San Mateo
Public Library

Library Rules of Conduct Policy

[Revision Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees, 3/2/26]

The Library is a resource for all members of the community. Any behavior that disrupts the Library's ability to provide a safe and welcoming environment for the public and a supportive workplace for library employees shall be grounds for immediate action. Follow-up may include requesting person(s) to leave the Library; barring future services, including admission (temporarily or permanently); and calling the police.

Prohibited behaviors in the Library may include but are not limited to the following:

- Leaving personal items unattended
- Consuming food and beverages (other than liquid in a container with lid) outside of designated eating zones
- Sleeping
- Blocking entrances, exits, aisles, walkways, or stairways
- Bringing animals other than service animals inside the Library
- Entering the Library without wearing shoes or a shirt
- Strong pervasive odors
- Smoking on Library property*
- Not setting cell phones or devices on silent mode; and speaking or listening on cell phones or devices in spaces other than designated "phone zones"
- Leaving children unattended
- Using rollerblades, scooters, or skateboards on Library property**
- Soliciting or panhandling
- Using the restroom inappropriately, such as bathing or laundering
- Monopolizing Library space or resources including moving furniture
- Viewing obscene content on library computers or personal devices; or other violations of the Computer Use Policy
- Causing a public disturbance, which includes but is not limited to use of abusive or obscene language, talking loudly, or making excessive noise
- Disobeying the direction of a library staff member
- Harassment of any kind toward other library users and library staff
- Bringing bicycles (or any wheeled transport that cannot be folded and/or safely stored away) inside the Library
- Bringing large, oversized, or bulky sets of personal belongings that cannot be safely stored away
- Bringing personal items judged to be unsanitary, pose a health or safety risk, or disruptive to library operations
- Vandalizing or misusing furniture, equipment, or materials

To prevent the theft of Library materials, state law authorizes the detention for a reasonable period of any person using these facilities when there is probable cause to believe that the person being detained is unlawfully removing Library materials from the premises. Staff has legal authority to conduct a limited and reasonable search of purses, bags, parcels, briefcases and other packages if a patron does not voluntarily surrender unlawfully removed Library materials. (CA Penal Code 490.5)

* Library property includes outdoor areas adjacent to the Library building.

**If brought inside the library, scooters and skateboards must be carried; scooters must be in the folded position.

Enforcement of Violations

To ensure a safe and welcoming environment for the public and a supportive workplace for library employees, violations of the Rules of Conduct are enforced by Library employees with assistance by the San Mateo Police Department. Suspensions are determined by the type of infraction and are issued by the City Librarian. The suspension period will be contingent on the nature of the violation and the Library will consult with law enforcement officials and the City Attorney's office. The City Librarian reserves the right to make individualized determinations as to the appropriate level of enforcement.

Library staff will document instances of minor violations or behavioral misconduct. Staff may direct patron to leave the library if verbal warnings are not followed within the same day and patron will not be allowed to enter until the following day. A written warning will be issued by the City Librarian or designee if misconduct continues. A suspension (banning) letter will be issued by the City Librarian if the written warning is not followed.

For violations stemming from criminal activity, library staff will summon the San Mateo Police Department in response to criminal activity in the Library. A suspension (banning) letter may be issued by the City Librarian to the patron at the time of the arrest. Due to the egregious nature of criminal activity, a warning letter will not be issued.

Appeal Process

Suspensions may be appealed in writing to the City Librarian within seven days of receipt of the suspension letter. The appeal will be reviewed at the next scheduled Library Board meeting, during which time the suspension will remain in effect. The Library Board will decide if the suspension will be upheld, reduced, or extended. The Library Board's decision will be final. Library patrons whose library privileges are suspended cannot use any of the San Mateo libraries while serving a suspension.

Level One: Minor Violations-examples may include but are not limited to the following:

- Leaving personal items unattended
- Blocking entrances, exits, aisles, walkways, or stairways
- Sleeping
- Speaking on cell phone in areas not designated as phone zones
- Bringing animals other than service animals;
- Entering without wearing shoes/shirt
- Using rollerblades, scooters, skateboards on Library property
- Leaving children unattended

Suspension Period: If behavior violations at this level persist, a suspension letter may be issued for disobeying the direction of library staff (see level two violations below).

Level Two: Violations stemming from behavioral misconduct-examples may include but are not limited to the following:

- Soliciting or panhandling
- Viewing obscene content on library or personal computers/devices
- Using the restrooms inappropriately such as bathing and laundering
- Monopolizing library space and resources

- Use of profanity or threatening language likely to provoke others
- Disobeying the direction of library staff
- Harassment of any kind toward other users or staff

Suspension Period: Minimum 3 months suspension period but may be longer; suspension period is contingent on the advisement from law enforcement officials and City Attorney

Level Three: Violations stemming from criminal activity-examples may include but are not limited to the following:

- Theft of library materials or theft of belongings of other users or staff
- Vandalism of library property or personal belongings of other users or staff (enforcement of vandalism will require paying restitution for the damaged items)
- Possession and/or use of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Engaging in physical altercations such as fighting

Suspension Period: Minimum 1 year suspension but may be longer; suspension period is contingent on the advisement from law enforcement officials and City Attorney