

Patron Responsibilities and Conduct

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The Hart County Library exists to provide open and equitable access to resources and services which meets information needs and enhances the quality of life in our community. To ensure an environment useful, safe, and enjoyable for all patrons, and to protect the library's resources, the Hart County Library Board of Trustees has established the following standards defining acceptable behavior for those who visit and use the library. Visitors to the libraries are expected to be engaged in activities associated with the use of public libraries while on or in any of the libraries' properties. Visitors who choose to violate these standards for behavior may be subject to a restriction or loss of library privileges.

The following actions, as well as any other behavior that disrupts the public use of the library, are prohibited.

- Engaging in any action that would be a violation, misdemeanor, or felony under local, state, or federal criminal laws or ordinances.
- Engaging in any action which violates established library policies, including the Internet Acceptable Use Policies and computer use agreements, which are posted on all public computers.
- Harassing, threatening, or intimidating other patrons or library staff [O.C.G.A. § 16-11-39]. This includes, but is not limited to, physical or verbal abuse, including obscene or derogatory language or gestures; annoying persistently to create an unpleasant or hostile situation; interference with another patron's use of the library; interference with library staff's performance of duties [Title 7, Civil Rights Act; OSHA Directive CPL 02-01-052].
- Engaging in disruptive or abusive behavior (which includes, but is not limited to, loitering, fighting, hitting, shoving, running, throwing objects, skating, accosting, selling, soliciting, or inappropriate displays of affection) that interferes with the normal operation of the library or that disturbs library patrons or staff [O.C.G.A. § 16-5-20].
- Sexual acts, obscene language, inappropriate bodily exposure, or any other sexual misconduct [O.C.G.A. § 16-6-8].
- Disobeying the reasonable direction of a library staff member or library security officer.
- Unlawfully carrying or displaying a firearm, weapon, or potential weapon.
- Knowingly destroying, damaging, defacing or removing any library property, including computer equipment and networks [O.C.G.A. § 20-5-52], or personal property of library patrons or staff [O.C.G.A. § 16-8-2].
- Taking library materials that have not been checked out into restrooms.
- Any loud, unreasonable, distracting, or disturbing noises created by persons, electronic devices, or cell phones including speaker phone conversations. This includes persistent noise or crying of children.

- Entering unauthorized areas of the building or grounds or remaining in the building after closing hours.
- Loud sleeping or putting one's head, feet, or legs on tables and other furnishings (infants and small children are excluded).
- Overnight camping on library property.
- Inappropriate use of restrooms.
- Blocking any building entrance or walkway.
- Climbing on library facilities, equipment, furnishings, railings, fences, or landscaping.
- Unauthorized use of parking lots or designated special parking spaces.
- Using more than one chair at a time, or monopolizing or rearranging library furnishings, equipment, materials, facilities, outlets, or spaces.
- Using a wheelchair, walker, shopping cart, child stroller, or other wheeled device to transport items or personal belongings into the library. Bedrolls, blankets, frame backpacks, suitcases, or bags measuring more than three feet in length or height are not permitted in library buildings. No items may be left unattended or allowed to impede others.
- Littering.

Other restrictions include:

- All library materials must be properly checked out [O.C.G.A. § 20-5-54]. Personal items are subject to inspection to ensure compliance with library policy.
- Appropriate clothing, including shirt and shoes, is required on and in all library property.
- Personal items should not be left unattended. Library staff is not responsible for monitoring personal items of patrons. Bicycles or other similar devices must be left in designated areas outside the library building.
- Leashed, controlled, and trained service dogs are permitted [Americans with Disabilities Act]. All other animals, including comfort companions, are prohibited in the library. Animals cannot be left tethered near library buildings, entrances, or walkways.
- The library building is tobacco and electronic smoke-free. Vaping, dipping, chewing tobacco, and smoking are not permitted inside the building.
- All conversations should be no louder than the general noise level of the area.
- Staff will request patrons engaging in lengthy/noisy cell phone or other conversations move to the lobby or other designated area.
- Food and covered drinks are allowed in designated areas only; alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs are prohibited on library campuses.
- Patrons will be asked to leave the library if their bodily hygiene or scent is so offensive as to constitute a nuisance to other patrons.

- Consistent behavior and policy violations that demand constant attention of staff and/or disrupt service to library patrons will not be permitted.
- Children under the age of 10 and adults who require supervision must be accompanied and actively supervised by a responsible caregiver at all times while in the library. Being accompanied by an older sibling or babysitter under the age of 16 does not constitute proper supervision.

All library employees and volunteers are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. [O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5].

Persons violating these rules, or any other library policy, will be first warned by library staff or a security officer at the time of the offense. If the conduct continues, the offender will be instructed to leave the library for the day. Library staff or security officers may expel the offender without a warning in situations of serious, threatening, or malicious behavior. Offenders who refuse to leave the library premises will be subject to arrest and prosecution for criminal trespass pursuant to Official Code of Georgia § 16-7-21.

Repeated violation of behavior policies may result in an official suspension of library privileges, based on an established schedule of offenses and consequences established by the library.