

Patron Use of Space

Welcome to your Washington County Free Library, we hope your experience with the Library is a positive one! Let's work together to create a safe, welcoming, and comfortable space for everyone.

To that end, please follow these basic rules of courtesy and responsibility during your library visit and respect the rights of other library users by:

- Observing library policies and the rules listed here.
- Avoiding any behavior that disrupts the work of staff and patrons.
- Cooperating with library staff who interpret and apply the rules.
- Understanding that physical and virtual library spaces are designed to be used for multiple purposes and are intended to be used by a diverse community of patrons.
- Providing proper supervision of children and vulnerable adults in your care.
- Respecting the use of designated service areas.
- Observing all federal, state, and local laws.

The Washington County Free Library (WCFL) supports the right of all individuals to use the library without discrimination. The Board of the Washington County Free Library has established rules of behavior that all library users must adhere to when in a library branch or on library property. These rules serve to make the Library a welcoming and safe place for library patrons, maintain a safe work environment for staff and volunteers, and preserve and protect the Library's materials, facilities, and property. Please help us by adhering to the rules listed below.

The Washington County Free Library is a place for everyone, shared by the community, and used by many people for widely different reasons. By using our facilities, you are agreeing to follow the rules listed here. Enforcement of these rules will be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner.

General Rules

1. Shirt and shoes are required in the Library; clothing must be appropriate for a public space.
2. The Library is not responsible for unattended children. Parents and caregivers are responsible for supervising the activities and choices of their charges. Children under the age of eight must be directly supervised by a responsible caregiver aged 13 years or older as dictated by Maryland state law, at all times, in all areas of the Library and on its grounds.

3. All Library materials must be properly checked out before they leave the building. A security system protects the Library's collection against unauthorized removals. All patrons shall obey reasonable requests to determine what materials have activated the alarm when passing through the system.
4. Using another person's library card for any reason is expressly forbidden, unless formally authorized by the Library.
5. The Washington County Free Library allows for photography and filming of library buildings, programs or collections that does not invade the privacy of library patrons or restrict their access to information and materials and that is consistent with WCFL's mission statement and rules. Please see the *Policy for Photography and Filming* for more details.
6. We welcome the opportunity to help all patrons to the best of our ability and to the extent of available resources, but patrons should be aware these resources are not unlimited and engaging in extended conversation or behavior that monopolizes staff for an inappropriate period may be restricted as deemed necessary by library staff.
7. Visiting groups that require a specific service, such as use of a community room, a staff presentation, or a guided tour, must schedule their visit in advance.

Respect and be considerate of others.

1. Behaving in a loud, disruptive, or otherwise inappropriate manner, including the use of offensive, racially charged, or abusive language or gestures is prohibited. Audio equipment must be used with headphones and must be set at a volume that does not disturb others.
2. Entering the Library with a bodily hygiene so offensive that it constitutes a nuisance to others, including, but not limited to, clothing odor, body odor, insects or pests, or with unsanitary belongings that interfere with the use and enjoyment of the Library by other library patrons is prohibited.
3. Cell phones and other audio devices must be used with consideration for others. Patrons should speak in low tones and keep conversations brief. If phone calls cannot be concluded quickly, patrons should move away from reading, research, and study areas.

Use furniture, equipment, and spaces for their intended purposes.

1. Covered beverages and reasonable snack foods are allowed in most areas of the Library; however, they are not allowed around any of the computers or in the Western Maryland Room, and only drinks are permitted in the Quiet Room.
2. Sleeping, lying down, or giving the appearance of sleeping, in or on Library premises is prohibited.
3. The use of Library restrooms or other public areas for bathing, shaving, doing laundry, or any other inappropriate personal grooming is prohibited.
4. Do not block Library entrances, exits, or aisles, stretch power or other cables across walkways, or impede access to public areas in any way, or monopolize library space, equipment, or outlets to the exclusion of others.

5. Soliciting, distributing unapproved printed material or literature, or asking library patrons or staff for money, petition signatures, votes, or political support inside or outside on library grounds without approval is prohibited. Political signs may not be left on WCFL property except on an election day if the branch is a polling location.
6. Patrons are welcome to bring service animals into the Library. All other animals must remain outside and attended to by their person unless part of a library-sponsored program. Service animals brought into the Library may not be left unattended, and must remain quiet and under the control of their handlers. Animals outside the Library may not be tied or otherwise tethered to any area on Library property and may not be left unattended on Library property at any time.
7. To maintain a safe environment for children, adult patrons who are not engaged in Library activities which requires materials from the Children's Area will be asked to relocate to other areas of the Library.
8. Patrons of any age are welcome to borrow materials housed in the Teen Space, but anyone who is not between the ages of 13-19 will be asked to relocate to other areas of the Library once they are finished with their selections.
9. Library furnishings and materials are not to be rearranged or disarranged by patrons without permission of library staff.
10. Non-public areas are for staff only, please respect that and refrain from entering staff-only areas.
11. Camping in library facilities or on library grounds is prohibited. "Camping" refers to the use of library property for living or accommodation purposes.

To keep everyone safe, some behaviors are not allowed, including:

1. Abuse or harassment of any kind towards others, including engaging in activities that may result in intimidation, harassment, injury, or harm to library patrons or staff.
2. Staring at or following patrons or staff in a manner that reasonably can be expected to disturb them.
3. Sexually threatening or harassing other patrons, volunteers, or staff, including stalking, staring, lurking, inappropriate comments, offensive touching, and obscene acts such as sex acts or indecent exposure is prohibited.
4. No person shall be allowed to possess, use, or threaten the use of any weapon or other object in such a manner that it may be considered a weapon in Library buildings or on Library property, except those carried by authorized law enforcement agents or Library security officers, as dictated by Maryland state law (MD Crim Law Code § 4-101 and § 4-203).
5. Using, possessing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs (controlled substances).
6. Vaping, smoking (including e-cigarettes) and the use of any tobacco products is prohibited from all Library facilities and property. Facilities and property include, but are not limited to, all library facilities leased and owned, parking lots, picnic areas, dock areas, entrances, entrance patios, garages, vehicles, green spaces, and gardens.
7. Engaging in activities or behavior that result in damage to library property is prohibited, including the vandalizing of any areas both inside the Library and on library grounds, or making any attempts to damage computer equipment or alter software configurations.

8. Bringing in personal items that will interfere with the use of space by other library users. The following rules and restrictions apply:
 - Bags, packages, and other containers may be examined at any time.
 - The Library does not provide storage for personal property. Always carry or keep personal items with you. The Library is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged property. Unattended items are subject to search, confiscation, and disposal.
 - Personal possessions must be contained in an area that does not impede others and may not take up seating or space needed by others. The maximum combined size of items may not exceed 2 bags measuring 16"x 18"x 24" per patron. Larger bags of any type, including bedrolls and luggage are prohibited.
9. Bringing bicycles, shopping carts, or other large, wheeled conveyances inside library buildings is prohibited. Wheelchairs, strollers, and mobility devices are permitted if being used as transportation, or as a mobility device. Skates, skateboards, collapsible scooters, hover boards, and other similar devices must be carried while on library property.

WCFL reserves the right to interpret and follow these rules and to make new rules in order to deal with new situations that might occur at the discretion of Library Administration and/or Security.

WCFL also reserves the right to deny use of its facilities and premises to persons who do not abide by the *Policy for Patron Use of Space*. WCFL staff or security officers may ask persons who are exhibiting inappropriate behavior to modify their behavior. Noncompliance may result in the individual being banned from library premises, or in arrest and prosecution. Entering or remaining on the library premises during the period in which an individual has been banned from the premises is prohibited.