

# Fancy trying out the theatre but not sure how to go about it? Read this handy guide and you can't go wrong.

## WHAT'S ON

### Websites:

[www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk) has comprehensive London theatre listings and online booking. For a list of other useful websites click [HERE](#).

### The Official London

**Theatre Guide:** a free listings guide available from theatres, tourist information centres, shops, airports, train stations and hotels across London and the UK. It looks like [THIS](#).

### Newspapers and

**magazines:** Most national papers contain show listings and reviews, as does Time Out London, and the free papers Metro, London Lite and The London Paper.

## BUYING TICKETS

**In advance:** Buy online, from the theatre in person or by phone, or from reputable ticket agents.

**On the day:** Ask at the theatre for returned tickets. Buy discount tickets (up to 50% off) at the **TKTS** booth in Leicester Square or Brent Cross, the only official discount theatre ticket operation in London. Beware imitations.

**Be a STAR:** Check your ticket seller is a member of **STAR**, the Society of Ticket Agents & Retailers, which ensures a fair code of practice, meaning you won't get ripped off.

**On the cheap:** Ask the theatre about student discounts. Visit a subsidised or **off-West End theatre**, which can be cheaper than the West End. Tickets to West End shows can be cheaper during the preview period. [Register](#) for weekly emailed special offers from [www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk).

**Sit comfortably:** When you book, ask where your seats will be, or see a seating plan and choose them. Tickets are priced according to where you sit. The better the seat, the more you pay.

### Pick up your tickets:

If you've bought online or by phone, pick up your tickets at the box office on the night - bring the bank card you booked with. If you buy in person you get your tickets there and then.

## GETTING THERE

### Use public transport:

Use the Journey Planner on [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk) to find out your route to the theatre. The Official London Theatre Guide contains a map of all major London theatres.

**Keep time:** Arrive well before the start of the show, especially if you are collecting tickets, as you may need to queue. Latecomers may not be let into the show until the interval.

**Dinner:** Many restaurants in Theatreland serve pre-theatre meals and have cheap deals. Find out more on [www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com).

## ENJOY THE SHOW...

**Clothes:** Anything goes - there's no dress code in London theatres.

**Food and drink:** Bring your own soft drinks and snacks or buy them there. Order your interval drinks before the show starts, or queue at the bar. Drinks can sometimes be taken into the second half in plastic glasses.

**Mobiles:** Turn them off.

**Cameras:** You are not allowed to take photographs or film any part of the performance. This includes mobiles.

**Smoking:** Not in the theatre.

**Extras:** Programmes and show merchandise can be bought on the night - they are not included in your ticket price.

## ...OR NOT

**Escape:** If you don't like the show and want to leave, wait until the interval.

**Refunds:** Not given unless there is a technical problem with the show or it is cancelled. If you can't make the performance and can give the tickets back before the show, the box office may be able to resell them and refund your money, but only if the show is sold out.

## GETTING HOME

Check [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk) for maps of night buses and last train times. The box office can tell you the exact running time of your show.

## TEMPTED?

Browse

[www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk)

now for details of all current London shows.

# The jargon

## A guide to common theatrical terms

**Box Office** - the little booth in the foyer of a theatre where the ticket sales staff sit

**Stalls** - the ground floor seats

**Royal/Dress Circle** - the first tier of seats upstairs

**Grand/Upper Circle** - the second tier of seats

**Balcony** - the top tier of seats, usually very high up and often with limited legroom

**Off West End** - theatres away from the traditional centre of London, often with cheaper ticket prices but a similar high quality of production, such as the Menier Chocolate Factory or the Gate

**Fringe theatres** - small theatres which showcase alternative and experimental theatre, or up-and-coming directing/producing talent such as the King's Head or Pleasance

**Subsidised theatres** - non-commercial theatres part-financed by public funds. Often have cheaper ticket prices as a result. These theatres range from the intimate Bush and Donmar Warehouse to the National Theatre

**Commercial theatres** - privately-owned theatres which produce shows with private investment, usually (but not always) located in the traditional West End of London, such as the Gielgud and the Lyric on Shaftesbury Avenue

**Previews** - when a new show opens in London it normally runs for a few performances before the critics come to see it, so that the cast can fine-tune their performances based on the audience's reaction. These preview performances are on general sale and are often cheaper than when the show has officially opened (the night the critics come to see it). The preview period of a major new musical can last for a few weeks

**Opening night** - the performance all the critics attend. The reviews will be in the papers over the following few days

**Programme** - contains the cast list, sometimes a synopsis of the show, information about the theatre, articles and adverts. Can be bought from an usher before/after the show/during the interval

**Ticket agent** - any company licensed to sell tickets

**STAR** - the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers. An industry body which regulates the sale of tickets

**Sightlines/restricted view** - the term given to the view you have of the stage from any particular seat

**Returns** - tickets that a customer has bought but given back to the theatre. When a show is sold out, these tickets can be sold on to new customers

For more information about buying tickets [click here](#)