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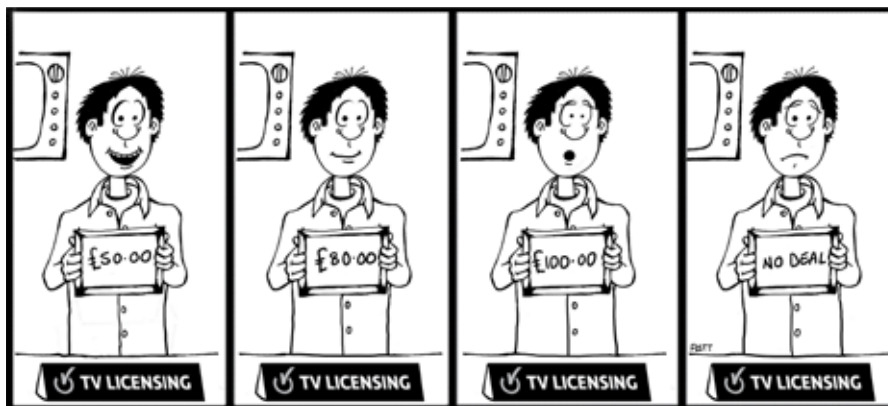


**Ask
TV Licensing**

No TV Licence? What's the excuse...

To help those that may find it difficult to pay in one go, we offer a range of ways to pay – all of which can be set up quickly and easily online at www.tvlicensing.co.uk or by calling 0300 790 6112.

We would always rather people pay than risk prosecution and a fine, so we're urging advice organisations to help ensure people know when they need a licence and which of the many ways to pay might suit them best. If your organisation works with people who have questions about TV Licensing and need further information, do get in touch with the TV Licensing community relations team on 020 7544 3116 or via campaignoffice@tvlicensing.info. The team will be happy to provide you with training presentations, leaflets and other materials to help you advise your clients.



"I've got no licence because when I called TV Licensing they refused to barter with me."

Haggling, incontinent animals and the plain daft top this year's list of excuses

When it comes to the most implausible excuses given over the last 12 months for not having a TV Licence, it's been a top year for tall tales.

Alongside the usual attempts to blame relatives or animals, bizarre logic and a lack of common sense rule the list of pretexts offered to TV Licensing's enquiry officers this year.

Some of the excuses collected by TV Licensing over the last 12 months included:

- **No deal:** "I've got no licence because when I called TV Licensing they refused to barter with me. Everything should be up for negotiation."
- **Don't work with animals:** "My house was invaded by a squirrel which weed on my TV, so now it doesn't work properly."
- **Downright dim:** "I don't watch the television; I just use it as a light in the dark."

No matter how creative people get with their excuses, watching or recording programmes as they are shown on TV without a licence is against the law.

When do you need a licence?

Whatever equipment you use – whether a TV set, laptop or mobile phone – if you are watching programmes at the same time as they are shown on TV, you need a licence.

Anyone in doubt about when a TV Licence is or isn't needed can easily check by visiting www.tvlicensing.co.uk/info or by calling 0300 790 6112.



Before we see you in court



Peter Sandles is a TV Licensing court presenter and has presented thousands of cases before magistrates. Here he talks through the contact that someone who has received a summons will have already had from TV Licensing.

The level of licence fee evasion is currently around 5.2% – representing £196 million of lost income to the BBC. Every week hundreds of ‘evaders’ are prosecuted and fined in court, but there is a lengthy process of mailings, telephone and text message reminders before someone gets called before a magistrate.

TV Licensing is constantly working to make sure people understand when they need a licence. In addition to the direct communication that people receive, TV Licensing communicates the licensing requirements through the media and working with money advice groups, housing associations, councils and community centres across the UK.

Every suspected offender is dealt with on a case by case basis. Their record is taken into account: as with many offences, this may slightly affect the timings of reminders and the amount of warnings we send. Regardless of the record however, anyone being prosecuted will have had several communications from TV Licensing and should fully understand the situation before they reach court.

When an address is shown as unlicensed on our database, we:

- Send a number of reminder letters to the address
- Call the person directly, if we have their telephone number

Members of the Payment Card scheme (which allows people to spread the cost of their licence into small payments) start to receive these mailings if they haven’t brought arrears up to date within an absolute minimum of 66 days following a missed payment.

If these reminders prompt no response, then an enquiry officer will visit the

property to clarify the situation. If the officer establishes that someone is watching programmes whilst they are shown on TV but does not hold a valid TV Licence, the officer will:

- Carry out an interview under caution
- Advise the person to buy a licence and explain the various payment options

If TV Licensing decides to prosecute, it is then down to my colleagues and to represent TV Licensing in court. Magistrates determine how to progress cases, judging each on its individual merits, and determine the appropriate fine if necessary.

We know it can be difficult for some people to pay, and we don’t presume guilt when we see an address is unlicensed. But the best advice I would offer people who are either struggling to pay, have received warnings or a summons is this: please don’t hope the situation will go away. Contact TV Licensing with any questions or a Citizens Advice Bureau if you need advice.



The latest ways to pay

Over 97% of households have a television and there are over 25 million TV licences in force in the UK.

Everyone's different. Of those 25 million, some people choose to pay for their licences by direct debit, some pay by card online. Others go to a PayPoint outlet, some still put a cheque in the post. Many people choose to spread the cost of their TV Licence into weekly or fortnightly payments using a Payment Card.

