

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

Welcome!

We want everyone to have a safe, clean, and pleasant library experience at the Berkeley Heights Public Library ("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.

Library users must respect others and avoid disruptive or inappropriate behavior. Any action that disturbs others, damages property, interrupts Library operations, or creates unsafe conditions is not allowed.

Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to:

- Breaking any federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances;
- Violating Library policies;
- Possessing or using weapons, firearms, stun devices, explosives, or similar items (unless legally permitted);
- Engaging in sexual activity, lewd behavior, or inappropriate physical contact;
- Harassing, threatening, or disturbing other patrons or staff;
- Interfering with other patrons' use of the physical Library space or their ability to participate in the Library's virtual programs;
- Interfering with Library employees' performance of their duties;
- Entering staff-only or unauthorized areas of the Library;
- Smoking, vaping, using, displaying, sharing, selling, or appearing under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, or illegal substances;
- Failing to follow instructions from Library staff or law enforcement;
- Soliciting money, donations, or signatures without written permission from the Library;
- Blocking Library entrances, exits, aisles, or walkways;
- Using rollerblades, skateboards, scooters, or similar equipment inside the Library; running is not allowed - patrons must walk;
- Defacing or marring Library materials, equipment, or property, including but not limited to books, magazines, newspapers, recordings, computer equipment, or other items in the Library's collection;
- Bringing animals into the Library, except service animals or those in approved Library programs;
- Taking photos or videos in violation of the Library's Photography and Recording Policy;
- Adults (aged 20 or older) using the teen area from 3:00 p.m. to closing during the school year;

- Having offensive bodily hygiene that constitutes a nuisance to other patrons or interferes with Library operations;
- Sleeping or appearing to sleep on Library premises;
- Leaving personal belongings unattended (*Note: Items may be removed without notice, and the Library is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged belongings*);
- Eating or drinking, except for water in closed containers or at authorized Library events;
- Entering the Library without a shirt or shoes; patrons participating in Library virtual programming shall also be adequately clothed;
- Creating messes, spills, or garbage that disrupt Library use.

LIBRARY USE BY MINORS

The Berkeley Heights Public Library welcomes children and teens and encourages family visits to help young people explore our resources and learn to use the Library responsibly. However, parents, guardians, and caregivers should note that the Library is a public space and part of the municipal complex. Library staff cannot monitor or supervise minors and are not responsible for their care. Because staff cannot verify whether a minor is with a trusted adult, the Library cannot prevent interactions with unknown individuals. **Parents, guardians, and caregivers remain fully responsible for their children while in the Library.**

For this policy, a minor is considered "unattended" when not supervised by a parent, guardian, or caregiver.

- Children aged 8 and under must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the Library.
- During regular school hours, all minors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult while on Library premises.
- Parents, guardians, and caregivers must stay within sight of their children at all times. That means accompanying the kids into the kids' room and staying with them for the duration of their visit.
- Outside of school hours, children ages 9–12 may use the Library without an adult but must be able to contact a parent or guardian by phone and should not be left alone for more than one hour.
- Teens ages 13–17 may use the Library without adult supervision, provided they follow all Library rules and use the space responsibly. Parents, guardians or caretakers should be available by phone if needed.

Staff Response to Unattended or At-Risk Minors

Library staff will attempt to contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver in the following situations:

- A child is left unattended in violation of Library policy or appears to be neglected;
- A child is behaving inappropriately or violating the Library's Policies and Rules of Conduct;
- A child appears to be a danger to themselves or others;
- A child seems to be threatened or at risk from others.

If a parent, guardian, or caregiver cannot be reached, staff will contact the Berkeley Heights Police Department.

In a medical emergency, Library staff will call 911 immediately if a child's health or safety is at risk. Staff are not required to contact a parent or guardian before calling emergency services.

If a minor is left unattended at closing time, either during a scheduled or unexpected closure, staff will attempt to reach a parent, guardian, or caregiver by phone. If no one can be reached, or if no adult arrives within 15 minutes, the Berkeley Heights Police Department will be contacted, and the child will be escorted to the Police Department to wait for pickup.

Consequences of Policy Violations

These Rules of Conduct shall be enforced in conjunction with all other BHPL policies. Any patron violating these Rules will be advised that their behavior is unacceptable. Depending on the severity of the violation, they may be asked to leave the premises, lose Library privileges, and/or law enforcement may be contacted for assistance.

Depending on the nature of the violation, Library staff may first attempt to educate the patron about the Rules and direct the patron to correct the offending conduct. If the patron continues the conduct in violation of the Rules, the person shall be directed to leave the Library for a stated period of time.

If the patron continues the offending conduct while visiting the Library thereafter, the patron shall be directed to leave the Library, Library privileges shall be revoked for an appropriate period of time; and the Berkeley Heights Police Department may be contacted for assistance.

For serious violations or illegal activity, even if an isolated event:

- the Berkeley Heights Police Department shall be notified immediately,
- the patron shall be directed to immediately leave the Library, and
- Library privileges shall be revoked for an appropriate period of time.

In all cases, if a patron refuses to leave the Library after being directed to do so by Library staff, the Berkeley Heights Police Department will be contacted for assistance.

Appeal of Revocation of Library Privileges

When a patron's Library privileges have been revoked for more than 45 days, the patron may appeal the revocation by submitting a written request to the Library Board of Trustees within one (1) week of receiving notice. The appeal must include all of the reasons the patron believes the revocation is unwarranted. All decisions by the Board of Trustees are final.

These BHPL Rules of Conduct, adopted on 11/8/2021, modified 12/11/2023, modified 6/9/2025 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