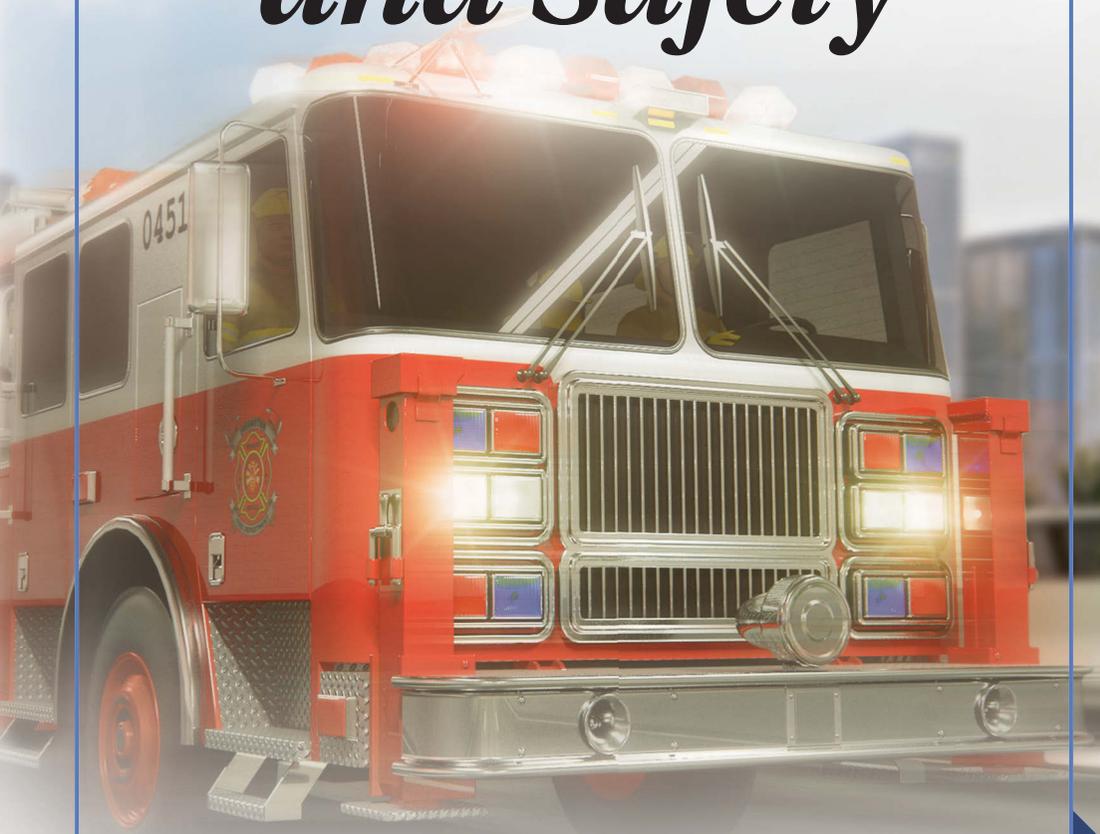


LIFE
SKILLS
HANDBOOKS

Community Resources *and Safety*



Local Resources | Getting Help
Resources for Citizens | Safety

Local Resources

Our communities are filled with local resources. Some focus on education and literacy. Others help keep people healthy. A few are for recreation. These resources can help enrich your life in many ways.



A Wealth of Free Resources

Matt is excited to be going to college. He wants to become a pharmacy assistant. It will take two years to get his degree. But after that, he is sure to get a good job. That is what his dad's friend Amir told him. Amir is a pharmacist and knows the job market well.

While going to school, Matt will have to cut back his hours at work. Working fewer hours will mean earning less money. He has saved enough to pay for college. Still, Matt will have to reduce what he typically spends on food and entertainment each month.

One of the ways Matt plans to cut back is in buying books. He loves to read. But buying new books is expensive.



Matt decides to visit the public library. He learns he can check out books for free. Getting the newest or most popular books will require signing up on a waiting list. But a librarian tells him that the wait time usually isn't more than a week or so.

