
Toronto Public Library to Go Fine-Free for Kids

March 2, 2021

Toronto Public Library (TPL) is eliminating children's overdue fines in a move to remove barriers to library access, especially for those who need it the most.

Late fines have a disproportionate impact on racialized and low-income communities in Toronto. Five percent of children from these communities have blocked TPL library cards because of overdue fines compared to one percent of children from other areas.

Overdue fines were originally introduced to encourage customers to return materials on time, but increasingly have been found to be ineffective in encouraging the return of library materials as intended, and are actually as a barrier to the use of all library services.

The Toronto Public Library Foundation raised funds from generous donors who helped make the elimination of children's fines possible including lead donors the Friends of Toronto Public Library, South Chapter, and the Haynes-Connell Foundation.

With this announcement, TPL joins hundreds of library systems across North America in the growing movement of eliminating overdue fines. In Canada alone, there are 189 fine-free library systems, including 27 in Ontario and nine in the GTA, and these numbers are increasing.

Key Facts

- TPL will not charge overdue fines on all children's materials checked out on children's library cards.
- Current [borrowing periods and renewal options](#) still apply.
- Wait times aren't expected to increase significantly for holds with this change. Many libraries that have eliminated fines report the same or an increased rate of returned materials.
- Library customers will still be responsible for returning materials, and those who do not will still need to pay the replacement cost for any materials lost, damaged or not returned. TPL will continue to send due date notifications.

TPL plans to phase out fines for teens and adults next. The Toronto Public Library Foundation will be actively fundraising again to help make this additional elimination of fines possible.

TPL branches are currently open for contactless holds pick-up and drop-off of library materials only. We are not charging fines on any materials until branches are fully open, but children's fines will be permanently eliminated.

[Key points and FAQs](#) include more detailed information.

Quotes

"Today's announcement is a good example of the steps we are taking to make our city more equitable and to ensure that our services are accessible to everyone. By eliminating children's overdue fines, we are removing barriers that were once impeding access to a wide variety of services and support offered at our city's libraries. I am pleased that we are able to include this service in our 2021 Budget with additional support from the Toronto Public Library Foundation."

- Mayor John Tory

"Literacy is an essential factor of our diverse society and introducing children to reading is essential to higher literacy rates. Removing fines for children's material in our public libraries is an important step in achieving this. Eliminating barriers, in particular fines, ensures children have access to a large assortment of resources in our libraries which is welcoming and exciting news. I am incredibly happy and supportive of this initiative. I also want to acknowledge the Toronto Public Library Foundation for their financial support."

- Councillor Paul Ainslie, Toronto Public Library Board Member

"We know fines are a barrier to the use of all library services including free children's activities, homework help, computer and wifi access. TPL's mandate is to be free and equitable, so removing this barrier is in keeping with the library's purpose. This is especially important in a city as diverse as ours with many newcomers and people of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds."

- Sue Graham-Nutter, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

"We are excited to welcome back kids who may have been staying away from the library because of overdue fines. Particularly in today's challenging times, we need to remove barriers and connect children to the information and resources they need – for school, for lifelong learning, for culture and entertainment. I am so grateful to the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Library Foundation for making the elimination of children's fines possible."

- Vickery Bowles, City Librarian, Toronto Public Library

“For nearly 25 years, the role of the Toronto Public Library Foundation has been to raise funds that help amplify and accelerate the exceptional work that TPL does. Donations have a resounding impact on those who rely on the library’s programs, services and spaces, and today’s announcement is a perfect example of how philanthropic giving, in partnership with the City, can generate such a positive outcome for Toronto’s most vulnerable families.”

- Sarah Fulford, Chair, Toronto Public Library Foundation Board

About Toronto Public Library

Toronto Public Library is the world's busiest urban public library system, with more than 46 million annual visits to our branches and online. We empower Torontonians to thrive in the digital age and knowledge economy through easy access to technology, lifelong learning, and diverse cultural and leisure experiences, where, when and how our customers need us. To learn more, visit tpl.ca, email Answerline at answerline@tpl.ca or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and subscribe to [email updates](#).

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About Toronto Public Library Foundation

The Toronto Public Library Foundation is a registered charity that raises funds to support the exemplary collections, ground-breaking programs and services, and the innovative community spaces at the world’s busiest public library system; Toronto Public Library. Since its inception in 1997, the Foundation has raised over \$88.5 million thanks to generous donors and corporate partners. Donating to Toronto Public Library is an investment in literacy, education, culture and in the vitality of a world-class city.

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