

Hays Public Library: A Parent's Guide to Your Child Using the Library

Congratulations! A library card is your child's first "passport" to a world of information. At Hays Public Library (HPL), we are proud to be a space where curiosity is encouraged and lifelong learning begins.

As your child transitions into using their own card, this guide will help you understand our shared responsibilities and how the library functions as a public institution.

1. Access to the Full Collection

When your child receives a library card, they gain access to the **entirety** of our resources.

- **One Collection for All:** Per the American Library Association's (ALA) **Library Bill of Rights**, we do not restrict access to materials based on a user's age. This ensures that a child researching a complex school project or pursuing a high-level hobby has no barriers to the information they need.
- **Open Navigation:** While the Children's Department is on the second floor, the **adult collection is on the main floor and in the basement**. Please be aware that library staff do **not** police the building or restrict children from browsing the collections throughout.

2. Labels as "Wayfinding," Not Ratings

You will see stickers on books like "Graphic Novel," "Young Adult," or "Mystery."

- **The Purpose:** These labels are for **wayfinding** (helping you find where a book is shelved).
- **The Policy:** The ALA states that labels should not be used to "prejudge" content. Therefore, these stickers are not ratings (like movie or video game ratings). They do not indicate that the library has vetted the book for "appropriateness." Only you, the parent, can decide if a book aligns with your family's values.

3. Inclusion is Not Endorsement

The library is a "marketplace of ideas." We provide materials and programs that represent a vast range of viewpoints to serve our entire community.

- **Neutrality:** Inclusion of an item in the HPL collection or a program topic is a commitment to **intellectual freedom**. It is not an endorsement by the library of the views, lifestyles, or content within that item or program.
- **Your Role:** We encourage you to be an active participant in your child's library experience and to discuss the materials they choose to borrow and programs they attend.

4. Safety & The "9+ Unattended" Policy

The safety of our young patrons is our highest priority, but it is important to understand the limits of library supervision.

- **Unattended Age:** HPL policy allows children **age 9 and older** to be in the library without a caregiver.

- **Not an Endorsement:** This policy is a minimum safety guideline, **not a recommendation** that every 9-year-old is ready to be alone. Every child's maturity is different; being "allowed" to be alone does not mean the library suggests it is the best choice for every child.
- **"In Loco Parentis":** The library does **not** act *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent). Staff are focused on library services and cannot provide childcare, monitor who a child speaks to, or prevent them from leaving the building.

5. Privacy and Responsibility

- **Confidentiality:** Under Kansas law and library ethics, a patron's borrowing record is confidential. We recommend that parents and children maintain an open dialogue about what they are checking out.
- **Civic Duty:** Help your child understand that library materials are "community property". Taking care of them and returning them on time ensures that their friends and neighbors in Hays can enjoy them too.
- **Locating Children:** Out of an abundance of safety, the physical location of a child will not be disclosed over the phone. There is no way for a staff member to verify the identity of the caller. Messages may be relayed, but again, the confirmation of the child's presence will not be disclosed.

6. Internet Access and Public Computers

- **Filters:** In compliance with the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and state regulations, the library institutes a filter on all HPL computers. Filters are no replacement for adult supervision. Some content that may be deemed inappropriate by some may not be blocked.
- **Public Computers:** Adults are asked not to use the public computers on the youth floor unless they are accompanying a child.

Parent/Child Checklist for Solo Visits

If you decide your child (age 9+) is ready to visit HPL independently, review this checklist together:

- **The "What If" Plan:** Does your child know to find a staff member with a name tag if they feel uncomfortable or need help?
- **Emergency Contact:** Does your child have your phone number memorized or saved?
- **Building Layout:** Does your child know where the various collections are located in the library and have they been told your expectations for where they should stay?
- **Conduct:** Does your child understand that they must follow the **Patron Code of Conduct** (using indoor voices, no running, and being respectful of others)?
- **The Exit Plan:** Does your child know exactly when and where they are being picked up? (Please remember that children should never be left waiting outside after the library closes.)

Hays Public Library Contact Information

- **Address:** 1205 Main St, Hays, KS 67601 | **Phone:** (785) 625-9014 | **Website:** hayslibrary.org
- **Hours:** Mon–Thurs: 9am–8pm | Fri: 9am–6pm | Sat: 9am–5pm | Sun: 1pm–5pm