During one of his trips to the library, Matt sees a poster about activities at a local park. There are concerts throughout the summer. All of them are free. The poster lists other free events too. These include an art fair, a food festival, and a farmers market.

Matt never knew there were so many things to do in his community. The fact that they are free is an added bonus.



Chapter 1

Schools and Libraries

Hani is 16 and goes to the local high school. She is excited to join clubs and play sports. In her home country, there was not enough funding for schools. Few children got a full education. Now she wants to learn as much as she can.

Because she loves to read, Hani decided to volunteer at her community's public library. She's impressed by all the services the library offers.

"It's about more than just books," Hani told her mom. "The library is about sharing information, ideas, and entertainment."





Funding Local Resources

Who pays for the local resources like schools and libraries? You do! Take a look at your next paycheck. There, you'll see some money deducted from your overall earnings. These are taxes. State and federal taxes pay for a wide range of services offered by the government. Such services include schools, parks, and libraries, along with police and fire departments and even the military.





Public Schools

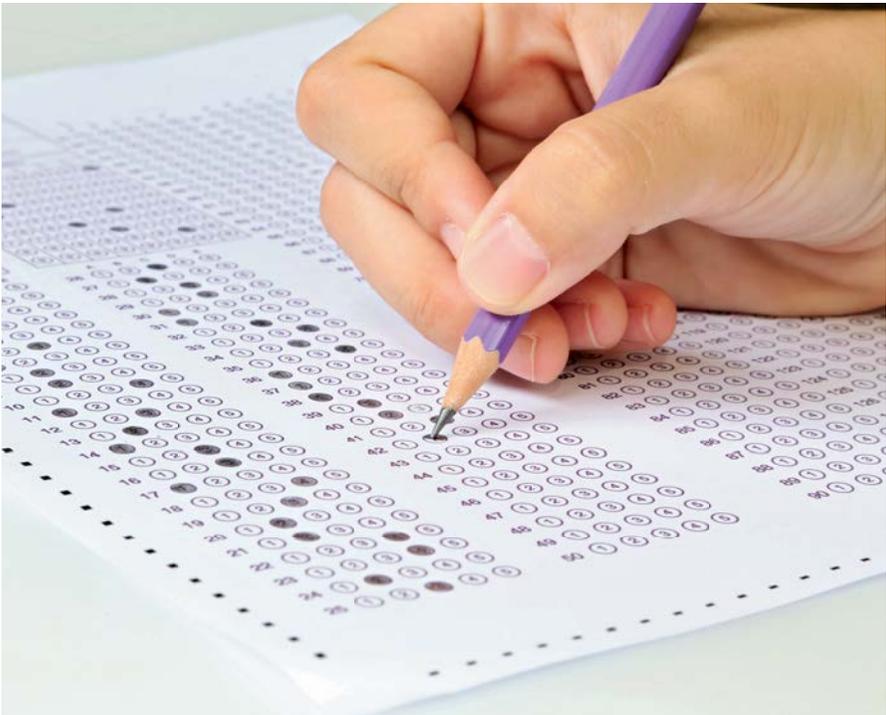
Public schools are centers of learning in our communities. They may be funded by local, state, or federal governments. Free general education is offered for children in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Children start in elementary school. This is usually kindergarten through fifth grade. From there, they move on to middle school for fifth or sixth through eighth grade. This is sometimes called junior high.



Finally, teens attend high school. Ninth grade, or freshman year, is a big transition for many students. Classes get more challenging. There are more sports and clubs to join as well. Tenth grade is sophomore year. Students may start to take advanced placement (AP) classes. These help prepare them for college.

Eleventh grade, or junior year, is often the most academically **rigorous**. Classes tend to be more difficult. Students may also take on more **extracurricular** activities. If they plan to attend college, this is the year to start studying for and taking placement tests. These may include the SAT and ACT exams. With senior year, or twelfth grade, comes college applications and campus tours. Those hoping to work after high school may take on part-time jobs to get more experience in the real world.



