

Rules of Conduct

The Somerset County Library is for all members of the community. We are committed to providing excellent services and resources to our patrons and ensuring that everyone who uses the library has a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience.

These Rules of Conduct guide staff in creating and enforcing an environment that encourages all patrons to use library facilities in an appropriate and respectful manner. This policy supports staff members' actions when a person's behavior or activities are unreasonably interfering with others' usage of the library.

To that end, please follow these basic rules of courtesy and responsibility during your library visit and respect the rights of other library users by:

- Observing library policies and the rules listed here.
- Avoiding any behavior that disrupts the work of staff and patrons.
- Cooperating with library staff who interpret and apply the rules.
- Understanding that library spaces are designed to be used for multiple purposes and are intended to be used by a diverse community of patrons.
- Providing proper supervision of children and vulnerable adults in your care.
- Observing all federal, state, and local laws.

These rules serve to make the library a welcoming and safe place for patrons, maintain a safe work environment, and preserve and protect the library's materials, facilities, and property. Please help us by adhering to the rules listed below.

Enforcement of these rules will be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner.

Respect and be considerate of others.

1. Behaving in a loud, disruptive, or otherwise inappropriate manner, including the use of offensive, racially charged, or abusive language or gestures is prohibited. Audio equipment must be used with headphones and must be set at a volume that does not disturb others.
2. Cell phones and other audio devices must be used with consideration for others. Patrons should speak in low tones and keep conversations brief. If phone calls cannot be concluded quickly, patrons should move away from reading, research, and study areas.
3. Entering the library with bodily hygiene so offensive that it constitutes a nuisance to others, including, but not limited to, clothing odor, body odor, insects or pests, or with unsanitary belongings that interfere with the use and enjoyment of the library by other patrons is prohibited.

4. Do not block library entrances, exits, or aisles, stretch power or other cables across walkways, or impede access to public areas in any way, or monopolize library space, equipment, or outlets to the exclusion of others.
5. Soliciting, including asking library patrons or staff for money or rides, and distributing printed material or literature, other than in designated library spaces and on bulletin boards, is prohibited inside library facilities or outside on library grounds.
6. We welcome the opportunity to help all patrons to the best of our ability and to the extent of available resources, but patrons should be aware these resources are not unlimited, and engaging in extended conversation or behavior that monopolizes staff for an inappropriate period may be restricted as deemed necessary by library staff.

Use furniture, equipment, and spaces for their intended purposes.

1. Covered beverages and reasonable snack foods are allowed in most areas of the library; however, they are not allowed while using library computers or perusing library collections.
2. Sleeping, lying down, or giving the appearance of sleeping, in library facilities or on library grounds is prohibited.
3. Shirt and shoes are required in the library; clothing must be appropriate for a public space.
4. The use of library restrooms or other public areas for bathing, shaving, doing laundry, or any other inappropriate personal grooming is prohibited.
5. Patrons are welcome to bring service animals into the library. All other animals must remain outside and be attended to by their owner unless part of a library-sponsored program. Service animals brought into the library may not be left unattended and must remain quiet and under the control of their handlers. Animals outside the library may not be tied or otherwise tethered to any area on library property and may not be left unattended on library property at any time.
6. Adult patrons in the children's or teen areas who are not retrieving children's or teen materials nor are caregivers for a child or teen may be required to relocate to other areas of the library.
7. Library furnishings and materials are not to be rearranged or disarranged by patrons without the permission of library staff. Toys and games should be returned to their containers after use.
8. Camping in library facilities or on library grounds is prohibited. "Camping" refers to the use of library property for living or accommodation purposes.

9. The library does not provide storage for personal property. Always carry or keep personal items with you. The library is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged property. Unattended items are subject to search, confiscation, and disposal.

10. Non-public areas are for staff only. Please respect that and refrain from entering staff-only areas.

11. Library phones are for the use of library staff. Library staff may make phone calls to arrange rides for patrons.

Behave in a manner that maintains a safe library environment.

