

PUBLIC FAQ

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

What items will be available for me to check out?

You can place a hold for books, CDs, and DVDs

What is a hold?

A hold is a request that we put an item from our circulating collection aside for you at your preferred BPL location.

How do I place a hold for items?

Look for the "Place a Hold" button in [our catalog](#). If an item is not available to place a hold, it may be because that item either does not circulate, or because it is available via [Hoopla](#), in which all items are available immediately.

How do I know when my items are ready for pickup?

We'll send you a notification to the email address we have on file when your hold is ready for you.

If you aren't receiving your notifications, make sure we have your current email address by [logging into your account](#). Sometimes, these notifications get marked as spam. Make sure that emails from no_reply@bpl.org are on your whitelist.

Can we return our Library materials now?

Yes, but if you'd prefer not to, all due dates for items checked out before June 22 have been extended until September 1, 2020, and no fines will be charged to your account.

The book drop at the Central Library is now open. The branch book drops remain closed and you can only return items during the branch's open hours. Check www.bpl.org for updates.

Should I wash/clean my books before I return them?

No – in fact, please don't! We will quarantine your items for 72 hours after you return them before we check them in.

Note: That means the book will still be on your account for 72 hours after you return it, but we are not charging fines so there will be no charge.

I lost my library card! How do I get a replacement so I can pick up my items?

Email ask@bpl.org. We will create a new card for you and contact you when the card is ready for pick up.

How I do I renew my library card?

Call or email ask@bpl.org or call 617.536.5400 and we will help you do that over the phone or email.

I want to sign up for a library card!

For immediate access to our online resources, you can sign up for an ecard online at bpl.org/ecard.

For a physical card, please email us at ask@bpl.org or call us at 617.536.5400. We will mail a card to you.

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What if I want to pick up an item but I can't get to Central?

You can change the location of your hold. [Watch our short video \(opens a new window\)](#) to learn how to change the pickup location online.

If you have trouble changing the pickup location, visit any [BPL location](#), call us at [617.536.5400](tel:617.536.5400), or email us at ask@bpl.org, and we'll try to help you.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Do I need a mask / face covering to pick up my hold?

Yes.

Will the BPL provide masks for the public?

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide masks to the public.

Are you going to clean each item that is returned?

To ensure the safety of our patrons and staff, all items will be quarantined for 72 hours before returning to circulation.

Will staff wear masks when handling materials?

Yes.

What safety measures is the BPL taking to keep patrons and staff safe?

We are quarantining all returned materials for 72 hours. Staff are wearing masks, washing their hands frequently and wearing gloves when necessary when handling materials. All of our spaces are being regularly cleaned and disinfected.

AT THE LIBRARY

May I come into the library if I'm not picking up a hold?

Unfortunately, the only service we are providing right now is for pick-up of pre-existing holds. Please visit <https://www.bpl.org/explore/?tag=from-your-home> or call us at 617.536.5400 to find out about our online services.

Can you help me find a new book when I'm at the library?

While we are not currently offering in person Reader's Advisory services, you can call 617.536.5400 and we will try to assist you over the phone. If the line is busy, please leave a message and we will call you back as soon as possible.

You can also get book recommendations by visiting bpl.org/shelf-service, and our librarians will email you a list of books.

Can I place a hold in person at the library?

We are not currently placing holds in person, but we can certainly help you over the phone. Please call 617.536.5400 and press 1 and we will assist you. If the line is busy, please leave a message and we will call you back as soon as possible.

Are printing/copy/scanning services available?

Not at this time, but we are working on a way to safely offer this service in the near future.

Are your bathrooms open?

Our bathrooms are not open at this time. We apologize for the inconvenience.

Can I donate my books to the Library now?

Thank you for your generosity, but we are not accepting donations at this time.

IN THE FUTURE

When are you going to go back to normal operations?

Right now, our greatest concern is keeping our patrons and staff safe. We will be taking our lead from City, State, and public health officials, who will let us know when they believe it is safe to reopen.

When will Community Rooms be available?

Our top concern is keeping our patrons and staff safe. We will be taking our lead from public health officials as we consider opening additional library services.

When will programs restart?

We have a vast array of programs that are currently running online. Visit the main page of our web site to find out more!

What about summer reading? For adults? For children?

Summer reading is still happening! For more information visit bpl.org/summer

When will Art & Architecture tours start again?

Our top concern is keeping our patrons and staff safe. We will be taking our lead from public health officials as we consider opening additional library services.

OTHER QUESTIONS

I'm not comfortable leaving the house yet, but I don't want to lose my hold. Can you help?

Yes! We can put your holds into "inactive" status. [Here's how you do it.](#)

I'm sick and I can't return my items on time. What should I do?

Feel better soon, and don't worry -- we are not currently charging fines. Just return your book when you are able to. Currently all materials are not due before September 1, 2020.

Note: That means the book will still be on your account for 72 hours after you return it, but we are not charging fines so there will be no charge.

How do I know my item isn't spreading COVID-19?

Our staff are following strict health protocols for handling materials, but if you are concerned, you can quarantine your items for 72 hours in home before enjoying them.