Preparing With Preschool

Before children start elementary school, many are enrolled in programs to help them learn and develop important social and early academic skills. Here are a few programs children in the U.S. may attend:



- **Day Care:** Serves children ages six weeks to five years. Learning is often centered around play to help build social and emotional skills.
- **Preschool:** Serves children ages two to four years. Kids begin to learn the foundations of reading and math, often through play-based activities.
- **Pre-K:** Serves children ages four to five years. Similar to preschool, a pre-K program builds the foundations of learning. However, pre-K is specifically designed to help students prepare for kindergarten and often focuses on more structured learning.
- **Head Start:** Serves children ages three to five years. Head Start is a special program dedicated to helping children prepare for school. Families must meet certain criteria to be eligible for this program.





Charter Schools

Charter schools are another kind of public school. However, they are independently run. This means they do not have to follow many state **curriculum** rules. Often, charter schools focus on certain areas of learning. Some may concentrate on college prep. Others may focus on the arts or STEM education.





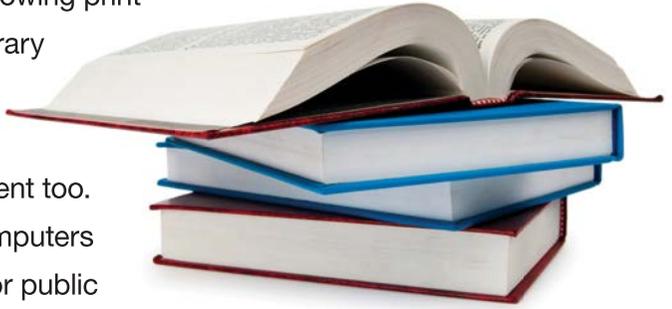
Students have to apply to charter schools. If more students want to attend than there is room for, a school will have a **lottery** to decide who gets in. Regular public schools do not do this. Any student who lives within district boundaries is allowed to attend school.

Schools offer even more to their communities. Many public schools offer night classes for adults. Some are used as **polling places** during elections. They provide entertainment such as concerts and plays too. Community members may also enjoy watching student sporting events like football, basketball, and baseball games.



Public Libraries

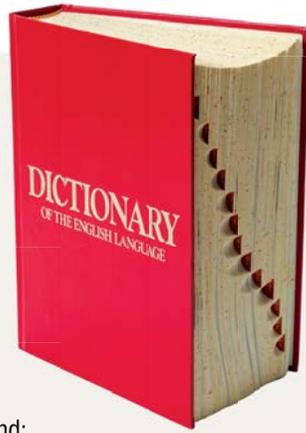
You don't have to be a big reader to use your local library. As Hani discovered, public libraries offer a variety of resources and services. These may include borrowing print books and eBooks. Library patrons can check out movies, music, and other digital entertainment too. The library also has computers and printers available for public use. Many offer online classes for adults. They also may offer story time and other programming for children. Some libraries have spaces for meetings and events as well.



What's in the Reference Section?

A library's reference section contains resource materials that are packed with information. These materials usually can't be checked out. Reference librarians can guide people to the information they need and show them how to use these resources. They're often available to help in person, over the phone, and online. In the reference section, you'll find:

- **Print resources:** Dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, guidebooks, manuals, newspapers, magazines, academic journals, directories, and other printed materials
- **Electronic resources:** Computers with internet access, searchable online databases, free access to thousands of online reference materials
- **Government documents:** Tax forms, the Congressional Record, census records, immigration documents, and other references published by local, state, and federal governments





Making the Most of Your Local Library

Your local library is a great place to catch up on the latest best sellers. But libraries have much more than just books. Want to get the most out of this valuable community resource? Follow these simple tips:

- Visit your library's website. Here you'll find out more about their services, resources, and guidelines.
- Browse the digital catalog. Most libraries now have digital offerings, such as eBooks and magazines, available to download straight to your phone or tablet.
- If you don't already have a library card, get one. Visit a library branch in your community and ask to fill out an application. Bring along a photo ID and proof of your current address.
- Check the community calendar for events, meetings, training sessions, and other free activities.
- If you have any questions about the services available at your library, just ask a librarian. Librarians are there to help you.