

Picketing

A picket line is where workers and trade union representatives stand outside a workplace to tell other people why they are striking.

Who can join a picket

Workers taking part in strike action can join a picket line at their workplace. This includes:

- trade union members
- workers in the same 'bargaining unit' as the trade union members – this is the group of workers represented by the trade union

Trade union officials can also join a picket.

Crossing a picket

It's up to the person entering the workplace to decide whether they want to cross the picket line.

Picketers must allow people to enter the workplace if they want to.

Workers represented by the trade union

If a worker is part of the bargaining unit represented by the trade union, they can decide to either:

- cross the picket and continue working
- not cross the picket and strike

If they work from home or another site, they might not have to cross the picket line. But they do need to decide whether to strike or not.

[Find out who can take industrial action](#)

Other workers, suppliers and people who need access

Other people can cross the picket, including:

- workers who are not eligible to strike
- anyone needing to deliver goods or services to the workplace

If they decide not to cross the picket, this is called 'secondary' or 'sympathy' action.

Secondary action is unofficial action. If someone takes this action they are not protected by industrial action law. However, they'll still have their usual employment rights.

[Find out more about unofficial action](#)

If it's a shared premises

Workers can picket outside a workplace that shares an entrance with other workplaces not involved in the dispute. In this situation, the picket line should not affect anyone going to the other workplaces.

Picket line rules

By law, people taking part in a picket can peacefully:

- talk to people wanting to enter their workplace
- explain why they're striking
- ask people not to cross the picket line

Picketers must not:

- block or stop anyone entering the workplace or doing work
- stop any vehicles entering the premises
- threaten or abuse anyone

The full rules on picketing are covered by [the picketing Code of Practice on GOV.UK](#).

It's a good idea to:

- have someone to answer questions about the rules
- provide a union contact for people on the picket line

As a picketer, it's important to understand the law. You can:

- get advice from your trade union
- read [the picketing Code of Practice on GOV.UK](#)
- [get tailored support from Acas](#)