



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL



The Ipswich Good Busking Guide

What is busking?

“Busking” is performance of music, singing, dance, street theatre, circus skills, and art in public spaces to entertain, interact with the public and to also receive voluntary payments.

Ipswich Borough Council welcomes busking in our town. Busking can help our town centre be a livelier place and create a pleasant atmosphere. Research shows that buskers also increase footfall and sales to nearby businesses.

Welcoming buskers and providing a supportive environment for street performers fits with Ipswich Borough Council's work to promote arts, music, culture and creativity.

Busking is also one way for local artistes and performers to demonstrate their talent and gain exposure. This helps support local cultural activities and many top performers, started out by busking.

You do not need a licence or permit to busk in Ipswich unless you are collecting for charity. You can busk on public land, for example, a street (but not in our parks).

This guide will help you busk safely and enjoyably and will also help local businesses and residents to work with buskers to resolve any problems.

This guide is intended to set out a standard which, if followed, will enable busking to continue to thrive whilst protecting businesses and residents.



Guidance for buskers in Ipswich

Engage with the surrounding community.

A positive culture can be created if everyone is open to dialogue. By speaking with one another politely and directly we can prevent problems before they start - being open to reasonable compromise and sharing space fairly goes a long way.

Introduce yourself to those around you before you start busking, for example nearby shops and market traders. Let them know what you do and how long you will perform for. Encourage people to talk to you if they have any issues with your performance (for example, if it is too loud). This is very effective at creating a positive atmosphere for you to perform.



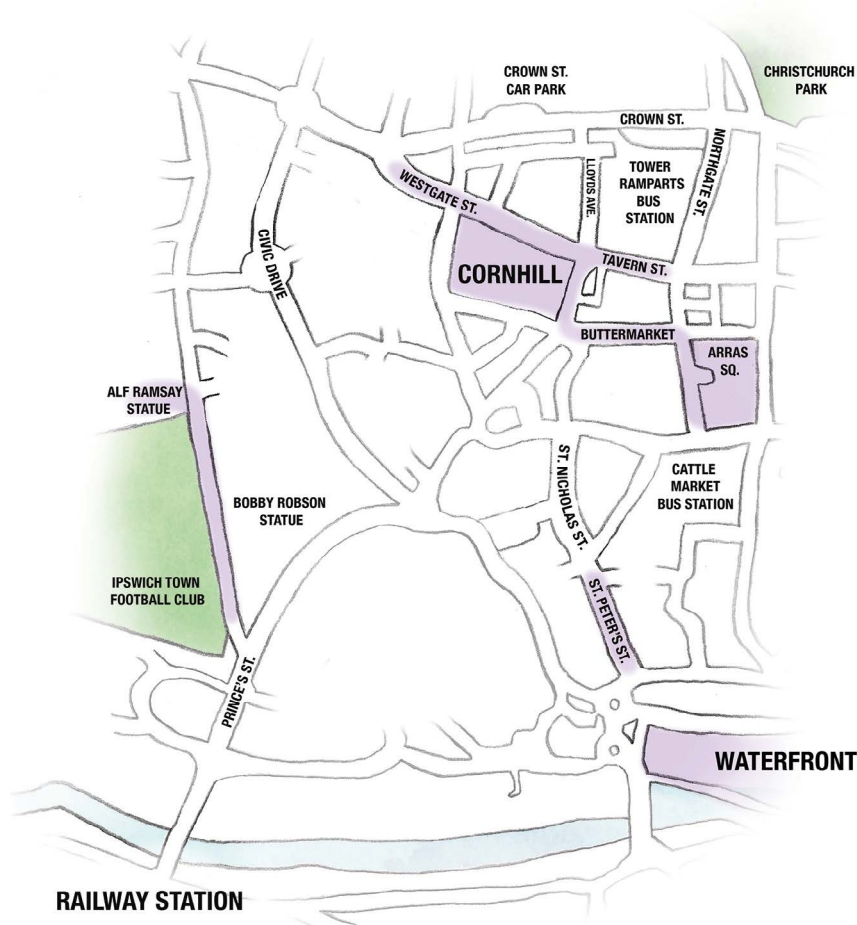
Where to busk in Ipswich

You can busk on public land (but not in Ipswich's parks because it's against local byelaws), but please consider potential effects – Ipswich town centre is an important part of the local economy and community. Poor quality or unreasonable busking can lead to meetings being disrupted, rooms having to be taken out of use, customers taking their business elsewhere and is annoying for people nearby. Please avoid busking in residential areas unless there are other events going on there.

