



Buskers' Code

We welcome you to perform in London, the world's most popular city! If you're busking in Greater London please use this code and you shouldn't experience any problems. It has been created by street performers, the Mayor of London, councils, businesses and the police to promote good relations and a vibrant street culture.

On this page you'll find details about performing in Greater London, guidance on **Resolving Problems** and a section on the **Law and Enforcement**.

If you have any questions about street performance in London, you can email info@buskinlondon.com

What is busking?

Busking is an art form that is practised by professional artists, amateur performers and those who are just starting out. Buskers put a lot of thought and effort into their act, they give a performance, entertain the public and receive tips in return.

Busking includes circus, dance, magic and street theatre shows as well as music, living statues and others. The three main types are:

Shows

Large shows attract a large audience. Small shows attract a smaller audience. People stop and watch for around 10 to 60 minutes.

Music Acts

Music acts can be soloists or groups. Audiences tend to stop and watch for a few minutes.

Walk-by Acts

Walk-by acts can be living statues, writers, close contact jugglers and other types of street theatre that are enjoyed whilst walking-by.

Where to busk

- Busking is legal on public land and there are lots of great places to busk in London.
- All pitches operate differently. Chat to local buskers to get the lowdown.
- If you trying out a new area, talk to local busker, businesses and traders. You are less likely to get a complaint.
- Let people get past. There should be space to push a piano past you *and* your audience - even at busy times.
- If your audience blocks a doorway, market stall, pavement, ATM or loo, please stop and clear the blockage! You may want to try a bigger pitch or adapt your act for a smaller audience.
- If there isn't a suitable space, wait for one to become free. Ask other buskers if there's a queue you can join.
- If a performer is waiting for your pitch please share it. On really popular pitches this could mean sharing after one hour or less.
- Avoid sound clash! Acts involving sound should have lots of space between them.

Your Performance

- Your performance will have an impact on people nearby. Please be aware of this and be willing to move or adjust your performance if necessary.
- Please don't cause offence or humiliation.

Sound

- The biggest cause of complaints is sound. Sound can travel a long way and go high into the air. Many busking locations are surrounded by flats, shops, offices or hotels. Because the people inside can't walk away, please make sure your volume doesn't bother them.
- As a rule - keep your volume *just* above the level of background street noise and check that it is not distorted.

- Please don't repeat music in the same location. Acts with varied content are much more popular.
- Some sounds have a big impact on people. If your act has loud, bass heavy or percussive sounds, please monitor your volume regularly, vary your music and limit your time at each location.
- Keep backing tracks unobtrusive and turn them off when you're not performing.

Equipment

- Make sure no-one could trip over your equipment.
- Never leave equipment unattended.
- Keep it safe! (particularly if your act involves anything risky (e.g. fire, knives, high wire, unicycle, diabolo, juggling).
- Please don't cover your face (e.g. by wearing a mask) as this puts people off talking to you if there is a problem.
- If you use fixtures such as furniture, lamp-posts or railings, or you draw on the ground, please get permission beforehand and make sure nothing gets damaged.
- Please keep the pitch clean and tidy-up afterwards.

Collecting Money

- Performers can accept donations but the public must never feel obliged to pay.
- You can give away CDs or other items, but you cannot charge a fee for them. To sell items for a fee you need a street trading licence.

If you are collecting for charity you'll need to apply for a permit.

Anyone wishing to collect money for charity while busking must obtain a permit. The Metropolitan Police issue permits for street collecting on behalf of all London boroughs (not including the City of London).

They will also be able to answer all your queries about Christmas Carol singing collections.

Resolving Problems

Talking with the performer is the starting point for solving all busking related problems. Unless there is an imminent risk to the performer or others, they should be given the chance to change their performance so that it follows the Buskers' Code.

Enforcement action should only be taken once the following steps have been taken:

- **STEP 1** - Don't wait until you're irate! If a performer or group is causing a problem it can usually be resolved quickly and amicably by talking. Where possible, wait for a suitable break before talking to the performer(s). Introduce yourself and explain the impact that their performance is having on you. Ask the performer if they know about the Buskers' Code and refer them to Busk in London website.
- **STEP 2** - If you have spoken to the performer(s) and the problem continues, please contact your local authority. This might be via an on-street warden/officer or by calling council hotline. They will decide what steps to take, which may be enforcement.

The Law and Enforcement

Is busking legal?

Yes - busking on public land is legal in most places. However, there are some exceptions:

- The **London Borough of Camden** has introduced a bylaw that requires acts with music or amplification to have a busking licence. If you perform without one you could be arrested and have your equipment seized.
- **Uxbridge Town Centre** in the London Borough of Hillingdon has introduced a bylaw that requires all acts using the four town centre pitches to have a busking licence. If you perform without one you could be arrested and have your equipment seized.
- The financial district of the **City of London** (known as the Square Mile) allows performers but does not allow money to be collected in public places.
- **Some parks and squares** have bylaws that don't allow busking.
- **Private land** owners may have their own policy on busking and you may require permission from the landowner. It is often hard to tell private from public land, so please check with a local warden or business or contact Busk in London if you are unsure.
- **Private busking schemes** that have entry requirements, such as auditions, permits or licences, include: the **London Underground Busking Scheme**; some pitches at **Covent Garden**; and the **Southbank Centre Busking Scheme** (between the London Eye and Hungerford Bridge).

Anti-social behaviour

- If your behaviour is unreasonable and you are having a persistent, detrimental effect on the quality of life of people in the area, you will receive a verbal warning.
- If you carry on, you could be issued with a formal warning letter, followed by a Community Protection Notice under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014).
- If you breach the notice, you could be fined or have your equipment seized.

Noise nuisance

- If you use amplification after 9pm you could be charged under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.
- If a sound is causing a persistent, detrimental effect on a person's quality of life, it could constitute a noise nuisance. If you are the cause of this sound and receive complaints you may receive a Noise Abatement Notice under the Environmental Protection Act (1990). If you breach this notice, you could be fined or have your equipment seized. The most common causes of noise complaints are: volume at an unreasonable level; playing the same music repeatedly; not moving regularly.

Obstruction of the highway

- If you or your audience block people's path you may be causing an obstruction and told to stop. If you carry on you could be charged under the Highways Acts (1980).

Intimidation or conflict

- If anyone is breaching the peace or intimidating others the police will take action. The person could be charged under the Public Order Act (1986).

Begging

- Busking shouldn't be confused with begging. Buskers put a lot of effort into their act, give a performance and entertain the public.