

GUIDES • WHAT TO DO NEXT

Fixed Penalty Notice: what should I do?

A Fixed Penalty Notice offers a fixed fine — and, where applicable, penalty points — as an alternative to going to court. This guide explains how the offer works, your deadline to accept or dispute it, and the risks to weigh before rejecting it.

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?

A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) is a way of dealing with many motoring offences without going straight to court. It usually offers a fixed fine and, where applicable, penalty points, as an alternative to prosecution.

An FPN is a conditional offer. If you accept the allegation, you can usually pay the stated fine and accept any penalty points within the deadline, often 28 days. If you do this correctly, the matter normally ends there, and you do not get a criminal record. Depending on the offence, the fixed penalty is commonly £50, £100, £200 or £300. Always follow the instructions on the notice you have received.

What happens if I do not pay or the time limit runs out?

Do not ignore the notice. If you want to challenge the FPN, follow the instructions and respond within the deadline.

If you reject the FPN, or fail to respond in time, the police may prosecute the offence. Depending on the offence and the procedure used, you may receive a Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) or a court summons.

An SJPN allows a single magistrate to deal with the case without a court hearing if you plead guilty. The financial penalty may be higher than the original fixed penalty, and you may also have to pay prosecution costs and a surcharge.

[More about Single Justice Procedure Notices →](#)

What if I did not commit the offence?

If you dispute the allegation, you may need to reject the FPN and ask for the matter to be dealt with by the court. This can carry financial risk, so you should consider taking legal advice before the response deadline expires.

The FPN will usually explain how to reject the fixed penalty or request a court hearing. You do not normally enter a formal not guilty plea at the FPN stage. If you are prosecuted, you can enter your plea later, for example in response to an SJPN or at court.

If the form asks why you are not accepting the fixed penalty, you may wish to say:

“I do not accept the fixed penalty because I dispute the allegation and wish the matter to be dealt with by the court.”

[More about a court summons →](#)

Before rejecting an FPN, ask yourself:

- ✓ How strong is the evidence against me?
- ✓ Do I have a legal defence?
- ✓ Do I have evidence or witnesses that may cast doubt on the allegation?

You do not have to prove your innocence. The prosecution must prove the case against you. However, if the prosecution's evidence is strong, simply saying “I did not do it” may not be enough. Helpful evidence, documents or witnesses can make a real difference.

If you are convicted after a trial, the penalty will probably be more severe than the original fixed penalty (because you've lost the right to a discount for an early guilty plea). You may also have to pay prosecution costs, a surcharge, and your own legal fees if you are represented.

[Request advice on a not guilty plea](#)

Key takeaway

Paying the FPN is usually the quickest and cheapest way to end the matter if you accept the allegation. If you dispute it, do not ignore the notice. Respond within the deadline and consider taking legal advice before rejecting it, because court proceedings can carry greater financial risk.

Disclaimer: This guide is for general information only and does not provide legal advice. Every case depends on its own facts, evidence and deadlines. You should not rely on this guide as a substitute for advice on your specific circumstances.

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THE FOUR STAGES

What to do when you receive a...

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NIP

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2

FPN

Fixed Penalty Notice

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SJPN

Single Justice Procedure
Notice

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Summons

Court Summons