



NUJ branch guidance on picketing

Use this guidance for information on:

- What the law says on picketing
- Responsibilities of Picket Supervisors
- Dos and Don'ts on pickets

The law

Government's Code of Practice on picketing details advice unions and members are expected to follow at pickets. The code recognises only two lawful purposes of picketing. These are:

- peacefully obtaining and communicating information
- peacefully persuading a person to work or not to work

Pickets should be formed of NUJ members working for the employer involved in the current dispute. To ensure compliance with the law, all action at pickets must always be conducted peacefully. Using threatening, abusive, insulting words or behaviour is a criminal offence. Paragraph [eight of the Code of Practice](#) details other offences, including obstructing a police officer in the execution of their duty.

At pickets, NUJ members and reps can engage with individuals providing information that aims to persuade them not to cross the picket line. Physically blocking entry or using any force is against the law.

Although there is no legal maximum on picket sizes, government guidance suggests that in general, pickets at entrances and exits of workplaces should not exceed six.

Responsibilities of Picket Supervisors

In 2016, government's Trade Union Act introduced new restrictions on pickets. This included the creation of the Picket Supervisor role and their responsibilities. It is essential everyone complies with rules on picketing, as employers can seek an injunction to stop a picket if there are breaches.

Picket Supervisors must inform the police of their name, contact details and where a picket will be taking place. It is best to do this in advance of strike days.

Supervisors must:

- Be an NUJ official or designated NEC member or rep
- Carry a letter confirming the NUJ approves the picket and confirming their role as Picket Supervisor
- Show the letter to the employer or their representative (e.g., managers or security staff) if asked
- Remain at the picket or be able to return at short notice
- Be easily contactable – remember to keep your phone handy
- Wear something that identifies them (e.g., a hi-vis jacket)
- Be aware of and familiar with the [Code of Practice on Picketing](#)

Picket Supervisors can be responsible for multiple pickets if they are able to attend sites at short notice.

Dos and Don'ts on pickets

Do plan early! Ensure you know which reps will be attending the picket and what resources will be brought. You'll want to ensure leaflets to hand out to passers-by with information on why you are striking is available. These will be provided by the NUJ campaigns team.

Do identify where your pickets will be set up. They should be close to workplaces and at entrances where possible, with pickets at the beginning of shifts to ensure maximum engagement.

Do try to persuade colleagues not to cross the picket line. This can be successful if done peacefully and with respect. Always aim to explain why strike action is taking place but never prevent someone who chooses to cross the picket from doing so.

Do stay positive. Not everyone will be open to hearing reasons for action, but remember any hostility directed at you should not be met with aggression. Focus on communicating constructively with other passers-by.

Do take photos and videos. Capturing NUJ members with banners, placards, posters on pickets is a great way to demonstrate how active the union is, and the dedication of members and reps in fighting for better terms and conditions. Images can be shared on social media, used in press releases, and motivate other pickets of our collective power.

[@nujofficial](#) – tag us in your images and clips and we'll repost these on the union's main account with solidarity messages.

Key points to avoid

Don't enter the workplace while on strike. Remain outside the building and focus on garnering support by leafleting and having conversations with those open to engage.

Don't forget to wear union armbands and display NUJ official picket signs, ensuring they are clearly visible.

Don't obstruct entry to any vehicles or obstruct the entrance of workplaces. This is against guidance in the Code of practice on picketing.