

Preparing for your first prison visit

General checklist

England and Wales. Check the prison's current visiting instructions before travelling. Ticks record your preparation, not permission to visit.

Before you book

☐ **Confirm the prison and visitor list**

Make sure the person is still at that prison and everyone attending has been added to their visitor list. Being on a phone list is a separate arrangement.

☐ **Wait for a confirmed booking**

Use the prison's published booking route. Have the information the booking service asks for ready privately. An online request is not the same as a confirmed visit. Ask the prison directly about reception visits or family days.

☐ **Check identification for each visitor**

Check the official accepted ID list. Alternatives exist if you do not have a passport or driving licence. If none of the listed documents is available, contact the prison before travelling to ask about advance permission.

☐ **Ask about anything that would make the visit easier**

Tell the booking team about mobility or communication needs, sensory difficulties, medical equipment or medication you need during the visit. Ask what arrangements and evidence are needed; do not leave it until the entrance.

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Get ready for the day

- ☐ **Read that prison's visitor dress rules**

Check footwear, outerwear and accessories as well as clothes. Hooded, revealing or damaged clothing can cause problems. Rules for visitors are different from rules about clothes a prisoner may keep. Ask about anything you are unsure of.
- ☐ **Plan the journey and arrival time**

Check the visitor entrance, where to report and how early to arrive. Allow time for registration and security. Check parking or the last part of the journey from the station. Keep the booking contact and confirmation available.
- ☐ **Check bags, phones, lockers and refreshments**

Ask what must be left outside the visits hall, whether a locker needs a coin or token, and how refreshments are paid for. Do not assume you can hand in clothes, gifts or parcels during a visit.
- ☐ **Check help with travel costs**

If money is tight, read the official eligibility rules before booking expensive travel. Keep the evidence and receipts the scheme asks for. Help is conditional, rather than available for every visitor.

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If children are coming

☐ **Confirm the children are included in the booking**

Ask about age, accompanying-adult and identification requirements. Check what baby supplies, food, bottles and pushchairs are permitted and whether the visitors' centre can help.

☐ **Explain the visit in words they understand**

Tell them there may be waiting, security checks and rules about what they can take in. Give them space for questions. Plan food, toilets and the journey home around their needs; the visitor team can explain local facilities.

Before leaving home

☐ **Recheck the booking and local instructions**

Confirm the date, time, approved visitors and ID. Read any cancellation message and check the prison's latest visiting information. If something is unclear, contact the visits team before setting off.

☐ **Leave some space after the visit**

A first visit can bring relief as well as difficult feelings. Plan who you can speak to afterwards. You do not have to solve every problem during one conversation.

Questions for the visits team
