



Meriden Public Library Goes Fine-Free

People have questions when a library stops the practice of charging overdue fines.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Why has the library stopped charging overdue fines?

Overdue fines are a major barrier to large numbers of people, including children, lower-income individuals, and seniors on fixed incomes. Often, when overdue fines accumulate on someone's card, they simply stop using the library altogether. That is the opposite of what we want. We want all members of the community to use the library equally.

Libraries nationwide are going "fine-free" to remain useful and relevant; foster equity; and promote easy access to lifelong learning for all.

Any other reasons?

Yes! We want our interactions with you, our patrons, to be pleasant and productive. Rather than "nickel and diming" you at the checkout desk, we would prefer to spend that time recommending great new reads, planning events, and opening a world of possibilities for our community.

Our community is stronger and healthier when all people have access to the programs, services, and materials they need to pursue their educational, career, family, and life goals, regardless of their ability to pay for them.

Will everything be free from overdue fines?

No overdue fines will be charged for most item types, except for museum passes and loanable technology such as hotspots. Materials that are never returned, or returned in a damaged condition, will be charged the replacement cost of the item(s). Once materials are returned in good condition, the replacement cost will be removed from your account.

What if I have old overdue fines on my account?

Overdue fines have already been wiped clean for a fresh start; however, you are still expected to return all overdue items that are on your card or pay the replacement cost for the item(s). As long as we get back the materials from you in good condition, the replacement fees are removed from your account.

What if I have fines from another library?

You are still responsible for paying overdue fines to other libraries that charge them. All items borrowed from other libraries are subject to the lending policies of the owning library.

What if my privileges are suspended at another library in our consortium (LION)?

Your borrowing privileges at all consortium libraries must be in good standing to check out materials from the Meriden Public Library.

I like to give a little donation to the library if I return my items late. Can I still do that?

Absolutely! Cash or check is accepted by staff working the service desks.

Will I still have to pay for printing and photocopying?

Yes. While overdue fines are punitive, fees for printing, faxing, and photocopying help us to recoup the cost of providing those services and associated materials such as printers, copiers, paper, and toner.

Won't people just check things out and never return them?

“No overdue fines” does not mean “no responsibility”. If your item is overdue more than one loan period (plus two additional automatic renewal periods, if the item has no holds), then the item will be assumed lost, and you will be charged the full replacement cost of the item. If the total replacement cost of one or more item(s) is \$25 or over, your card privileges will be suspended until you return the item(s) in good condition OR pay the replacement cost.

Don't overdue fines encourage people to return items on time?

There is no evidence that shows this to be true. In fact, when the Chicago Public Library eliminated overdue fines in 2019, they saw a 240% *increase* in the number of items returned. Also, if library fines worked the way they were intended, revenue would be \$0 anyway because all materials would be returned on time!