

LIBRARY USE GUIDELINES

Library and Community Services
800 Alma St., Menlo Park, CA 94025
menlopark.gov



Purpose

Menlo Park Library provides access to all through its collections, programs, facilities and resources. We strive to serve our visitors effectively by providing a welcoming and safe environment. At the same time we ask that visitors help us to maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and community engagement by following these Guidelines.

Entering the library or participating in a library event or program constitutes an implicit acceptance of these Guidelines and an acknowledgement of the right of library staff to take any action they see fit while interpreting these Guidelines.

In case of an emergency follow library staff instructions promptly.

We welcome everyone to:

- Study, read and enjoy our environment within the limits of its intended use.
- Find materials in good condition.
- Feel safe and secure.

Prohibited conduct and activities

In consideration of all Library visitors and staff, the following activities are not allowed:

- Leaving a vulnerable adult or a child under the age of 11 unattended.
- Entering the designated children's area, attending a program for children, or using a designated children's computer without being accompanied by a child (0 to 12) or without a demonstrated need to access the children's collection.
- Using the designated teen area, attending a program for teens, or using a designated teen computer without being accompanied by a teen (13-17) or without a demonstrated need to access the teen collection.
- Disturbing others by talking loudly or with other noisy activity—including any loud sound originating from any electronic device. Please do use headphones when listening to audio on any electronic devices.
- Failing to monitor the activities and behavior of children while attending a library event.
- Sleeping—as a safety precaution sleeping individuals will be awakened.
- Eating—except in the designated areas, or food provided at library-sponsored events.
- Drinking—except for covered beverages in the designated areas, or beverages provided at library-sponsored events.
- Presenting offensive and pervasive odor or odors that may make the use of the library difficult for others.
- Inappropriate personal grooming activity that can create unsanitary conditions or is disruptive to regular library use, including but not limited to: bathing, shaving, hair cutting, nail trimming, or washing clothes in the library or the public restrooms.
- Failing to wear shoes or adequate clothing, including top and bottom.
- Bringing in animals other than service animals recognized under Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Leaving pets unattended and/or unleashed in outdoor areas near the library, including but not limited to entryways, pathways, lawns, and outdoor seating areas.
- Bringing carts, bicycles, scooters, skateboards, or similar items into the library or leaving them at the entrance--except when the vehicle is: used by disabled people or is used to carry an infant/child.
- Wearing skates or roller blades inside the library.
- Changing diapers—except in the designated area of the public restrooms.
- Blocking aisles, shelves, or any thoroughfare with personal items, or leaving items unattended at any time--except to use the restroom for a reasonable amount of time.
- Putting feet on library furniture, rearranging the furniture, or using the furniture for other than its intended purpose.
- Bringing weapons of any kind into the library.
- Bringing into the library any items that present health hazards, including but not limited to: items containing vermin, decomposing or rotten items, and items that contain or could potentially release hazardous material.

- Harassing library users or staff—including physical, sexual, verbal harassment or stalking.
- Bullying, intimidation, or retaliation directed at facility users or staff.
- Selling, soliciting, or using illegal drugs on library premises.
- Alcohol is prohibited, except at library-sponsored after-hours events.
- Distributing or posting literature, gathering signatures, soliciting contributions or conducting surveys, except by Library support groups or as a part of a Library-sponsored event.
- Placing any tables or other structures on library property, including library grounds.
- Smoking, including using electronic and smoke-free cigarettes (vaping) inside or within 50 feet of the library building.
- Vandalizing library facilities, equipment, or materials.
- Removing library materials from the building without checking them out.
- Engaging in sexual conduct or lewd behavior.
- Viewing or displaying inappropriate, sexually explicit, or illegal material in the library.
- Illegal activity of any kind will be reported to law enforcement.
- Violation of any federal, state, or local public health orders, restrictions, protocols and/or guidelines.

Unattended children and youth

The library is a public place. Do not leave children unsupervised or unattended. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure their children's safety, welfare, and appropriate behavior in the library. Library staff are not available to provide childcare for any duration of time. Library staff are not authorized to assume responsibility for the direct supervision, safety, or welfare of any child in the absence of a responsible caregiver.