Please be aware of your location - who and what is around you - don't set up near other performers and please keep at least 100 metres away from other buskers. Talk to other buskers nearby before you set up.

Be sensitive about performing near businesses and residents (for example if there are flats nearby or above shops) and choose your pitch carefully. Keep away from ATMs because it is important that people using them do not feel overlooked. Do not block entrances to buildings or fire exits.

Experience shows that **these are the better places** for busking in Ipswich town centre: The Cornhill, Westgate Street, Tavern Street, Arras Square, The Buttermarket, and St Peter's Street. The Waterfront, (normally a noise sensitive area), when events are taking place there. Musical performances near the Bobby Robson and Alf Ramsay statues outside Ipswich Town Football Club's ground on match days can also be good.



Where to busk in Ipswich

The Cornhill is a good place for busking, but quite often there are pre-booked events there. If an event is taking place, please do not busk on the Cornhill and stay at least 100 metres along Tavern Street or Westgate Street. You will be asked to move if your performance affects a booked event. You can ask at the Town Hall Reception Desk whether there are any events booked on the Cornhill. Also, there are often weddings in the Town Hall on the Cornhill; check with the Reception Desk so please keep your volume down if a wedding is taking place.



If there is a busker performing somewhere you want to play, wait for a suitable break in their performance then politely ask them what time they are playing until and if they would be willing to share or swap places. We encourage buskers to swap pitches because it enhances the creative atmosphere and provides variety for your audience and we also recommend buskers perform for a maximum of 120 minutes in the same place if another busker wants to use the pitch you are on.

If another busker is playing loudly and it affects your performance, please politely ask them to reduce the volume.

If you are waiting at a place and not performing, and another busker comes along, wishing to play on it, work together to reach an agreement.

Places for busking do not “belong” to any buskers.

When to busk

The law prohibits the use of amplification after 9pm and before 8am.
If you are busking on a Sunday, please do not do so before 10am.

About your Performance

Performances which are too loud and/or which involved repeated tunes will cause complaints about your act. Please keep your volume down and also vary your repertoire.

Intrusive noise levels. Noise from a high volume, long duration or repetition makes the lives of nearby businesses or residents more difficult.

There are no specific rules on volume levels or on use of amplification, but **please keep your performance at a reasonable volume** so that it has a positive effect on your surroundings and people rather than a negative effect.

A musical busker's sound must not disrupt the lives of people living or working nearby. A busker needs to be heard above the level of background noise, but the volume should be just above the level of street noise. **Please turn your volume down if you are asked to.**

Carry out simple sound checks to gauge responses as you go – please ask your audience, other buskers or nearby businesses whether you are playing too loudly.

Know your equipment - certain sounds carry more than others and some sounds are more intrusive than others, for example brass instruments, amplifiers, bagpipes and percussion instruments. Some locations amplify sounds more. It may be reasonable to take more breaks and move pitches or to turn your amplifier so it faces down a street rather than directly across towards a shop.

If you use an amplifier, please have it behind you so you know how loud it is and also so it doesn't cause an obstruction for passers-by.

If you use an amplifier, it should be battery powered and you must not use a petrol or diesel generator.

Please play a variety of tunes and do not repeat tunes you have already played in the same place. Buskers who play a few tunes repeatedly are likely to annoy people and get complaints. Build your repertoire; vary songs, styles and tempos to keep things interesting for your audience and you'll also earn more!

If you use backing tracks, please make sure these are not left running when you are not performing. Please think about the position of any amplifiers or loudspeakers.

Sound can travel a long way; please be aware of this.

Don't be offended if someone asks you to make a reasonable change to your performance.

Be willing to compromise - if someone is negatively affected by your performance, be open to making reasonable changes such as turning down an amplifier, playing different tunes, moving a short distance or changing the direction you're facing.

Excessive amplifier volume can distort sound which many people find uncomfortable; turning down the volume can improve your performance so more people enjoy it

Please ensure your performance is suitable for all ages because we want everyone to enjoy it.

