Fees for damaged materials
- a. Patrons will be charged for items that are returned **damaged** and declared unsuitable (by library staff) for the collection.
 - b. The patron is required to pay the **replacement** cost and associated \$5.00 processing fee(s) for the damaged item(s).

E. Patron Responsibilities

1. Patrons who accrued overdue fines with **the** Gary Public Library before we went fine-free are **no longer required** to pay those fines.
2. 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.

Adopted by the Gary Public Library Board of Trustees on March 27, 2023