

Cloquet Public Library Free from Fines FAQ

Why go free from fines?

Going free from fines aligns with the library's strategic plan. One of our main goals is to offer an open, welcoming environment without barriers that is equally accessible to all people. Overdue fines are punitive and act as a barrier, especially for people whose income is not high.

Will my library materials still have due dates?

Yes. Library materials are a shared community resource. They still have a due date, and you are asked to return or renew your items by the due date so they are available to others in the community.

Will my old fines be forgiven?

If you've returned all materials to the library, your Cloquet fines for overdue materials will be waived! If you have fines from other Arrowhead Library System libraries, you will still need to pay those.

Will people return items if there are no late fines?

Free from fines does not mean anyone can keep materials as long as they want. Fines were meant as a way to encourage patrons to return their materials on time. Instead, fines create a barrier to access, and going free from fines will remove that barrier. Patrons will still be charged if they damage items or if they keep items 28 days past the due date (two weeks for Interlibrary Loans) and the computer system declares the item lost.

I didn't really lose these items; can I still bring them back?

YES! It is weird, but librarians call a book that is not returned Lost, even if the person who checked it out knows exactly where it is. If you've been billed for an item, we will take it back (in good condition), remove the replacement charges from your account, and you can check out materials again.

What will happen if I don't return my materials on time?

If you have 5 or more overdue materials, any fees from lost or damaged items, or more than \$10.00 in fines from other libraries, you will be unable to check out any more materials or download any e-books or e-audiobooks.

Will I be charged anything?

No, as long as you return the items in good condition.

How many items can I check out?

The total number of items you can check out is as many as you feel comfortable being responsible for. New books and DVDs have a limit of five (5) items, and other DVDs are limited to ten (10) items.

Will I still receive reminders about returning materials?

Yes! A reminder will be sent two days before an item is due by email or text, if you have opted for that notification. After that, the first overdue notice will be sent at 1 day overdue. The second overdue notice will be sent at 8 days overdue. After that, the item is declared lost, and you will be billed at 28 days overdue. Interlibrary Loans will be billed as lost at two weeks overdue. We encourage you to keep your contact information and notification preferences up to date. Talk to a library staff member to verify that you will get the notifications you want and need.

Fines have been waived, so why does my account show a balance?

If you have returned all materials to the library, your old Cloquet overdue fines will soon be waived. Until then, stop by the library, and we will waive existing Cloquet overdue fines manually. Overdue fines from other libraries and fees for lost or damaged items will remain. Because some libraries in the Arrowhead Library System charge overdue fines, and some do not, you may have overdue fines on your account if you checked out materials at a library that charges fines.

How was the decision made to go Free from Fines?

Libraries across the country are eliminating overdue fines as a way to reduce barriers, and the Cloquet Library Board had been investigating the option of becoming free from fines for several months. At the July 2023 board meeting, the board members voted to move to a fines-free model of service.

I always considered paying my fines as my library donation. How can I donate to the library?

We have many ways you can help your library!

Visit cloquetlibrary.org and click on the Donate button to make an online donation. You can also mail a check or donate in person using cash, a check, or a credit or debit card (for \$10.00 or more). We also accept gently used books, DVDs, and CDs that our Friends of the Library can sell at their book sales to raise money for programming.

I haven't used my library card in years! Will it still work?

Library cards expire every three years. If it is inactive for one year after expiration, it may have been deleted. The best way to find out the status of your card is to contact a library staff member. Call or stop in at the library to check.