Collecting Money

People can give you tips either by cash, card and/or QR Code.

If you sell merchandise (e.g. CDs) you must have a Street Trading Licence issued by Ipswich Borough Council. You can give people merchandise but you must make it clear that if they wish to pay, these are voluntary donations and they can choose how much (if anything) to pay you.

You must not collect money for charity without a Street Collection Permit issued by Ipswich Borough Council.

Children and young people

It is against the law for anyone under the age of 14 to busk on their own but we welcome performances by children supervised by responsible adults

Keeping everyone safe

Maintain public safety and access - make sure that people can move past your performance easily. Make sure that people can't trip or fall over your equipment. It is your responsibility to make sure that your audience is well managed. If there are any access or safety concerns you must immediately stop performing until the issue is resolved; if necessary ask spectators to move on. Also keep an eye on your audience so that you know they are safe.

Signs and equipment should be small and minimal and must be moved with you.

The town centre is well covered by CCTV and some people feel more secure if a performance is near a camera.

We recommend you use a large, sturdy item for collecting cash, like a bucket or instrument case which you can watch. Please take care and be aware of your equipment and earnings. Some buskers like to attach their collection item to a fixed object and to also regularly reduce the cash in it.



Performances with fire and/or blades

If fire is used in your act you must carry out a fire risk assessment. There is advice on the Home Office website.

A wet towel, fire blanket and water mist extinguisher must be easily accessible and stored close-by in the performance space. Keep your performance at least 8 metres away from people, buildings or flammable materials.

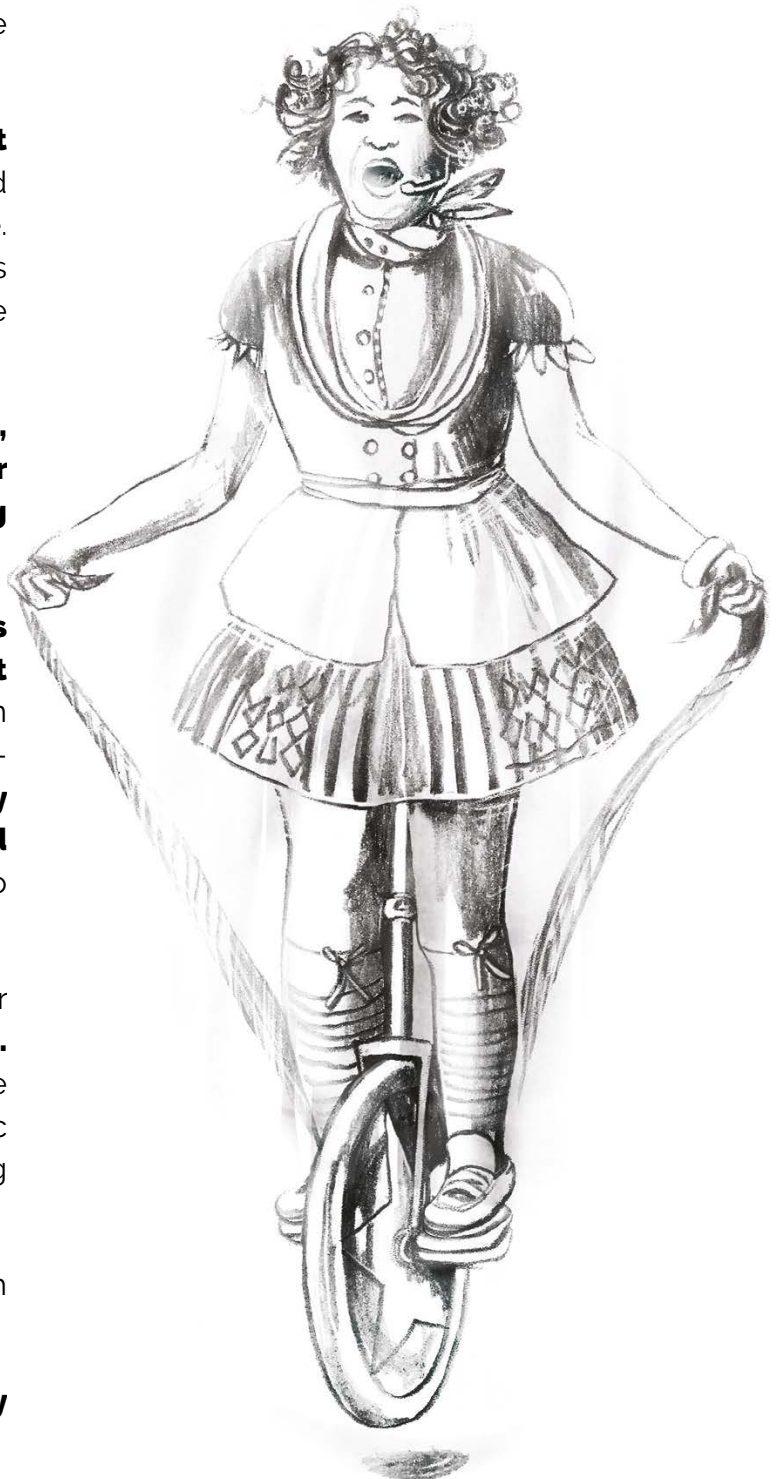
Any fuel used must be a minimal amount, low flash and stored in a closed container which is specially designed for holding fuel.