The following behaviors are not allowed in library facilities or on library grounds:

1. Abuse or harassment of any kind, including engaging in activities that may result in intimidation, harassment, injury, or harm to library patrons or staff.
2. Staring at or following patrons or staff in a manner that reasonably can be expected to disturb them.
3. Sexually threatening or harassing other patrons, volunteers, or staff, including stalking, staring, lurking, inappropriate comments, offensive touching, and obscene acts such as sex acts or indecent exposure is prohibited.
4. Using or threatening to use any weapon or other object in such a manner that it may be considered a weapon.
5. Using, selling, or distributing alcohol, marijuana, or illicit drugs (controlled substances).
6. Vaping, smoking (including e-cigarettes), or using any tobacco products.
7. Engaging in activities or behavior that result in damage to library property is prohibited, including the vandalizing of any areas inside the library and on library grounds, or making any attempts to damage computer equipment or alter software configurations.
8. Bringing in personal items that will interfere with the use of space by other library users.
9. Bringing bicycles, shopping carts, or other large, wheeled conveyances inside library buildings is prohibited. Wheelchairs, strollers, and mobility devices are permitted if being used as transportation or as a mobility device. Skates, skateboards, collapsible scooters, hoverboards, and other similar devices must be carried while on library property.

The Library reserves the right to interpret and follow these rules and to make new rules in order to deal with new situations that might occur at the discretion of the Library Administration.

The Library also reserves the right to deny use of its facilities and premises to persons who do not abide by the Rules of Conduct. Library staff may ask persons who are exhibiting inappropriate behavior to modify their behavior. Noncompliance may result in the individual being banned from library premises, or in arrest and prosecution. Entering or remaining on the library premises during the period in which an individual has been banned from the premises is prohibited.

Behavior Management Matrix

Offense	Examples of Behaviors	Staff Response - 1st Offense	2nd Offense	Repeat Offences
<p>Prohibited Behavior</p> <p>A. Emergency Incident</p>	<p>Threat of physical violence to patrons or staff.</p> <p>Accessing illegal material on the internet (i.e.: child sexual abuse material).</p> <p>Other violations of law.</p>	<p>Call Police.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Ban for one year.</p>	<p>Call Police.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Extend ban as determined by Director.</p>	<p>Call Police.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Extend ban as determined by Director.</p>
<p>Prohibited Behavior</p> <p>B. Serious Incident</p>	<p>Harassment of library patrons or staff.</p> <p>Unsafe and hazardous behavior.</p>	<p>Call Police.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Ban patron for 90 days.</p>	<p>Call Police.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Ban for one year.</p>	<p>Call Police.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Extend ban as determined by Director.</p>
<p>Disruptive Behavior</p>	<p>Violations of this policy that are not prohibited by law and do not create an immediate threat or unsafe condition, e.g., disruptive behavior, excessive volume, or inappropriate language.</p>	<p>Give oral warning citing policy.</p>	<p>Ask patron to leave the building for the day.</p> <p>Provide copy of the policy.</p> <p>Log incident.</p>	<p>Escalate ban period.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Subsequent violations, ban determined by Director.</p>

<p>Unattended Children</p>	<p>Parent or guardian who is not staying with a child 10 years of age or younger.</p> <p>Child 10 years of age or younger who is left alone at the library by parent or guardian.</p>	<p>Give oral warning.</p> <p>Explain policy to the parent if present. Log incident.</p> <p>If parent not present, call Police. File Incident Report.</p>	<p>Parent and child must leave the library for the day.</p> <p>Provide copy of policy.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p>	<p>Ban parent for 30 days.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Subsequent violations, ban determined by Director.</p>
<p>Violation of Acceptable Use Policy for the Internet</p>	<p>Violations of Somerset County Computer & Internet Use Policy.</p>	<p>Give oral warning.</p> <p>Provide copy & explain policy.</p> <p>Patron computer session is terminated.</p> <p>Log incident.</p>	<p>Patron barred from computer & Internet use for 30 days.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Director may reinstate internet access before fulfillment of 30 days.</p>	<p>Patron barred from computer & Internet use for a minimum of 90 days.</p> <p>File Incident Report.</p> <p>Subsequent violations, access determined by Director.</p>

Incident reports or logs will be filed in all situations in which a patron is compelled to leave the facility.

Safe Child Policy

The Library is not responsible for unattended children. Parents and caregivers are responsible for supervising the actions and safety of children visiting the library.

Children ages 10 and under must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or parent-provided reliable caregiver, at least 13 years old, to protect the child at all times while in library facilities and on library grounds, as dictated by Maryland State Law. The library cannot assume responsibility for the safety of young children.

If children 11 years old or older are left unattended at closing and attempts to reach their parents, guardian or caregiver have failed, law enforcement will be called and staff will remain with the child until an officer has arrived.

If children 10 years old or under are left unattended at any time and attempts to reach their parents, guardian or caregiver have failed, law enforcement will be called and staff will remain with the child until an officer has arrived.

The Somerset County Library assumes no responsibility for children left unattended on library premises.