

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF BERKELEY HEIGHTS RULES OF CONDUCT
and POLICIES ON LIBRARY USE*

The Board of Trustees has adopted the following Rules of Conduct and Policies on Library Use (“Rules of Conduct”) in order to create and maintain a safe and welcoming environment in the Berkeley Heights Public Library at 29 Park Avenue, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey (“BHPL” or “Library”).

Appropriate use of the Library includes activities such as selecting materials, researching, studying, attending programs and meetings, using BHPL’s computers and wireless services, reading, and quiet conversation.

Inappropriate behavior is any behavior which interferes with the ability of others to use the Library, causes damage to Library property, disrupts the normal functioning of the Library or results in unsafe conditions. Patrons must refrain from inappropriate behavior and activities in the Library which includes, but is not limited to:

1. Talking loudly, making noises or engaging in disruptive activities
2. Interfering with another person’s use of the Library space or with Library staff’s performance of their duties
3. Verbally or physically abusing or threatening other patrons or staff
4. Consuming food unless approved in advance by Library Director
5. Drinking from containers without lids; no drinking is permitted near Library computers. Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited.
6. Using personal electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) or Library-owned equipment in a manner that is disturbing to others
7. Smoking (including electronic cigarettes) and/or vaping
8. Bringing animals into the Library, except for service animals
9. Misusing the restrooms
10. Littering
11. Soliciting, panhandling, petitioning, or distributing handouts
12. Inappropriate attire; shirts and shoes must be worn
13. Offensive bodily hygiene which constitutes a nuisance to others in the Library and interferes with their use of the Library
14. Damaging or stealing Library materials or property
15. Sleeping
16. Use of recreational drugs

LIBRARY USE BY MINORS

The Library is a place where people of all ages are welcome, children as well as adults. The Library encourages regular visits as a family activity to introduce young children to the resources and materials available, as well as promoting responsible and appropriate Library usage. Parental involvement is encouraged with older children to assist with the selection of reading and viewing materials for educational and recreational use, as well as reinforcing responsible use of the Library facility. The Library should not be a threatening place for a child. Library staff members expect the cooperation of parents/guardians/caregivers in creating and maintaining, both inside and outside of the Library, a welcoming atmosphere for all Library users.

Parents/guardians/caregivers must be aware that the Library is a public space in the Municipal Complex, a public building. Library staff cannot and will not assume responsibility for the care, monitoring and supervision of minors at any age. Responsibility for a minor using the Library rests with the parents/guardians/caregivers of the child. The Library cannot know if a minor is with a friend, guardian, or stranger. Thus, the Library cannot prevent minors from interacting with persons who are not the appropriate chaperone. Parents/guardians/caregivers retain that responsibility.

An “unattended” minor is herein defined as a minor not supervised while in the Library by a parent/guardian/caregiver.

Parents/guardians/caregivers responsible for the well-being of a child who is

- a) age 6 or younger must remain in the same area within the Library (including Story Times and all other Library programs) and must be immediately accessible;
- b) age 7-8 must remain in the Library for the entire visit. The child must be informed when the parent/guardian/caregiver moves to a different location within the Library but must remain on the same level as the child.

Children ages 9-12 are welcome to use the Library unattended, however they must be able to reach a parent/guardian/caregiver by telephone if necessary and should not be left unsupervised for extended periods of time.

During the school year, students using the Library during school hours must be accompanied by an adult.

If Library staff is aware of a minor left unattended at the time that the Library is closing, whether at the regular closing time or an unforeseen closing, an attempt will be made to notify the parents/guardians/caregivers by telephone. If Library staff members cannot reach a parent/guardian/caregiver by telephone, or if a parent/guardian/caregiver cannot arrive within 15 minutes, the Berkeley Heights Police Department will be notified to accompany the minor to the Police Department to await pick-up. A note will be left on the outside door of the Municipal Complex indicating where the minor was escorted.

Parents/guardians/caregivers will be notified by telephone if their child is not abiding by the Library's Policies and Rules of Conduct or any other Library policies, including but not limited to the Use of Public Access Internet Policy, Wireless Internet Policy and Meeting Room Use Policies, Rules and Procedures.

If a medical emergency arises and there is cause to believe a child's health or safety is in danger, Library staff will call 911 immediately and will not accept responsibility for first contacting a parent/guardian/caregiver.

PROCEDURES

These Rules of Conduct for all patrons shall be enforced in conjunction with any other BHPL policy, including but not limited to Use of Public Access Internet Policy, Wireless Internet Policy and Meeting Room Use Policies, Rules and Procedures.

Any patron violating the Rules of Conduct, any other BHPL policies, or local, state or federal regulations, will be advised that their behavior is unacceptable. Depending on the severity of the violation, law enforcement authorities may be contacted for assistance.

If the unacceptable behavior persists, the patron will be asked to leave the Library for the remainder of that day.

For a second offense, the patron will be asked to leave the Library for the remainder of that day and will be asked to remain out of the Library for the next day also.

For a third offense, the patron will be asked to leave the Library for the remainder of that day and will be asked to remain out of the Library for one week thereafter.

Repeat offenders may be directed to leave without repeated warnings. If warranted by the severity of the unacceptable behavior, Library privileges will be revoked for a specific time period established by the Library Director and Board of Trustees.

All staff members on duty are empowered to enforce the Rules of Conduct and, as necessary, to contact law enforcement authorities. Rulings made by staff other than the Library Director shall be in effect for the remainder of that day or until the Library Director or Board of Trustees President is consulted.

- These BHPL Rules of Conduct, adopted on 11/8/2021, modified 12/11/2023 replace the following:

Rules of Conduct; adopted 11/10/1993, modified 5/14/2018

Policy on Library Use by Young People, adopted 11/10/1993, modified 5/14/2018

Policy on Unattended Children, adopted 4/9/1990, amended 6/11/1990, modified 5/12/2003, amended 6/9/2003, amended 5/14/2018