



Library Board
Cornell Public Library

Fine Free Statement

The Cornell Public Library has changed our fine policies. The board has decided we will not charge overdue fines on adult books, children's books, audiobooks/CD's, periodicals, reference materials, DVD's, puppet kits, and NSP meters, effective immediately. We will also eliminate all fines on patron's accounts up until now. This means everyone will have a fresh start with a zero balance.

Patrons will still be responsible for returning items on time so that other patrons can also enjoy the material we have available.

If the material is through our interlibrary loan system, overdue fines may apply because they are based on the policies of the other library.

When material is overdue, patrons will receive two notices by phone or mail. At 45 days overdue the material will now be considered lost or not returned. You will then be charged a replacement cost and a bill will be sent. You would not be able to check out new material until the bill is paid or the material is returned in a similar condition as it was before.

Fines for damaged material will be on a case-by-case basis.

Why would we do this? There are many studies out now which show that fines are a barrier to accessing the library and its resources. Dropping fines has increased library usage and created more positive interactions between staff and patrons.

The studies show that fines are cost neutral. This means that it isn't helping the library financially. Patrons that still wish to support our library are welcome to donate what they are comfortable with. If someone is unable to donate or just chooses not to, they will still have access to our library and resources. Fines have disproportionately impacted the people least able to pay them, and this removes barriers to learning and growing and strengthens our community.

Our #1 goal with this is to get our material back so that others can use them. Libraries in these studies have shown that they get their material back at the same rate or even faster. The places that did see people keeping things longer had a large decrease in books considered lost or not returned. That means at least the library got the material back and kept the patron coming back. The hold times were not shown to increase, and some even reported shorter wait times.

These policy updates are an investment in our patrons and our community. We do not want to turn anyone away due to an inability to pay.