



Beginning January 2020, Mid-Columbia Libraries no longer charges late fines on overdue books and materials, and outstanding overdue fines have been forgiven!

- You are responsible for returning each item by the due date.
- You will be charged a replacement fee for any item that is not returned or is damaged.
- Seven days after an item is due, it will be declared lost, charged to your account, and a bill will be mailed to you.
- The replacement fee is waived when the item is returned in good condition.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the library eliminate late fines?

Overdue fines create barriers to using the library for many in the community, especially children and families, therefore reducing access to learning opportunities during periods of critical learning and development. Mid-Columbia Libraries (MCL) wants to ensure all customers—regardless of age, background, or socioeconomic status—have equitable access to our collections, programs, and services.

Many library systems in the state, such as Spokane Public Library and Seattle Public Library, and across the country have already eliminated overdue fines!

What happens if I don't return my items by the due date?

We will charge replacement fees for books and materials that are not returned or that are damaged. Seven days after an item is due, it will be declared lost, charged to your account, and a bill will be mailed to you. Charges for lost items are waived when the item is returned in good condition.

For accounts owing \$25 or more, library privileges will be restricted until fees are paid. If your account balance reaches \$50 or more, your account will be referred to a collection agency and a non-refundable \$10 collections fee will be added.

What will happen to my existing fines?

Overdue fines on your account will be forgiven; you can enjoy a fresh start! We hope this encourages people to return to the library. Outstanding fees for lost or damaged

items as well as collection fees, however, will remain on accounts.

Will this cause people to return items late?

Many of our customers regularly use our libraries and return their books on time. Research from other libraries show that overdue fines have no impact on return rates and that they can discourage or prevent customers from signing up for or using library cards. Research also shows that circulation actually increases when libraries eliminate overdue fines!

Does auto-renewal still exist?

Yes! Our auto-renewal feature automatically renews all eligible items on your account three days before the items' due date, provided your account has no blocks prohibiting renewal. Checked out items may be renewed twice if there are no reserve requests on the item.

Will this impact the library's budget?

Fines are not a reliable revenue stream for the library. Every year the revenue from fines goes down, while the labor and costs of processing the fines go up. Fines merely prevent some customers from accessing the library.

What happens if I find a lost item that I already paid for?

Customers who pay for lost items but return them in good condition within 30 days of payment for the items are eligible for a refund. A refund due to a customer with an outstanding balance on their account will be applied to the account to pay other lost or damaged items.

How can I access my account to see what I owe?

Click on **My Account** on our website, and enter your username or card number and password. Once you are logged in, click on the Fines & Fees option in the menu.

How can I pay for what I owe on my account?

Visit our **SmartPay website** to pay online. You can also click on the Pay Fines option under the Services tab of our website. Or, pay in person by visiting the customer service desk at any of our 12 branches.

Visit our circulation **policies page** to learn more.