We do all that we can to try and make paying for a TV Licence as easy and convenient as possible. Two of the most recent additions to the 'ways to pay' include paying by SMS (text message) and the e-licence. Here's what they are in a nutshell.

Paying by text

The humble text message is now 18 years old. Text messaging has come a long way in those 18 years, with nearly 100 billion messages sent every year in the UK alone – a staggering 11 million every hour.

Mobile phone users who pay for their TV Licence via a Payment Card (see below for a reminder about what

this is) can now choose to pay using a simple SMS. Already 35,000 people every month are doing so, and a further 681,000 have opted to receive text message reminders telling them when their TV Licence payment is due.

The e-licence

As with many other bills, charges and costs, people can buy their TV licence online at www.tvlicensing.co.uk. In total, 2.1 million licences were sold on the internet in 2009/10.

To make things simpler, people can now opt to receive an electronic e-licence instead of a licence through the post. e-licences can be emailed to you on renewal, and can be viewed online by logging in on the website, or customers can print it out if they wish for their own records. In total, 1.1 million e-licences were sold in 2009/10, compared to 886,000 the previous year – an increase of 20%.

We've also taken steps to improve our website and make it more useful for licence holders. Over the last year more than 10 million visits to the site led to 1.44 million people requesting information and 578,000 changing their details – for example their name or address.

Remind me: what's the Payment Card?

The Payment Card allows people to spread the cost of their TV Licence into weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments. Those payments can be made by cash or a debit/credit card at any one of over 22,000 PayPoint outlets across the country, as well as by phone, online or via text message.

At www.tvlicensing.co.uk you can

- Buy a licence
- Register a change of address
- Make a payment on a cash scheme
- Change your bank or Direct Debit details
- Download a range of leaflets
- Apply for a concession
- Ask a question





Ask TV Licensing

TV Licensing's Community Relations team speaks to hundreds of organisations every year to help make sure people understand when a licence is needed and how to pay. As part of a regular feature, we answer the questions we get asked most frequently by advisers. Have a question you need answering? Email us at campaignoffice@tvlicensing.info or call us on 020 7544 3116.

Q: A client doesn't watch TV, so doesn't need a licence. What should they do?

If someone doesn't need a TV Licence they should let us know so we can update our records. People can let us know either by calling us on 0300 790 6063 or by filling out an online declaration form at www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

When someone lets us know that they don't need a TV Licence, an Enquiry Officer will visit just to double check that no licence is needed. Once confirmed, we won't contact the person again for two years.

Remember though that not having an actual TV set might not necessarily mean someone doesn't need a TV Licence. Whichever equipment

you are using, if you are watching programmes at the same time as they are shown on TV, you need a licence. So, for example, you might need a licence if you watch programmes online as they are being shown on TV.

Q: Does a university student living away from home need a licence? What if their parents have one?

In general, if you live in halls of residence and use a TV in your own room, you need your own separate TV Licence. Similarly, if you are sharing a house with other students and have a separate tenancy agreement, you would need your own licence if you use a TV in your room.

If you have a separate tenancy agreement but a television is only

being used in a communal area, then only one licence is required for the property. Only one licence would be required if you have a joint tenancy agreement.

In most cases, a parent's TV Licence will not cover a student living away from home, but there are however certain circumstances when it will. Whatever TV equipment is being used, if it is powered by its internal batteries rather than being not installed or plugged into the mains supply, a licence will not be required.

If anyone is unsure about if they or their son or daughter need a TV Licence while at university, best advice is to call 0300 790 6090 to talk it through.

Ways to pay There are several ways to pay for a TV Licence

Direct Debit

Phone 0300 790 6063 to set up a monthly, quarterly or annual Direct Debit payment. Direct Debit is now used by the majority of customers and it's now also possible to set it up online by visiting www.tvlicensing.co.uk/info

Debit and Credit Card

Call 0300 790 6063 in order to pay by debit or credit card. This facility accepts payment from a range of debit cards including Maestro/Switch and Delta. You can also pay online at www.tvlicensing.co.uk/info

By Post

Send a cheque made payable to TV Licensing to: TV Licensing, Freepost BS6689, Bristol BS1 3YJ

Over-the-counter

Make payments in person at one of over 22,000 PayPoint outlets around the UK. Go to www.paypoint.co.uk/locator to find your nearest outlet. To find out about using PayPoint to make payments under a cash payment plan, call 0300 555 0300.

TV Licensing Savings Card

The TV Licensing Savings Card is designed to help people save towards the cost of their next TV Licence in small, manageable amounts. People can make a payment at any time, either online, by text, at any PayPoint outlet or over the phone. Call 0300 555 3434 for further information.

Useful numbers

Direct Debit and credit card enquiries	0300 790 6063
Change of address notifications	0300 790 6065
Cash payment plan enquiries	0300 790 6078
Requests for TV Licensing literature	0300 790 6022
Minicom facility	0300 790 6050
Over 75s enquiries	0300 790 6073
National Debtline*	0808 808 4000

* National Debtline is an external telephone advice service not run by TV Licensing

TV Licensing contact details

TV Licensing, 6th Floor, 77 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SR
Tel: 020 7544 3116 Fax: 020 7242 4202

Your Feedback

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of In Brief, and we would welcome your views on both its current design and content. Please tell us the kind of TV Licensing stories you would find useful and interesting, and whether any other improvements could be made.

You can contact us on 020 7544 3116, or at campaignoffice@tvlicensing.info

We look forward to hearing from you.