

Fine-Free

The Upper Merion Township Library is excited to announce that we are now Fine-Free! Find out more information about what that means for you! (Hint: It's pretty awesome!)

What fine free means for you:

- You will no longer receive a daily late fine on overdue items, except for museum passes and wifi hotspots.
- You are still responsible for returning your items. We do want all items back!
- The library will send you a series of reminders to return your items (see Reminders Schedule below)
- Items that are overdue by 28 days or more will be considered lost, and you will be billed for them. If you return the items, the bill will be cleared from your account.

Reminder Schedule:

- Almost due + autorenewal email – 3 days before due date
- Overdue notices:
 - 1st notice – 7 days after due date
 - 2nd notice – 21 days after due date
 - Bill – 28 days after due date

Loan Periods & Fees: See "[Loan Periods & Fees](#)"

Why did the library go fine-free?

- It's good for our community. Our community is stronger and healthier when people have access to the programs, services, and materials they need to pursue their educational, career, family, and life goals. We hope this will encourage prior users to come back to the library and attract new users to experience our offerings.
- Late fines are not effective. Studies have shown that small fines have no impact on return rates. According to "Removing Barriers to Access" a Colorado State Library whitepaper, "The scant research on the impact of library fines and fees does not indicate a clear benefit to administering these policies and may be costly to enforce."
- It's fiscally responsible. Due to the rise in electronic materials (which do not accrue late fines) and other factors, fines are not a sustainable form of revenue

for the library. Money collected from fines and fees has gone down steadily for the past few years.

When does the fine-free policy go into effect?

The Upper Merion Township Library will be fine-free as of January 1, 2022.

What materials are fine-free?

The easiest answer is everything **EXCEPT museum passes and Wi-Fi Hotspots**. All books, magazines, audiobooks, music, DVDs, video games, and toys. As a reminder, eBooks have never accrued fines.

Check out your access to eBooks, eMagazines, eMovies, eComics, eMusic and more from:

- OverDrive – <https://montcolibs.overdrive.com/>
- Hoopla – <https://www.hoopladigital.com/>
- ComicsPlus - <https://uppermeriontownshiplibrarypa.librarypass.com/>

Why do museum passes and hotspots still accrue fines?

Due to the popularity and cost associated, fines will still be accrued on all museum and cultural passes and Wifi Hotspots. We want as many members of our community to be able to take advantage of these wonderful collections.

Will my existing overdue fines be forgiven, even if I have materials at home that are long overdue?

Yes! All Upper Merion Township Library cardholders with overdue fines on their account will have them removed effective January 1, 2022. We want to put overdue materials back into circulation so that they can be enjoyed by more customers, so when you bring back those overdue books, DVDS, and CDs, we'll forgive any related overdue fines.

This doesn't just apply to materials that are a day or a week late—if you're still hanging on to a book you checked out before cell phones were a thing, we'll gladly take it back, waive the overdue fines, and remove any related lost fees, too! You can return your items to our library either inside at the desk or at our drive-up return.

Will lost or damaged fees also be forgiven?

No. Because we need to replace lost or damaged materials, customers are still responsible for costs associated with those materials.

How will the Library encourage people to return their overdue materials?

We will provide an email reminder three days before materials are due. At this time you may also receive information about your material being auto-renewed. For more information about autorenewal, please visit our FAQ page.

We also send out overdue notices at 7 days overdue and 21 days overdue.

After 28 days, we will assume that overdue materials are lost and notify the customer by sending a bill. At that point, the customer will be responsible for the cost or replacement of the materials.

Once the cost of lost materials totals \$30 or more on an account, patrons will be unable to check out physical materials, place holds, or request Interlibrary Loans until the materials have been returned or their lost fees paid.

I have always thought of paying my fines as my donation to the library. Can I still donate?

Yes! Monetary donations continue to help support the library's critical mission to educate, empower, and engage our community through programs, resources, and services. There will also be a donation box located at the check-out desk.

How will the new fine-free policy affect the holds list?

Many libraries that have gone fine-free have actually seen an increase in the return rate of overdue materials, and we're anticipating the same happy result! As always, our staff will continue to monitor the holds list and purchase additional copies of popular materials as necessary.

What if I frequent a number of MCLINC libraries, is all of MCLINC fine-free?

MCLINC is a consortium and not a system, which means each individual library has its own rules. That being said, there are some libraries, including Upper Merion Township Library that are currently fine-free. By returning your materials (from any library) to a fine-free library, your library account will not accrue fines.

To take advantage of our fine-free policy, please return your items to our library either inside at the desk or at our drive-up return. Any material regardless of home library returned to Upper Merion Township Library will be considered fine-free (except our museum passes or similar collections from other libraries).

Will people return items if there are no late fees?

A number of libraries have gone fine-free in the past ten years. Most find that materials are returned at similar rates, if not better rates, than those who have a fine policy in place.

We have adjusted our schedule for reminder notices to patrons and will bill sooner than we used to for materials that are not returned. We will continue to monitor how this policy change affects patrons and will make improvements to our policies and procedures as necessary.

How will the elimination of fines affect the Library's budget?

Library fines in the past few years totaled just 0.5% or less of the library's budget. With some retirements in staffing and some additional changes, the Library's budget was balanced and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

What should I do if I see a late fine on my account?

Upper Merion cardholders, please contact the library through email uppermeriontownshiplibrary@gmail.com, call us at 610-265-4805, or come in and speak with someone at the check-out desk.

Cardholders from other libraries, please contact your home library for more information.

I haven't been to the library in years, will my card still work?

Your library card may have expired if you haven't used it in the past few years. Please see a library staff member who can reactivate your card or register you for a new card.

I've never had a library card. How can I get one?

You can visit the library with a photo ID with proof of current address (driver's license, state ID, passport, bill, or piece of mail)

You can apply online by visiting: [Get a Library Card](#)