

LIBERTY'S PRACTICAL PROTEST GUIDE



PROTEST ON CAMPUS

YOUR RIGHT TO PROTEST ON CAMPUS

Everyone has the right to protest and organise protests. Universities are considered public authorities for the purposes of the Human Rights Act – they are therefore required to act compatibly with your human rights under the ECHR. This does not include private universities.

LAW ENFORCEMENT BY STAFF

Every university will have a campus security and safety team. University security staff are not police – generally, they do not have the same level of law enforcement powers. They have some powers that can be exercised by accredited staff, like issuing fines.

CHALLENGING YOUR UNIVERSITY

If you believe that your protest activity or human rights have been unfairly restricted or that you were discriminated against by your university, you should contact a solicitor specialising in public and human rights law to explore a potential legal challenge.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME?

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS



Write key numbers on your arm (preferably under a sleeve). Include an emergency contact, the number of the Green & Black Cross Protest Support line, and the number of a solicitor who you might want to contact if you are arrested. See 'Who I should contact' at the bottom of this document for numbers.

A MOBILE PHONE AND CHARGER



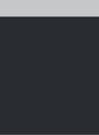
If possible, bring an old phone with essential numbers on it. If arrested, the police have the power to take your phone and search it for evidence. Make sure it is locked with a passcode and switch off any facial and fingerprint unlocking technology.

NOTEPAD AND PEN



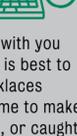
Bring a notepad and pen to keep notes of any issues and the shoulder number of police officers you interact with.

WATER AND SNACKS



Bring water and snacks as you may be out for longer than you think (and may be caught in a kettle for several hours).

MEDICATION



Keep a copy of emergency phone numbers and any medical information that someone may need to know. Keep medication that you may need (preferably in a prescription bottle) including inhalers if you are asthmatic.

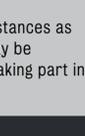
EXTRA CLOTHING & ESSENTIALS



Dress for the weather and bring warm, dry clothes if protesting during the winter months. You can also bring hand sanitiser, earplugs and first aid supplies.

PROTEST PLACARDS, SIGNS AND BANNERS!

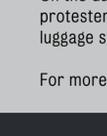
Tell the world why you are protesting! Banners, signs and placards are an important part of protests.



Find out more information on rules around placards, particularly on what counts as placards causing "harassment, alarm or distress".

AVOID BRINGING

VALUABLES



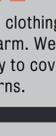
Do not bring anything valuable with you that could be lost or broken. It is best to leave jewellery – including necklaces earrings and bracelets – at home to make sure they aren't lost, damaged, or caught on anything.

CONTACT LENSES



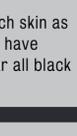
It is advisable to bring glasses with you instead of contact lenses, in case you are arrested. Tear gas is not often used in the UK, but contact lenses can make the effects of tear gas worse.

SHARP OBJECTS OR GLASS



Avoid bringing items that could be seen as a weapon if you are arrested. This could be sharp objects, a pen knife or a glass bottle.

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES



Avoid bringing any illegal substances as there is a chance that you may be arrested or searched when taking part in a protest.

LAWS TO BE AWARE OF

"LOCKING ON" DEVICES

The Public Order Act 2023 makes it a crime to "lock on". This is when you attach a person or an object to anything else.



It is now also a crime to be "equipped for locking on". This is when you carry an object and intend for you or someone else to lock on with it.

For example this could be a bike lock or padlocked chain.

On the day of the King's Coronation, six Republic protesters were arrested because police believed their luggage straps were 'lock on' devices.

For more information on this visit [our website](#).

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

NON-DISTINCTIVE

Wear non-distinctive, comfortable clothing and shoes. It is best to cover as much skin as possible, even if the weather is warm. Wear dark colours if possible, and if you have distinctive markings or tattoos, try to cover them. The general advice is to wear all black or gray, with no logos or no patterns.

WEATHER APPROPRIATE

Prepare for being outside for longer than expected. If it is warm weather, bring a hat and sun cream. If it is cold weather, bring extra layers and gloves. Always bring a waterproof – this is the UK and it can be useful for sitting on should you need.

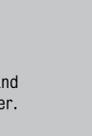
SAFE AND PREPARED

Bring a face mask, especially if you are at a higher risk of catching infections. If you can, make sure the mask is non-distinctive.

If you are on your period, wear pads instead of tampons as it may be difficult to access a toilet, and keep a spare on you.

LAWS TO BE AWARE OF

FACE COVERINGS



A uniformed police officer can tell you to remove any item they reasonably believe you are wearing to hide your identity, and take the item away from you.

