Parking charge notices - RAC advice

When you park your vehicle, be sure to always look for signage of terms and conditions. If signs are hard to find or obscured this may stand you in good stead should you receive a Parking Charge Notice.

Make sure your vehicle is parked within the bays – operators are known to ticket motorists who have parked over the lines.

Do not park in disabled bays unless you have a blue badge.

Take note of the time you are allowed to park, when you parked, and whether you are required to pay to use the car park. Where possible, we recommend setting a timer on your phone/watch to remind yourself when you are due back.

Local authorities in England only offer a 10 minute grace period.

Private parking companies are known to issue Parking Charge Notices even if you are just a few minutes late. Unlike with local authority parking in England, there is no statutory 10 minute grace period.

Operators who are BPA members are supposed to abide by the BPA code of practice which drivers should be given a 10 minute grace period.

If you haven’t received a 10 minute grace period between when the ticket expired and parking notice was issued, you should have good grounds to appeal.

How to appeal

An appeal could be launched in any incident where you feel you have not breached the terms and conditions or if you feel the fine is disproportionate.

- Firstly, if you feel you have been unfairly charged, do NOT pay anything. Paying immediately online or sending a cheque in the post is an admission of guilt and you cannot then subsequently appeal.

- Gather evidence whilst on site, including taking pictures of signs, proof of time of return, how your vehicle was parked, or keep receipts if you have been accused of not using facilities or going off-site.

- An appeals process will require that in the first instance, you lodge an appeal with the operator or local authority. The easiest way is to do this online - check the private company or local authority's website, or for appeals with Scottish local authorities check MyGov.scot. Many private operators will give you a reduced charge if you pay within 14 days. Appealing in the first instance will retain your right to pay at this rate even if the operator rules you are still in contravention.
- It is always useful to check whether the operator is a member of the BPA or IPC. Check their code of practice to see whether the operator has acted in accordance and whether the reason for their ‘ticket’ is appropriate.

- If the parking operator is not a member of the BPA, unfortunately they may have their own rules. It will then be up to you as to whether you wish to take advice from the Citizen’s Advice or other legal representation – the RAC offers legal advice to its members on 0330 159 0275.