
Berks County Public Library System

Borrowing Policies

Library Card Registration

The Berks County Public Library System (BCPL) provides services to all residents of the County of Berks without discrimination in fulfillment of its mission to develop services, resources and collections to meet the cultural, informational, educational and recreational needs of its diverse community.

All library transaction records are confidential under Article IV. Section 428 of the Public Library Code (24 PA C.S.).

BCPL member libraries issue library cards to establish a patron account, facilitate loan of materials and use of online resources, and to enable the member libraries to keep a record of which materials are on loan to patrons. Individuals who live, own property, work, or attend school in Berks County are eligible for a free library card. This card is also referred to as a Full-Service Library Card.

Library cards are valid for use at all BCPL member libraries, Reading Area Community College, and the Council on Chemical Abuse.

To borrow materials from a BCPL member library, a person must register for a library card. Applicants must present proper proof of residency and identity, and complete and sign a library card application. By virtue of the signature, the applicant agrees to accept responsibility for all fines, fees, or charges incurred through library transactions. Applicants are able to obtain a registration form online; but must present proof of residency and identity before receiving a library card.

Anyone under the age of 18 may receive a library card after completing an application signed by a parent or legal guardian presenting proper proof of residency and identity. At the discretion of the Library Director and under certain circumstances, another adult may sign as the responsible adult on behalf of a minor child. By virtue of signature the signing adult agrees to be financially responsible for the use of the card and all fines and other charges incurred pursuant to the Borrowing Policies. The adult applying for a juvenile card on behalf of a child must be in good standing (no fines/fees over \$10). A juvenile card will be linked to the library card account of the signing adult. Member libraries may require adults signing on behalf of a minor child to apply for a library card if an account is not already opened.

At their discretion, member libraries may allow those under the age of 18 to assume financial responsibility and sign for their own card. By virtue of signature, the signing teen agrees to be financially responsible for the use of the card and all fines and other charges incurred pursuant to the Borrowing Policies.

Upon turning 18, a minor who has a library card will need to apply for a new card and thereby assume financial responsibility for the account.

BCPL member libraries and staff do not act *in loco parentis*.

BCPL member libraries are participants in the ACCESS PA Statewide Library card program and adhere to its rules and regulations for free reciprocal library cards. Pennsylvania residents who hold a valid library card from an out-of-county library or a State library card are eligible for a BCPL library card without fee. Such non-residents of Berks County are required to register and provide proof of identity and the home library card.

BCPL will provide non-ACCESS PA County-wide library cards to any Pennsylvania resident who can provide proof of residency. These non-ACCESS PA cards will allow the cardholder physical material access at any BCPL location. This card does not include access to digital media types including but not limited to: Overdrive/Libby, Databases, etc. This card does not give access to the ACCESS PA Statewide Library Card program. This card is also referred to as a Limited-Service Library Card.

Non-residents of Pennsylvania may be issued a borrower card upon payment of a \$40 annual fee and upon providing proof of identity in the same manner as county residents. This card can be used only at BCPL libraries. These cardholders receive a Full-Service Library Card.

Library Card Information

Identity and Residency Requirements

The applicant must provide full legal name, address and date of birth.

Applicants must also provide valid photo identification that verifies name and current address.

At their discretion, member libraries may accept other documentation to verify current address.

Institutional and Homeschooling Requirements

Institutions may receive an institutional borrower card, providing the Director or other authorized person of the agency signs the application and commits to the financial responsibility of all fees and charges incurred pursuant to the Borrowing Policies.

Homeschooling educators may apply for a Homeschool borrower card upon presentation of an affidavit as defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and issued by the local school district. The affidavit covers the school year, and the borrower card registration must be renewed annually. A homeschooling card enables the cardholder to borrow up to 150 items at one time and place 50 hold requests.

Because Pennsylvania Law does not require homeschooling educators working with children younger than 8 to have an affidavit, those educators working exclusively with students under 8, may receive for a homeschooling card at the discretion of the Library Director.

Provisional Library Cards

Member libraries at their discretion may issue provisional library cards with specific restrictions or limitations. Please contact your local library for more information.

Cardholder Responsibilities

Cardholders should present a valid library card in order to check out materials and to use library computer resources. If a library card is not available, the cardholder must provide an ID and proof of address that exactly matches the address on the account.