But they can only do this if authorised by a senior officer (inspector or higher) who reasonably believes offences will be committed in the area and this is necessary to stop them happening.

That authorisation must be in writing, signed by the senior officer, and say the reason, location and time period.

INTERACTING WITH THE POLICE

FILMING THE POLICE

You are allowed to film and take pictures of the police (e.g. when observing or intervening in a stop and search or arrest or interactions with the police generally).

The police have no power to stop you (except in very specific circumstances), but they may try to prevent you through misinformation, abuse of power or intimidation.

The police can only lawfully stop you filming them if your footage/photos are "likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism". [Section 58A of the Terrorism Act 2000]

Filming someone else and the police:

The police may try to put you off filming by talking about the privacy/data protection rights of the person that is being stopped and searched or arrested.

This does not mean you can't film it. However, you should always ask the person being stopped and searched or arrested if they want you to film them, and then only film/take photographs with their consent.

ANSWERING POLICE QUESTIONS

You do not have to respond to police if they speak to you. The police can't lawfully stop and search you simply for not answering their questions.

But if the police have reason to believe you have been or are taking part in "anti-social behaviour", they can require you to tell them your name and address. It is an offence to refuse or to give false information.

If you are an international student, you are not required to share your nationality or immigration status with the police. However, if you are arrested, they may carry out immigration checks. See the end of the guide for help with this.

OBSTRUCTING A POLICE OFFICER

It is a criminal offence to "wilfully obstruct" a police officer.

This is when you deliberately make it more difficult for the police to carry out their lawful duties. Obstruction could therefore include:

- preventing a police officer from making a lawful arrest/carrying out a lawful stop and search.

However, obstruction would not include:

- preventing/disrupting a police officer carrying out an unlawful stop and search/making an unlawful arrest
- advising someone not to answer police questions, where they have no legal obligation to.

WHAT DO I DO IF I'M ARRESTED?

CONTACT A SOLICITOR

You should talk to a solicitor before:

- being interviewed
- accepting a caution
- deciding how to plead to a charge.

Before you go on a protest, find a solicitor who is an expert on protest law and immigration law if necessary and keep a note of their name and phone number.

See the end of this document for a list of solicitors who offer free help to protesters.

ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

If you require medical assistance, the police must make arrangements for this. You should:

- tell the police as soon as you're arrested
- tell them if you are on medication that you need to take
- tell them if you have a history of mental health problems.

If you are regarded as 'vulnerable' or are under 18, ask for support from an 'appropriate adult'.

If English is not your first language, ask for an interpreter.

DON'T ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Answer "No Comment" to the police at all times until you've had legal advice from a solicitor with special knowledge about protests.
- Don't chat with officers while in a police car or van – or when being 'booked in' at the police station.
- You can say "No Comment" at any time during your arrest and questioning. We advise you to do this until you've spoken to a solicitor.

DON'T ACCEPT A CAUTION

If you are asked to accept a caution, seek advice from a solicitor with expertise in protest law.

A 'caution' is an admission of guilt and stays on your criminal record. There are rules that the police must follow when giving a caution, so you should speak to a solicitor about this as soon as you can.

For more information on cautions, click [here](#).

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

SOLICITORS SPECIALISING IN PROTEST

There are a number of solicitors offering protest advice during this time. The following solicitors firms offer free 24/7 help to protesters:

- Commons: 02038655403
- ITN Solicitors: 02039098100
- Hodge Jones & Allen (HJA): 08448480222
- Kellys: 01273674898
- Bindmans: 02073055638
- MTC Solicitors: 07956308127

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT

If you are facing difficulties with your student visa or immigration status, seek urgent legal advice from a solicitor specialising in immigration law. [You can find out more here.](#)

OTHER PROTEST SUPPORT

Green & Black Cross

Green & Black Cross facilitates legal observers and arrestee support by sending volunteers to police stations to offer legal and practical support to those who are arrested at protests.

- 07946541511 (Protest Support Line)
- courtssupport@protonmail.com
- @GBCLLegal

Green & Black Cross advises people to report any arrests they witness to the protest support line, and provide as much info as they can – this will help the arrested protester get legal and practical support.

Black Protest Legal Support

Black Protest Legal Support provides legal observers for protests involving Black and other racialised people, as well as legal advice and representation.

- blackprotestlegal@protonmail.com
- @blkprotestlegal

Liberty's Human Rights Advice Page

Find out more about your protest rights and police powers to restrict protests.

[Visit our website to find out more.](#)