

Preble County District Library  
Fine Free Policy

### **Late Materials**

No overdue fines will be incurred once materials are returned.

### **Never-returned and damaged items**

All cardholders will be responsible for never-returned and damaged items. Charges for never-returned or damaged items will be calculated at list price unless only the barcode is damaged or missing (\$1.00 is charged) or only a case is damaged or missing (\$2.00 is charged). Items are deemed never-returned at 30 days overdue.

Once the materials are returned, the material cost fee will be removed from the cardholder's account. Collection agency fees will still be charged, if applicable.

### **When did this take effect?**

As of March 1, 2020, any borrowed item returned is not charged overdue fines.

### **Does this mean my current overdue fines accrued prior to March 1, 2020 are being wiped away?**

Our goal is to improve access and opportunity. If a patron has existing overdue fines, we invite them to speak with a staff member about returning any overdue items or if they have already returned the items, removing all previous overdue fines charged on those items and updating the customer record.

### **Automatic Renewal**

Any eligible item will automatically renew four times before it becomes overdue unless the item has been reserved by another patron. In that case, an item cannot be renewed. Anything that has a 42-day loan (which applies to Teacher and Homebound library cards) only allows one renewal.

### **Blocked or suspended Library Card**

Preble County District Library cardholders who have three overdue items will have their borrowing privileges blocked until the items are returned. If items have been lost, the item list price has to be paid below \$5.00 to reinstate borrowing privileges.

Preble County District Library cardholders who have 1 overdue mobile hotspot will be blocked from borrowing until the hotspot is returned or the replacement fees have been paid below \$5.00.

A first overdue notice will be sent at 7 days. A final overdue notice will be sent at 21 days. A billing



notice will be sent at 30 days.

At 30 days overdue, items will be considered lost and a lost item fee will be assessed.

Cardholders who owe \$5.00 or more for never-returned or damaged items will have their borrowing privileges blocked until their charges have been paid or reduced below \$5.00.

### **Collections Agency**

Accounts with \$50.00 or more in fees will be sent to Unique Collections Agency, which specializes in library collections. A \$10.00 collection fee will be assessed. The collection fee will not be waived even if the items are returned.

### **Overdue Notice Procedure**

Once three items are overdue, no further materials can be checked out and customers that do not return the overdue items within 30 days will be billed for the list price of the materials.

Actions by the Administration Office:

- 1) When an item becomes **7 days overdue**, a *first notice* is printed and mailed or emailed to the patron. The opening lines of the letter state: *“Library records show the following is overdue. Please return any overdue items to the Library as soon as possible. Until the overdue items have been returned, your account will be blocked from borrowing. If items have been returned, please excuse the notice.”* The following is texted: *Please return any overdue items to the Library as soon as possible.*
  - A. A copy of the first notice is also sent to the appropriate branch.
    - (i) At this point the Branch Librarians are responsible for checking the shelves to make certain the item has not been returned.
    - (ii) Should the item be found, the branch would need to change the status of that item and remove the freeze on the patron’s account.
  - B. If the mailing address is incorrect, the overdue notice will come back to the office. A comment is added to the patron’s account noting that an update of the address and verification of the phone number is required.
  - C. If an email address is incorrect *or* a patron’s system doesn’t recognize the PCDL email address ([pcdl@preblelibrary.org](mailto:pcdl@preblelibrary.org)) and won’t accept the notice, Serving Every Ohioan (SEO) is notified. Once a month SEO sends the Administrative Assistant at PCDL a file of “bad” emails via the SEO ticket system.
    - (i) The Administrative Assistant will go into the patron’s account and delete the incorrect email address.
    - (ii) The patron’s account will be changed to mail notification.
    - (iii) A comment is added to the patron’s account noting that an update of the email address is required.



- D. Should the patron call and if the patron is a minor, the librarian will ask to speak to the parent or guardian. Parents are responsible for their children's fines.
  - E. To receive the second notice, the patron must have a correct email address listed in their account.
- 2) After an item is **21 days (3 weeks) overdue**, a *Final Overdue notice* is printed and emailed but **not** mailed. The opening lines of the email state: *"The following items are now very late. Please resolve the issue immediately. Your account remains blocked until the items are returned. After 30 days overdue, the items are considered lost and a lost item fee will be assessed."* The following is texted: *Please return any overdue items to the Library as soon as possible.*
- A. The second notice is sent to the appropriate branch.
    - (i) At this point the Branch Librarians are responsible for checking the shelves to make certain the item has not been returned.
    - (ii) Should the item be found, the branch would need to change the status of that item and remove the freeze on the patron's account.
    - (iii) If the item is not found, the branch will call the patron, explain the materials are overdue, and verify the patron's mailing address.
- 3) After **30 days overdue**, a *billing notice* is printed and mailed to the patron via the U.S. postal service. The opening lines of the letter state: *"This is your final notice to return the items listed below. The items are now considered lost and a lost item fee has been assessed. Your account remains blocked until the items are returned or the fee has been paid below the \$5.00 threshold. If you have the item and can return the item to the library, the lost item fee will be removed from your account. Accounts with \$50.00 or more in fees will be sent to Unique Collection Agency, which specializes in library collection. A \$10.00 collection fee will be assessed."* Should the patron return the item, the lost item fee will be removed.
- A. Third notice is sent to the appropriate branch.
    - (i) At this point the Branch Librarians are responsible for checking the shelves to make certain the item has not been returned.
    - (ii) Should the item be found, the branch would need to change the status of that item and remove the material fees on the patron's account.
    - (iii) The branch will call the patron to notify them of the overdue materials and inform the patron that after the materials have been overdue for 44 days, the delinquent patron's information will be sent to the collection agency if the account owes \$50.00 or more and an additional nonrefundable \$10.00 collection fee will be assessed.
- 4) After **44 days**, and accruing \$50.00 or more in fees, the *collection agency* (Unique) is sent the delinquent patron's pertinent information. The information is taken directly from the patron account record. Early every Monday morning, two reports are automatically sent to the agency (one consisting of all new "assumed lost" items and the other consisting of updates to previous submissions: dollar amount of material returned, dollars paid, amount waived, and balance due).