



Policy 3.5 Penalties for Overdue, Lost, or Damaged Materials

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3.5 Penalties for Overdue, Lost or Damaged Materials

In order to provide a reasonable level of protection for library materials, and to insure that they are available for use by all patrons, NOLS imposes certain penalties for overdue, lost, or damaged library materials. Patrons are responsible for managing their own accounts.

3.5.1. Blocked accounts.

A patron retains full library borrowing privileges as long as his/her library record is not blocked. A library record becomes blocked under the following circumstances:

- a. When the total amount of unpaid fines and fees exceeds \$50.00
- b. When a patron's account includes ten (10) or more active "claims returned" entries (entries indicating the patron claims to have returned an item but it was not checked in by the Library) that occurred during a single three (3) year period.

Once a patron's library card is blocked, all circulation privileges for that patron are suspended, including borrowing and renewal of items, including digital audio books, and placing of hold requests. Patrons may use all other library services.

3.5.2. Fines and Fees.

The library charges overdue fines as an incentive for patrons to return materials in a timely manner so that other patrons can have access to them.

The standard overdue fine rate for most items, including interlibrary loans, not returned by the due date is 20¢ per day up to a maximum of \$5.00.

Non-standard overdue fine rates for other materials are as follows:

- a. E-Readers - \$5 per day up to a maximum of \$50.00.
- b. Reference/professional collection materials and loaned equipment, microfilm, oral history tape, photo album, slide set - \$1 per day, up to a maximum of \$25.

No fines will be charged for days the library is closed, based on the days of operation for the branch from which the item was checked out by the patron.

A seven (7) day grace period will be granted for overdue items, with the exception of E-Readers, Interlibrary Loans, and the other non-standard fine category materials noted above. If an overdue item is returned within this seven-day window, no fines will be assessed. If the item is returned eight days or more after the due date, each day of the grace period will be counted in assessing the fine.

When fines and/or charges owed on a single card reach \$90.00 or more, the account is referred to a materials recovery (collection) agency. See section 3.5.4 below.

3.5.3. Charges for Lost and Damaged Materials.

Items not returned within sixty-three (63) days of the due date will be assumed to be lost, and a bill for replacement and processing costs will be sent to the patron. Payments for lost items which are subsequently found, will be refunded if the item is returned to the library in good condition within one year of the payment (see policy 3.5.5).

When an item is returned damaged to such an extent that the item is unusable, a bill for replacement and processing costs will be sent to the patron.

The replacement charge for lost or damaged-beyond-repair items will be based on the current cost to replace that item. The library adds a processing fee of \$10 to the cost of replacing a lost or irreparably damaged item to cover expenses associated with updating the database of holdings, physical processing and other handling of a replacement item.

The replacement charge for Interlibrary Loans will be the amount determined by the lending library, plus a \$10 NOLS processing fee.

At the discretion of the Branch Manager, patrons may be allowed the option of clearing charges for a lost or damaged item by providing an acceptable replacement, and paying the \$10 processing fee. The replacement item must be the same, or a similar title, in excellent condition, and acceptable to the Branch Manager and/or appropriate selector.

Patrons may keep damaged-beyond-repair items, with the exception of E-Readers, for which they have paid or provided an acceptable replacement.

The library reserves the right to impose a repair charge for damage to library materials and packaging, even if the damage does not render the item unusable. Charges for partial damage will be made at the discretion of the Branch Manager, appropriate to the nature and amount of the damage, and in accordance with the guidelines established by the NOLS Fee and Charges Schedule.

3.5.4. Library Materials Recovery (Collection) Agency.

The services of a library materials recovery agency are utilized to assist the library in recovering long overdue materials in order to maintain the integrity of the library's collection and ensure availability of materials to library users.

Accounts that have unpaid bills totaling \$90.00 for a period of twenty one (21) days or more will be referred to the materials recovery agency. A non-refundable \$10 service charge is added to the patron account when it is referred to the collection agency.

Once a patron account has been referred to the collection agency, all fines and fees must be paid in full before borrowing privileges can be restored, unless a payment plan has been negotiated with the Branch Manager. Patrons on payment plans must pay at least \$10.00 per month toward the resolution of the debt. During the time the patron is regularly making payments, the library will arrange for the collection agency to suspend collection activity. At the discretion of the Branch Manager, limited service may be restored as long as the patron meets the terms of the payment plan. A missed payment will result in the account again becoming active with the collection agency, and limited service, if any, being blocked.

3.5.5. Refunds of Payments for Lost Materials which are Later Found

If a patron has paid for a lost item, and later finds the item, the patron may request a refund of the payment, provided:

- a. the material is in good condition when it is returned to the library;
- b. the refund is requested at the time the material is returned;
- c. the item is returned and the refund is requested no more than twelve (12) months after the payment was made;
- d. the payment was not for replacement of an individual cassette tape or compact disk in a "talking book" set. Individual tapes and CDs are the exception to the refund policy, because once the replacement charge has been paid, a replacement tape or CD is purchased to complete the set, and a single "lost" tape or CD which is subsequently found will not be of any use to the library.

Refunds are mailed to the patron and will take four to six weeks to process and mail.