Potentially dangerous **props such as blades or flammable items must be stored out of reach and sight from the public.** When dangerous items are involved in the performance, child volunteers cannot be used. **Any fuel or other chemicals must be cleaned up** and a suitable cover put on the ground to protect it.

Blades can be used in a performance however **they must be blunt and handled with care.** There must be a good distance between the performer and the audience and the public must not be used as part of an act involving blades.

Equity, the performers' trade union has health and safety guidelines for such acts.

Animals must not be used as part of any performance.



Guidance for the public and local businesses

Resolving Issues

We aim to help everyone solve problems quickly and easily on the street and in a mutually respectful manner. Effective enforcement powers are available as a last resort to deal with any individual who persistently causes a negative impact by acting unreasonably or causing a nuisance. In most cases the busker will not know that they have caused a problem and will want to resolve it quickly and amicably.

Step 1

If it is safe and practical you should approach the busker directly. Please wait for a suitable interval in their activity because interrupting a performance is unlikely to lead to a productive dialogue! Politely explain what your issue is, (for example, volume level, repetitive or poor quality music, or obstruction) and try to reach a fair and friendly compromise. You can draw their attention to this guide and/or give them a copy.

If the issue persists, speak to a member of staff at Ipswich Town Hall, (in normal working hours ask for the Duty Officer on 07920 845893) who will assist in remedying the situation.

Step 2

If a compromise cannot be reached then please call 01473 432000 (out of hours, call 01473 433444) or email environmental.health@ipswich.gov.uk. Where possible, an Ipswich Borough Council officer will attend that day to try and resolve the problem by assessing the situation and suggesting solutions. The busker will be advised how to busk more reasonably.

Step 3

If the problems continue and the Council believes a busker is acting unreasonably and causing a noise nuisance, the Council will collect and assess evidence from the affected people and can take formal action which can include a Noise Abatement Notice under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and possibly also other action to stop unreasonable busking including seizing equipment and instruments.

Please note: Polite interactions are much more likely to produce positive outcomes. If we all abide by this guide, busking makes for a happier town centre and a better experience for buskers and people in the town centre.

If a performance has abusive or obscene content, please contact the police.

Enjoy busking in Ipswich!

**Have you found this guide helpful?
We would love to hear about your
experiences of Busking in Ipswich, please
leave a comment or message by
e-mailing busking@ipswich.gov.uk**

The Ipswich Good Busking Guide

This guide was produced with the help of many people including staff from Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Central, Suffolk Police, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Suffolk County Music Service, Keep Streets Live, Musicians Union, Equity, Incorporated Society of Musicians, Ipswich Arts Association, Spill Festival, Peppery Productions, Stephen Foster, Eastern Angles, Brighten the Corners, local musicians, performers and businesses.

Ipswich Borough Council links

[Street trading consents | Ipswich Borough Council
– licensing@ipswich.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@ipswich.gov.uk)

[Environmental Health – Ipswich Borough Council](#)

Useful resources

<https://keepstreetslive.com/>

<https://musiciansunion.org.uk>

<https://www.equity.org.uk/>

<https://www.ism.org/>

Copies of this guide are available here

