

12 Ways to Utilize Resources at the Public Library

I may be a little biased because I have a master's degree in library science, but I love the public library. There are so many resources. Helpful librarians are there to help you find what you need. And it's all free!



Some people don't even set foot in the library, and many don't know what's there. Here are several ways to use your local library that you may not have thought of, and which could help save you money. My library is in a fairly large city, so your library resources may vary, but it doesn't hurt to check!

- **The obvious resource is books, but not just fiction.** Are you interested in a new hobby? You'd be surprised at how many useful books the library has. Just recently I decided to find out more about web design. I found an amazing book at the library and read it for free.
- **DVDs and VHS tapes.** My library has a great selection of movies that are available for a free three-week checkout. I don't use Netflix or Blockbuster anymore, I just look for a movie on the library website, request it, and I'm usually viewing it within a week or two. The newest releases are scarcer, but if you don't mind watching a movie after it's been out a while, this resource is amazing.
- **Exercise, Dance, and How-To videos.** I thought these DVDs and VHS tapes were worth mentioning separately. Do you need a new workout? Your library may have a collection. What about learning how to do something? My library has 'how-to' videos, including topics as diverse as belly dancing, home improvement, and getting through pregnancy.
- **Books on CD or tape.** I don't use this resource anymore because my car stereo is broken. But my commute time used to be a perfect chance to learn a new skill (like learning Spanish), learn about a new topic (like world history), or just catch up on a fiction book I haven't had time to read.
- **Music.** Most libraries have a good collection of CDs you can check out in just about every genre. It's a great way to explore all kinds of music for free.
- **Download books to your computer or mp3 device.** Some libraries have a program where you can "check out" books by downloading them and listening to them on your computer or mp3 player. Definitely take advantage of this if you can.
- **Inexpensive books, music, and videos.** Many libraries sell used library items that have been donated or that the library no longer needs. You can find books, music, and DVDs for a great price.
- **Free Internet and computer use.** Back when I was without the Internet and looking for a job, this resource was worth its weight in gold. Some libraries don't even require you to have a library card to use the computers.
- **Free classes, lectures, and movie showings.** There is always something interesting going on at the library. Try going to a lecture at the library sometime instead of going out to the movies. It could prove to be more fun, and it's definitely cheaper!
- **Study.** The public library is a great place to study. It's quiet, there are several desks or comfortable chairs, and many libraries even have study rooms where you can study with

a group. For a student or someone who needs a quiet place to work for a few hours, this is a useful resource.

- **Story Time.** If you have small children and have the time to take them to Story Time, it is well worth the effort. The kids get to interact with others, learn songs and games, and have fun. They also get more exposure to reading and books.
- **Teen Programs.** If your teens are looking for something fun to do during the summer, many libraries are updating their programs to appeal to teenagers. Fun classes, crafts, activities and movie showings are just some of the resources out there.

Have I convinced you yet that the library is worth checking out? Perhaps you are already a library enthusiast. What resources do you use at your local library?