



Tip of the Month – January 2018 Estimated Fines, and How Fines Are Calculated

Staff may sometimes get a question from a patron about how much fine they currently owe on unreturned material. They may not be able to renew the material, but are unsure if they want to keep the item longer and continue accumulating higher fines. It is possible for staff to see the current estimated fine for an unreturned item in the Checkout (Circulation Desk) function in Sierra.

Another confusing topic is how fines are calculated in Sierra, taking into consideration grace period and days the library is closed. This Tip of the Month also provides some details about how fines are calculated.

Viewing Estimated Fines:

1. To view estimated fines for overdue materials a patron has checked out, go to the Checkout (Circulation Desk) function, and search/display the patron's record by barcode, name, etc.
2. Go to the Checked Out Items tab, and change the pulldown on the right above the list of checked out items from "All" to "Overdues and charges." Only overdue items then display.
3. The estimated fines will display in the status column for items still checked out and not within the grace period of the loan. The amount is the overdue fine that would be assessed if the item were checked in today. Please remember the fine can be different tomorrow because of how the grace period works in calculating fines (see below).

Check Out	0	Checked-Out Items	Cancel	Clear Selection	Mark Used Items	Mark Unused Items	Change	Overdues and charges	
Checked-Out Items	12	All	#	Barcode	Call Num	Location	Title	Due Date	Status (\$25)
Holds	0		1	30050045901716	DS71 .R33 2015	bhsk	Ancient Assyria : a very short introduction / Karen Radeer.	10-27-2015	\$1.00
Fines	\$0.40		2	38512001443316	939.402 RIZ	gaanf	The Assyrians and the Babylonians : history and treasures of an an...	11-12-2015	\$0.60
Check In	0		4	36059001265598	636.7 WMIOGRAD	seanf	Redemption : the myth of pet overpopulation and the no kill revoluti...	11-17-2015	\$0.20
Linked Patrons	2		5	38514000876959	636.755 DEL	ejstk	The pit bull placebo : the media, myths and politics of canine aggre...	11-18-2015	OVERDUE
ILL	1		6	38513000528479	NF 636 FDS	gesik	I'm a good dog : pit bulls, America's most beautiful (and misunders...	11-18-2015	OVERDUE

How Fines Are Calculated in Sierra:

When adding an overdue fine to a patron's record, the system first calculates the overdue period (the number of days or hours for which to fine the patron), then calculates the amount to fine the patron. When the amount of fines the patron owes exceeds \$4.99 (the PrairieCat uniform threshold), the system blocks the patron.

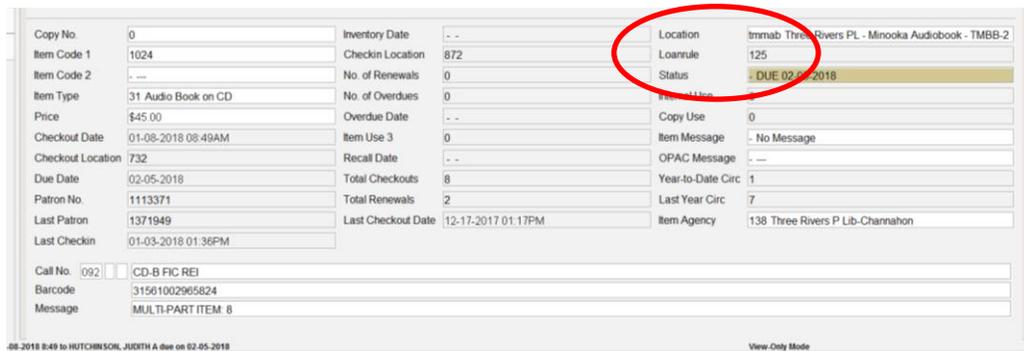
Calculating the Overdue Period (number of days or hours):

1. Sierra counts the number of days (for daily loans) or hours (for hourly loans) an item is overdue. To do so, the system first compares the checkin or renewal date (and time for hourly loans) to the value in the item's **DUE DATE** field. If the checkin was backdated, the system substitutes the backdated date for the checkin date.

- Due to PrairieCat's chosen settings, Sierra use the Checkout location (not the item's owning location) to determine the number of days closed and hours within the overdue period. Sierra examines the Days Closed table (and Hours Open table), and in calculating days overdue, subtracts days the checkout library is regularly closed, or closed for a holiday or other special closing. For hourly loans, Sierra subtracts the hours where the checkout library is closed.

Calculating the amount to fine the patron:

- Once the number of days or hours overdue is determined, Sierra then determines the loan rule under which the item circulated. The loan rule is specified in the item's LOANRULE fixed field.



The fine rate is specified in the loan rule in Sierra, e.g. \$.10/day.

- Sierra then determines whether the overdue period exceeds the grace period. Most loan rules in PrairieCat have a one day grace period (the standard, uniform policy). If the overdue period is less than the grace period, no fine is assessed. If the overdue period is greater than the grace period, the system continues to calculate an overdue fine. Note that after the grace period has elapsed, the patron is fined retroactively, starting from the due date.
- Sierra then multiplies the number of days or hours overdue times the fine rate, taking into consideration the grace period, to determine the fine.

Here is a sample calendar with some examples:

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 Library Closed	2	3 Item's Due Date	4 Holiday	5 1 day grace period / 1 st day overdue	6 2nd day overdue	7 3rd day overdue
8 Library Closed	9 4th day overdue	10	11	12	13	14

- Item is due on the 3rd, and library is closed on Sundays and on the 4th for a holiday.

- If item is returned on the 5th, within the one day grace period window, no fine is assessed because the holiday is also subtracted in days overdue.
- If item is returned on the 6th, the grace day is ignored, but the holiday is subtracted, so item is two days overdue. Two days of the fine rate are assessed.
- If item is returned on the 9th, the grace day is ignored, but the holiday and the Sunday are subtracted, so item is four days overdue. Four days of the fine rate are assessed.

This is why it is important to keep your library's Days Closed table entries up to date for regular days of the week, holidays or other special closings. Send your holiday closings to PrairieCat staff at least annually, or open a Help Desk ticket to add special closings or adjust your regular library days closed schedule.

If you have any questions about fines, please contact Judy Hutchinson, Gail Lien or John Slanicky.