Adult cardholders can designate other adult cardholders to pick up reserved materials for them by completing a "Holds PickUp" form. This authorization is specifically noted in the cardholder's account.

A cardholder is responsible for all materials checked out on his or her library card and on the cards of minor children for whom s/he has assumed responsibility on a library card application.

BCPL libraries charge fines as an incentive for cardholders to return materials in a timely manner so that others can have access to them. Maximum fine amounts vary by material type. No fines are assessed on the late return of juvenile books, audio, magazines or Young Adult/Teen books.

Cardholders are responsible for all charges on their account including payments for any lost or damaged items borrowed on their card. BCPL reserves the right to charge an Administrative/Processing fee for handling lost and damaged items.

Cardholders are responsible to report address, telephone and/or email changes.

Lost or stolen library cards must be reported immediately so that the card can be invalidated. The owner of the card is responsible for all items checked out on the card until the card is reported lost or stolen. Replacement card fees may apply.

Cardholder Privileges

Cardholders may use their library barcode number to access library databases from home, check their library borrowing record, place holds on library materials and borrow electronic resources.

Suspension of Cardholder Privileges

A cardholder's account is considered delinquent when items are overdue or money is owed. This status may affect the cardholder's ability to borrow materials, place holds or use electronic/digital resources.

Privileges will be suspended when:

- there are accumulated charges of more than \$10.00 Cardholder privileges for any adult responsible for any juvenile account(s) will be suspended when the sum of all charges associated with the adult account is more than \$10.00
- there are fines and fees from a previous calendar year (All accounts must be paid in full by the end of each calendar year before items may be borrowed in a new calendar year)
- there are 4 or more items with a status of 'claimed returned'

Expiration of Library Cards

All library cards must be renewed every three years. If, at the end of three years, there has been no activity on the account, and there are no outstanding charges or unreturned materials, the account is considered inactive.

Material Loan Periods

Loan periods

- 21 days - audio materials, books, some DVD sets, e-Book Readers, and magazines.
- 7 days - DVDs, VHS tapes, and Museum passes

Non-standard item loan periods are set by owning libraries.

Renewals

Most materials, unless on reserve for another patron, may be renewed for an additional loan period. Renewals for longer loan periods are granted on an exception basis.

Nonrenewable items may include DVD sets, e-Book Readers and NEW materials. For more information, contact your local library.

Items may be renewed at the library, online through the library website, or by phone. The cardholder's barcode number is required for telephone renewals.

Maximum number of items

The maximum number of items that can be borrowed is determined by each individual library. To learn the limits on the number of items that can be borrowed, see your local library's local service policies.

Placing a Hold (or Request/Reserve)

If an item is not available at the time and place that it is sought, cardholders can place a hold (request/reserve) on the item at any member library, by phone, or online. Cardholders will be notified when the item is available.

Items placed on hold (requested/reserved) may be picked up at the BCPL library that was specified at the time the hold was placed. Member libraries may restrict or limit pick-up options for certain items. Held items must be picked up within 7 days of notification. This time limit varies for some libraries.

Fines

Cardholders are responsible for returning library materials on time. Overdue fines are charged as an incentive to return materials promptly. Fines are calculated by calendar day and vary by material type. The current fine table, as amended from time to time is posted at the Circulation Desk and online.

There are no fines on juvenile audio, books, or magazines.

There are no fines on Young Adult/Teen books.

Overdue Notices

Cardholders are notified when items checked out become delinquent. A billing invoice is sent if, after 3 overdue notices, the items have not been returned. Section 6708 of Title 18, Pennsylvania Code makes it a summary offense to retain library property after being notified to return it.

Fees

- For lost/damaged card: \$2.00 (both adult and juvenile)
- For lost/damaged museum pass: \$15.00
- For all other lost/damaged items: Replacement value plus a \$5.00 Administrative/Processing Fee

Refunds for lost Items:

Refunds may be given for lost materials which were previously paid for, if the materials are found and returned in good condition to the library within 60 days. Maximum fines (if applicable) and any Administrative Fees will be deducted from the refunded amount.

Returns and Book Drop Policy

Most items belonging to any Berks County public library may be returned at any Berks County public library. Exceptions include museum passes, e-book readers, video games, and items borrowed from outside the BCPL system. Book drops are available at each library for the return of materials when the library is closed.

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