Children under the age of 6 should never be left unattended in any part of the library, including areas designated for children. A parent, guardian, or responsible caretaker must always remain within sight of their child, including during story time or other programs.

Children ages 6-10 must have a parent, guardian, or designated caregiver over the age of 14 (for example, an older sibling) remain in the library with them at all times. The caregiver is responsible for the safety, behavior and supervision of the children in their care while at the library.

Older children ages 11 and up may visit the library unattended by an adult but should never be left alone for extended periods of time and never outside library open hours. Parents/caregivers are responsible for the safety, well-being, and behavior of their children. It is recommended that older children have a cellphone or other method to contact their parent or guardian. If a child needs assistance to call home, library staff will dial the number for them. The library has areas designated and reserved for exclusive use by children and teens and their caregivers. Adults over 18 who are not accompanied by a child or teen in their care may not visit these areas except to briefly access the library book and media collection, seek assistance from library staff, or attend a program with staff's approval.

All library patrons, including children and teens, are expected to follow the Menlo Park Library Use Guidelines.

- Caregivers must pick children up at least 15 minutes before the library's posted closing time.

If a child is observed to be unattended by an adult or caregiver in the library and the child seems upset, disruptive, in distress, at risk, or otherwise in need of adult help, library staff may take one or more of the following actions:

- Make contact with the child to assess their well-being
- Attempt to reach the adult/caregiver by paging them over the public address system, or directly by phone;
- Walk through the library building with the child to look for child's adult/caregiver;
- Contact emergency services and/or law enforcement.

If a child is left unattended in the library at closing time, library staff will attempt to contact the parent or legal guardian. If a parent or guardian cannot be immediately contacted, or if a parent/guardian is unable to immediately pick up the child, staff will contact local law enforcement to assume responsibility for the child's well-being.

Library events

Library events are open to the general public. Advance registration may be required for planning purposes or when space is limited. Events may be held on-site, off-site, or virtually. Event participants, whether onsite, offsite, or virtual, must comply with the Library Use Guidelines.

Youth events are created for participating youth and their caretakers. Adults who are not accompanying a youth participant may be asked to leave the event.

While hosting a virtual event, library staff may take one or more of the following actions as needed to ensure compliance with these guidelines: mute attendees, lock the event after the program has begun, dismiss participants or take other actions as needed. During virtual events, participants may be asked to turn on their cameras so that staff can identify them. Unidentified or unidentifiable individuals may be removed from the event.

Library events and programs are intended to serve as safe spaces for participants, and it is important that people who identify within historically marginalized minorities have a safe space in which to share their lived experiences. Cultivating such spaces may include creating programs for identity-based groups that reflect the needs of City of Menlo Park community members and covering sensitive topics such as, but not limited to, gender, sexual orientation, race, mental and physical disability, and immigration status. In order to keep these spaces welcoming and serving their intended purposes, anyone who responds to such events with prejudice or intolerance of any variety, including derogatory comments, hate speech, and/or repeated microaggressions toward others may be asked to leave.

Enforcement

Failure to follow these Guidelines will result in the following actions:

- Individuals will be asked to leave.
- Library visiting privileges may be suspended for an extended time period.
- Library staff may call local law enforcement to provide assistance in enforcing these Guidelines.
- Illegal activity in the Library may result in arrest and/or prosecution in addition to suspension of Library privileges.
- Customers who return to the Menlo Park Library before a suspension has ended may be charged with trespassing.

Additional information

- In case of an emergency, promptly follow all library staff instructions.
- Theft of Library property, or property of Library staff, or property of Library visitors is prohibited.
- State law permits library staff to search purses, bags, parcels, briefcases, and other packages to prevent the theft of books and library materials and authorizes the detention for a reasonable period of any person using these facilities who is suspected of committing library theft (California Penal Code section 490.5.)

Policy review

This policy shall be reviewed at least once every two years.

Policy history

Action	Date	Notes
Policy adoption	December 17, 2018	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	September 16, 2019	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	June 21, 2021	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	April 18, 2022	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	March 6, 2023	Library Commission reviewed
Policy updated	July 21, 2023	Administrative revision
Policy updated	October 7, 2025	Administrative revision