NEWS LESSON

What Should You Be Able to Borrow from a Library?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What would you borrow if a library lent more than books?
2. Would you try a new hobby if you could borrow all the equipment?
3. Which thing do people buy and hardly ever use?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**conservation**	☐
2	**pollinators**	☐
3	**drought-resistant**	☐
4	**naturalist**	☐
5	**stakes**	☐
6	**psychological**	☐
7	**residents**	☐
8	**extension**	☐

A	connected with the mind and feelings
B	the people who live in a place
C	able to live through long periods without rain
D	insects that carry pollen from one flower to another
E	a person who studies plants and animals
F	what you might gain or lose if something goes wrong
G	the protection of nature and wild places
H	something added to make a thing bigger or longer

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

At the Anythink Nature Library in Colorado, a library card can borrow a tent, a camera or binoculars. What else should a library lend?

1 On the shelves of a new Colorado library, you can borrow a tent, a wildlife camera or equipment for looking at the stars. Borrowing means someone can try camping, birdwatching or stargazing without buying anything first. The Anythink Nature Library, opened in Thornton in August 2026, extends the library's traditional promise beyond books and information.

2 Alongside a conventional collection of tens of thousands of items, the library provides approximately 850 nature-focused equipment kits. The building stands on a 15-acre site next to open land, with gardens, walking trails and spaces designed for practical exploration. Children can scramble over boulders or play in mud, while adults can learn about drought-resistant gardening, wildlife photography or stargazing. Solar panels and a geothermal heating and cooling system reinforce the environmental purpose of a public building that treats the outdoors as an extension of its reading rooms.

3 The strongest argument for the project emerges in the experiences of its visitors. One mother borrowed an outdoor camera and navigation equipment, allowing her young son to explore and photograph insects and flowers. Another family used gardening materials to plan a garden more welcoming to pollinators. Parents who felt intimidated by camping described how borrowing equipment lowered the financial and psychological stakes of trying something new. The library does not promise to turn every visitor into an accomplished naturalist. It offers a manageable first encounter with activities that might otherwise remain out of reach.

4 That distinction matters. Access to public green space is often discussed as though the presence of a park or trail were sufficient. In practice, enjoying the outdoors can require money, transport, time, appropriate clothing and a sense of belonging. Families working long hours, older people with limited mobility and city residents unfamiliar with rural environments may come up against very different obstacles. Anythink's director, Mark Fink, has emphasised that nature need not be synonymous with remote mountains or lengthy camping trips. It can begin with learning the names of birds visiting a garden.

5 There is an environmental argument, too, although it deserves a little caution. Direct experience of wildlife may encourage people to value conservation more deeply, and borrowing shared equipment can cut down on individual purchases. Yet the relationship between environmental knowledge and behaviour is not automatic. Owning fewer objects is useful only if the lending system is accessible, maintained and well used. The library's success will depend not merely on an impressive building and an inventive catalogue, but on whether residents continue to return and discover practical value in the service.

6 At a time when public libraries are frequently required to justify their existence, the Colorado experiment offers a more expansive definition of what they provide. Its central innovation is not the tent itself but the removal of a threshold. A person can try camping without buying equipment, learn to recognise local birds without first becoming an expert, or explore a garden without owning one. The institution remains recognisably a library: a place where resources are shared so that opportunities need not belong exclusively to those who can afford them.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer implies that having a park nearby does not guarantee everyone can enjoy the outdoors. T F NG
2. The writer is certain that lending equipment will reduce what individuals buy. T F NG
3. Local residents have criticised the library's opening hours. T F NG
4. The library's long-term success partly depends on people coming back to use it. T F NG
5. The writer regards the tent itself as the library's greatest innovation. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

accomplished **expansive** **intimidated** **reinforce** **reluctant** **scramble** **synonymous** **threshold**

1. The new policy was meant to _____ the message that public services belong to everyone.
2. Luxury is not always _____ with comfort.
3. Removing the application fee lowered the _____ for first-time applicants.
4. Many first-time hikers feel _____ by the sheer amount of gear on offer.
5. Hikers had to _____ up the loose slope on hands and knees.
6. The museum took an _____ view of its role, hosting concerts, classes and markets.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The long-term _____ of the scheme depends on community support. (SUSTAIN)
2. Knowledge of wildlife can seem _____ to people who are struggling to pay the rent. (RELEVANT)
3. Public spaces are only valuable if their _____ is real, not just formal. (ACCESS)
4. A lending scheme succeeds only if borrowers return items _____ . (RELY)
5. Careful _____ of the equipment keeps the scheme affordable. (MAINTAIN)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At this level, check the logic first. Some words take a noun phrase, some a clause, and some start a new sentence. Is the link concessive, conditional or contrastive?

albeit	lest	nonetheless	notwithstanding	provided	thereby	whereas

1. _____ the occasional damaged item, lending schemes of this kind tend to run smoothly.
2. The first month was a modest success, _____ one that surprised the sceptics.
3. Wealthier households can simply buy a tent, _____ others must weigh every purchase.
4. A lending scheme can widen access, _____ it is properly maintained and well publicised.
5. The scheme cannot guarantee a lasting love of nature. _____ , it removes a real obstacle.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should every neighbourhood be able to borrow?
2. Would you lend something you loved to a stranger through a library?
3. What would turn a library into a place you wanted to spend time?

9 Role-play: borrow it or buy it?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who wants to buy

You want to go camping next weekend. You plan to buy a tent. Explain why owning one feels better, and ask your friend about any problems with borrowing.

Student B · the friend who suggests borrowing

You know a library where you can borrow a tent. Persuade your friend to try borrowing first. Answer their worries and say what you'd do together.

Useful phrases

I was thinking of buying a tent.

Why don't we borrow one first?

What if it's already taken?

That's a fair point, but it's cheaper.

I'd rather try it before I spend money.

Okay, let's give it a go.

Afterwards, tell the class: did your friend decide to borrow or to buy, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 D · 3 C · 4 E · 5 F · 6 A · 7 B · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 reinforce · 2 synonymous · 3 threshold · 4 intimidated · 5 scramble · 6 expansive

6 Word forms

1 sustainability · 2 irrelevant · 3 accessibility · 4 reliably · 5 maintenance

7 Language focus

1 Notwithstanding · 2 albeit · 3 whereas · 4 provided · 5 Nonetheless

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