

# Elimination of Library Overdue Fines

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Why is Pasco County eliminating fines for overdue materials?

Pasco County Libraries is committed to being a valuable resource for all members of the community, providing equal access to information and fostering lifelong learning. Library experts have found that charging overdue fines restricts access to library materials and services. Studies indicate that even modest penalties deter people from registering for a library card or using the library because of the risk of incurring fines. Rather than motivating cardholders to return items on time, fines act as an inequitable barrier to service, disproportionately affecting minors, students, and community members with limited financial resources.

In Pasco County, there was a sizeable number of cardholders who were unable to borrow materials from the Library. They will now be able to return and use all the Library resources.

*Out of almost 250,000 Pasco County Library cardholders:*

*• 16% were blocked from borrowing because of fines.*

*• 24% of those cardholders were between the ages of 5 and 18.*

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### Have other library systems eliminated late fines?

In the U.S., almost 400 libraries have adopted fine-free policies, and the number is growing. In Florida, the Alachua County, Tampa-Hillsborough, Sarasota County, and Miami Dade library systems have adopted fine-free policies. To learn more about this growing trend, visit:

- Urban Libraries Council – [www.urbanlibraries.org/member-resources/fine-free-map](http://www.urbanlibraries.org/member-resources/fine-free-map)
- End Library Fines – [www.endlibraryfines.info/fine-free-library-map](http://www.endlibraryfines.info/fine-free-library-map)

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### What are the advantages of a fine-free policy?

Libraries that have adopted fine-free policies found that:

- Library card registrations increased
- Borrowing of materials increased
- More library items were returned
- Students returned to the library to use homework resources
- Staff time was redirected from fines-handling to customer-focused services

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### How will eliminating fines enhance library service?

Library employees who previously spent between 10-20% of their time managing the collection of fines will be able to devote more time to serve library users by:

- Assisting at service desks and with the use of technology
- Assisting with the completion of online applications for jobs and government services
- Conducting instructional sessions and presenting enrichment programs
- Delivering outreach activities in the community
- Developing and maintaining the library collection

## Won't eliminating fines reduce library revenue?

Although revenue will no longer be received from payment of overdue fines, it is far more valuable to the community to increase access to library collections. Revenue from fines have decreased consistently over recent years due to the growing demand for digital resources, which do not incur fines.

## Will people return items if there are no fines?

The public library model is based upon a trusting relationship between borrowers and a valued community resource. Library staff trusts that cardholders will return items on time, so others may use them. Other libraries have experienced an increase in return rates after the adoption of fine-free policies. To encourage on-time returns, the number and frequency of reminder notices have increased. If library materials are not returned, the cardholder account will be blocked until items are returned or the replacement cost of the item is received.

## Are the due dates for library materials the same?

Yes. The loan periods for items remain the same:

1 WEEK	DVD's, Blue-rays, games, Launchpads
2 WEEKS	New books, magazines
3 WEEKS	Books, audiobooks, Playaways

## How long will items be renewed for?

Yes. Items will be auto-renewed up to five times as long as there are no requests (holds) for the item.

## What happens if an item is not returned?

The cardholder's account will be blocked from checking out additional items, requesting reserved items, and accessing many digital resources. Replacement charges and the block on the account will be removed when the undamaged item is returned or the replacement cost has been paid.

## What services can be accessed with a blocked card?

Patrons whose cardholder account is blocked may still access library computers and some digital resources and may participate in programs and events.

## What happens to old overdue fines on cardholder accounts?

Past overdue fines will remain on cardholder accounts. Charges for unreturned, incomplete or damaged items remain on the cardholder account.

## Can patrons receive refunds for past fines payments?

No. Overdue fines paid before this policy was enacted are not eligible for refunds. The refund policy regarding "lost" items that are subsequently found and returned remains the same.

## Where can I learn more?

Visit any Pasco County Library or call the main office at 727-861-3020.



[www.pascolibraries.org](http://www.pascolibraries.org)  
727-861-3020