

Just the ticket

With so many different choices of rail tickets, it is sometimes hard to know if you are buying the most suitable one for your journey. Passenger Focus is the official, independent voice for passengers and we want to make sure that you get the best value from your rail travel. This information briefly outlines your options, gives you some handy hints and tips that may help you when buying a rail ticket and points you in the right direction to get further information should you require it.



Is your ticket right for the journey?

STEP ONE

Be clear about what you want

Make sure that you are clear about your requirements. Do you need to be at your destination at a certain time or do you have to travel on a particular day?

What is more important to you: the cheapest ticket, the fastest journey or the flexibility to catch any train?

The time of your journey

- Most train companies define their services as 'peak' and 'off-peak', and offer fares which can be used during peak times alongside other fares which restrict your travelling times. If you avoid travelling during the peak period, generally your ticket will cost you less. There are usually a morning and evening peak, Monday to Friday. For specific times contact National Rail Enquiries or the train company directly for details.

Example: A return ticket from Manchester to London costs around £66 off-peak but around £260 or more in the peak.

Avoiding the peak can save you money!

Advance tickets

- Advance tickets can also save you money. With this type of ticket you must specify the dates and times of your outward and return journeys. (Remember this means you lose the flexibility to travel on any train.) They are subject to availability and may not be available on all trains.

All Advance tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Advance booking can save you money!

A specific train or route

- On some routes/journeys you will have a choice of which train company you can use or the route you can take.

By restricting yourself to travelling on specified trains or by specific routes you can save money on your ticket, but you may not be able to change the journey once booked and restricted refund conditions may apply.

Example: Several train companies run services between London and Birmingham, some on different routes and from different stations. The journey time varies between the routes from 80 to 150 minutes; also some trains have catering and some do not. The price at peak times on one company can be more than double on another company.

Being specific can save you money!

Ticket type	Buy	Travel
Anytime	The ticket choice for turn-up-and-go travel in the peak	No restrictions
Advance	Advance tickets can be purchased up to 6pm the day before travel – subject to availability	For travel on a specified date at a specified time
Off-peak	These tickets can be purchased immediately before travel but restrictions will apply at peak times	Can be used on any off-peak train, Monday to Friday. There are no restrictions at weekends or on Bank Holidays

STEP TWO

Special fares and discounts

There may be other ways to reduce the cost of your journey

- **Group fares** While all train companies offer reductions for groups of nine or more people, some train companies offer discounts for groups of three or four people (e.g. GroupSave). They can be cheaper than buying separate tickets for each person, but you must all travel together.
- **Add-on fares** Some train companies offer fares which include the cost of bus, tram, ferry or other city public transport. They can be cheaper than buying tickets for each element separately.
- **Rail Rovers** These tickets allow you to make as many journeys as you like on specified parts or all of the rail network for a limited period (usually for periods of between one and 15 days). Peak-hour restrictions apply to some Rail Rovers.
- **Special offers** Train companies sometimes have special discounts for a limited period. These are usually advertised in the press and at stations. You



Are you eligible for a discount?

can also get information on deals to be had from train companies' telesales or websites.

- **Season tickets** If you are travelling over the same route on a frequent basis it may be cheaper to buy a season ticket. These can usually be purchased for any seven-day period or any period between one month and a year. Season tickets can include travel by other modes of transport, such as the Underground and offer an unlimited number of journeys.

STEP THREE

Basic tips for travelling

Ask questions!

Do not hesitate to ask

- Would it be cheaper if I travelled at a different time or on a different day?
- Does another train company run trains to my destination and offer a cheaper ticket?
- Is it cheaper to buy two single tickets for each one-way journey rather than a return ticket?
- Is it cheaper to buy an Advance ticket for each journey direction than an Off-Peak or Anytime return?
- Am I eligible for a Railcard? How much would it reduce the cost of this journey?
- Do you offer small group fares?
- Do I need to make a reservation?



- What if I do not use the ticket? Can I get a refund?
- Can I split my ticket – buy a series of tickets to different stations along the route to get a cheaper price?

Buy the ticket before boarding

Unless there are no available booking facilities or working ticket machines at the station, most train companies require you to buy your ticket before boarding the train. If not, you may not be able to benefit from any reduced fares nor use your Railcard for a discount. In some parts of the country you could be charged a penalty fare if you travel without a valid ticket, authority or permit to travel.

Travelling restrictions

Ensure that you travel on the correct train according to any restrictions and conditions which apply to your ticket.

If in doubt, ask.

STEP FOUR

Can you save more?

Railcards

Many different Railcards are available. They give you a discount on the price of most tickets. Restrictions may apply to the times the discount can be used and the tickets you can purchase with your Railcard (e.g. a 16-25 Railcard cannot be used to buy a reduced-price first-class Anytime ticket). A minimum fare may apply on tickets bought with some Railcards – check before you buy.

National Railcards include:

- **16-25** Also for mature students in full-time education
- **Senior Railcard** for passengers aged 60 or over
- **Disabled Persons Railcard** for passengers who are eligible
- **Family and Friends** for up to four adults travelling with up to four children
- **Network Railcard** for travel on specific routes in the South East of England and covers up to four adults and four children.

Other regional railcards are available. For example, a London and South East Annual Season ticket entitles the holder to discounts on some journeys (known as

the Gold Card discount).

The saving you could make when buying a ticket for just one journey could cover the price of a Railcard.

You can buy Railcards at staffed stations, online or at or rail-appointed travel agents (except the Disabled Persons Railcard for which a special form can be obtained at stations or by writing to: Disabled Persons Railcard Office, PO Box 163, Newcastle NE12 8WX). Evidence of eligibility and identity are required and for a 16-25 Railcard or Senior Railcard, a passport-style photograph will be needed.

Forgotten your Railcard? Forget the discount! Remember you must take your Railcard on any journey you are making or you will probably be charged the full fare or penalty fare.



Ask a staff member if you're unsure about what ticket to buy from a machine

STEP FIVE

How can I get information?

National Rail Enquiries for information on train times, fares, service alterations due to engineering work and up-to-date information in case of disruptions:

Phone **08457 48 49 50**

Textphone **0845 60 50 600**

Welsh-language service **0845 60 40 500**

Web **www.nationalrail.co.uk**

Phone **0871 200 22 33**

Minicom **0870 841 2216**

Web **www.traveline.org.uk**

Train companies Most train companies run telesales offices and websites. It can be useful to check company websites to see if special offers are available. However, they may only give information about their own services. To ensure you get the best deal it is worth checking first with National Rail Enquiries.

For more help and advice about getting the right ticket for your journey or any other rail issues, contact us at:

info@passengerfocus.org.uk



Ticket office staff will give you impartial information unless the ticket office window/counter is clearly marked as dealing with only one train company's services.

The Traveline gives you information about planning your entire journey. This includes buses, trains, ferry and coach information:

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Disclaimer: All information is correct at the time of going to press. The information contained in this leaflet is intended as a guide. Specific information relating to individual journeys or ticket conditions should be addressed to the relevant train operating company.