

GUIDES • WHAT TO DO NEXT

Single Justice Procedure Notice: what to do next

This guide is for drivers who have received a Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) and need to decide how to respond. It explains the main options: pleading guilty with mitigation, asking for a hearing where exceptional hardship or special reasons may be relevant to avoid disqualification, or pleading not guilty.

Start with the deadline, then get the plea right

You usually have 21 days from the date shown on the SJPN to respond. If you ignore it, the court can decide the case without you.

The two decisions you need to make

You need to choose between guilty and not guilty. If you plead guilty, the case may be dealt with on the papers or sent to a court hearing. If you plead not guilty, it will usually be listed for a normal Magistrates' Court hearing.

The right choice depends on the evidence, your penalty points, whether a ban is possible, and whether mitigation, exceptional hardship, special reasons or a defence may apply. If in doubt, complete the [free online assessment form](#) before submitting the SJPN response.

If you are pleading guilty: written mitigation matters

If you plead guilty and the case is dealt with on the papers, your written plea in mitigation may be your only chance to influence the outcome. A plea in mitigation is an explanation of how and why the offence occurred and includes other relevant information that may persuade the court to impose a more lenient and proportionate penalty. It should be clear, honest and focused on the sentence you are asking the court to impose.

I can draft a professional written plea in mitigation for you. Complete the [free online assessment form](#) and upload the SJPN, evidence, driving record information and any personal circumstances that may be relevant.

Exceptional hardship: when a hearing may be needed

If the SJPN could take you to 12 or more live penalty points, the court must normally disqualify you. For 'new' drivers, who passed their test within the last two years, the totting-up limit is only 6 points. A first-time disqualification period for totting-up must normally be for at least six months. Exceptional hardship arguments may persuade the court not to disqualify you, and require a court hearing and proper evidence. What amounts to exceptional hardship is a complex subject.

Complete the [free online assessment form](#) before responding. I can then advise what evidence may be needed and whether a court hearing should be requested.

Not sure how many points you currently have on your licence? [See my FAQ on how to check your penalty points →](#)

Special reasons: when a hearing may be needed

A special reasons argument may be presented when disqualification is a mandatory or optional penalty for the offence itself, rather than for totting-up. Drink-driving or high-level speeding, for example. If accepted, it may allow the court to avoid disqualification or reduce penalty points in suitable cases.

If you think you may be at risk of disqualification for the offence, complete the [free online assessment form](#) before replying, and we can discuss whether special reasons may apply. These cases need careful preparation and may need a court hearing.

If you want to plead not guilty

A not guilty plea should be based on a realistic defence, not just a sense that the situation is unfair. If you plead not guilty, the case will usually go to a Magistrates' Court hearing.

Before pleading not guilty, complete the [free online assessment form](#) and upload the SJPN papers. I can review the evidence and advise whether the case appears defensible.

Do not let the online form make the decision for you

The online SJPN process can look simple, but the consequences may be serious. A quick response can miss important mitigation, fail to request a hearing, or create problems with a not guilty plea.

If the case has already been decided

If the first you know about the case is a conviction notice, fine, DVLA endorsement or enforcement action, you may be able to ask the court to reopen the case by making a Statutory Declaration. You will need to act quickly.

Complete the [free online assessment form](#) and explain when and how you first found out about the case.

Final point

An SJPN should be dealt with promptly, but not casually. If you have received one, and you are facing a fine of more than £300 or a risk of disqualification, complete my free online assessment form before responding so I can help you decide the safest and most effective next step.

[Start the free online assessment](#)

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.

Phil Lyons provides legal services through DAV Legal Ltd, authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA No. 8003625). DAV Legal Ltd is registered in England & Wales (Company No. 14530689); registered office: PO Box 1474, Preston, PR2 0EF. This guide provides general information and is not legal advice. For advice on your own case, complete the free assessment at www.phillyonsmotoringlaw.co.uk.

THE FOUR STAGES

What to do when you receive a...

1

NIP

Notice of Intended
Prosecution

2

FPN

Fixed Penalty Notice

3

SJPN

Single Justice Procedure
Notice

4

Summons

Court Summons