



MAY 2025

An autism friendly guide to travelling by train



This guide has been created to inform you about some of the experiences you can expect to encounter while using the railway.

It includes information in the form of written guidance, images, sounds and links to further information.

We understand that every autistic person is different and therefore not all of the content within this guide will be relevant to you, or your circumstances.

The guide has been designed so that you can navigate the information and skip to the sections that are most relevant to you. You can do this using the contents page and page headers throughout the guide.



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Choosing what time to travel

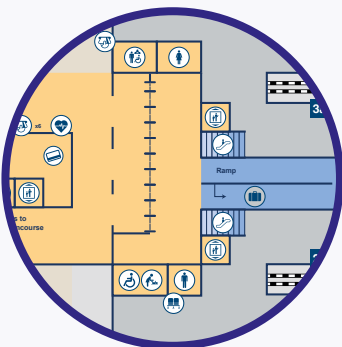
The time at which you travel may have some impact on how busy the station or train may be. If you would prefer a quieter journey, it may be helpful to try and avoid travelling during peak hours, which are between 06:30 and 09:30 and from 16:30 to 19:00.



How to find out if there are certain times/dates and events that may impact your journey

Most train companies have an events page on their website you can review to see if there are any events that may impact your journey when planning your trip.

Alternatively, you can visit nationalrail.co.uk/travel-information/holidays-and-events to see if there is an event listed that could impact on your travel.



Station specific information

You can visit nationalrail.co.uk/find-a-station to find specific information on each station on the network. This includes station maps, virtual maps and tours (where available) as well as accessible facilities and more.



Think about the items you would find useful and pack them for your journey



Essentials



Train Tickets

In paper or digital (e-ticket) form. Also remember to keep your ticket collection

Money

Cash, card or electronic payment

You may also want to bring:

	Communication devices or cards
	Headphones, ear plugs or ear defenders
	Information card (for example, the National Autistic Society's "I am autistic" card)
	Medication (if required)
	Notebook and pen
	Phone (including charging cable or power bank)
	Refreshments (food, drink or snacks for your journey)
	Sensory tools
	Something to pass the time (for example, a book or portable game console)
	Sunflower Hidden Disabilities lanyard and card

Buying a ticket



There are several different ways you can purchase train tickets:



Online

Tickets can be bought in advance directly through the train operator's website or app. Tickets can also be purchased through National Rail Enquires at [nationalrail.co.uk](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk)



At stations

You could purchase your tickets at the station on the day of travel. Some stations have ticket offices and ticket machines – some just have ticket machines. At staffed stations, staff can help you purchase your tickets



Telephone

You can purchase a ticket over the phone from some train operating companies. Please check with your local train operator that this service is available if this is your preferred option



If the station is unstaffed and a ticket machine is not available, you can purchase your ticket onboard the train



You can purchase different ticket types for train travel. These can vary in price:



Advance tickets

these are only valid on a particular date and train, but may be cheaper as a result



Anytime tickets

these can be used on any date and train, but may be more expensive as a result



Off-Peak or Super-Off Peak tickets

these come with some time restrictions but can offer cheaper travel if you are able to travel outside of the busiest times. The time restrictions can vary across different train companies, so check before purchase to make sure they will meet your needs



£35

**With 1/3 off* rail travel,
it pays for itself in no time.**

railcard.co.uk

£35 from 2 March 2025
*Terms and conditions apply. See inside leaflet for details.

Railcards

There are a range of National Rail Railcards available to purchase. These can offer discounted fares depending on your circumstances. You can find out more at nationalrail.co.uk/railcards.

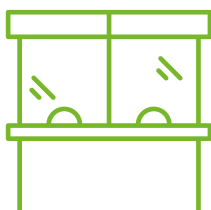
If you are eligible for and have bought a Disabled Persons Railcard, this can give you **one third (1/3) off adult fares for you and a companion**. To qualify for a Disabled Persons Railcard, you must meet the eligibility criteria. You can find out more about the Disabled Persons Railcard on their website at disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk.

Ticket format

You may have the option to choose your tickets to be in digital format (e-ticket), posted to you or available to collect at the station. If you are choosing the collection option, you will need to check the station you are departing from has a ticket machine.



Collecting your ticket:



If you are collecting your ticket at a station, you will need to have your booking reference number available



It can be helpful to have your booking reference number ready in advance, so that you can easily access it when you need it



When collecting your ticket, there will often be more than one piece for each ticket – please ensure you wait until all pieces are printed



Once you have your ticket, keep it in a safe place – you may need it again for inspection or to open barriers later in your journey

What if I decide not to travel?

You can get a refund for an unused train ticket, with no fees, if your train is delayed or cancelled and you decide not to travel. If you want to get a refund for another reason, you may have to pay a fee. For more information see our [Ticket Types page](#) or our [Changing, Cancelling and Getting a Refund for Tickets page](#).



Departure screens

Most stations will show the trains leaving the station on a departure screen. These take the form of written information presented on a digital screen.

Departure screens provide information on train times to destinations and platform departure numbers. All this information will be shown in advance of the train's departure.

In larger stations, departure screens are often situated in the main entrance/concourse. In smaller stations, departure information can usually be found displayed on screens on the platforms.

At some larger stations, departure platforms are not displayed on the screens until a few minutes prior to departure.



Announcements

Announcements are also made at the station to let you know what platform your train will be departing from. These take the form of spoken information from loudspeakers in the station.



Information about delays

Any delays to train services will be announced via announcements and on the departure screens so that you are kept informed and are aware of changes to the service.



Information about platform changes

Any late platform changes will also be announced via announcements and displayed on the departure screens ahead of the train departing the station. This will help you to change platform if needed.



Asking for help

There is often a lot of information displayed on the screens. If you are unable to find the information you want, a staff member should be able to help you identify the right information.

Going through the barriers



In many stations, you may have to pass through ticket barriers in order to get to your platform.

In some larger stations, you might not be able to go through the barriers to the platform until your train is announced as ready for boarding.

There are several ways of getting through the barriers. These will vary depending on your ticket type.



Paper ticket

- If you have a paper ticket, insert it into the slot, then collect it again at the top once it has been returned. The barrier will then open
- If this does not work, ask a staff member to help you. Staff can often be found near the barriers
- Sometimes the ticket does not come back out, but the barrier will still open. This usually happens when you have ended your journey. If you still need the ticket, ask a staff member for help

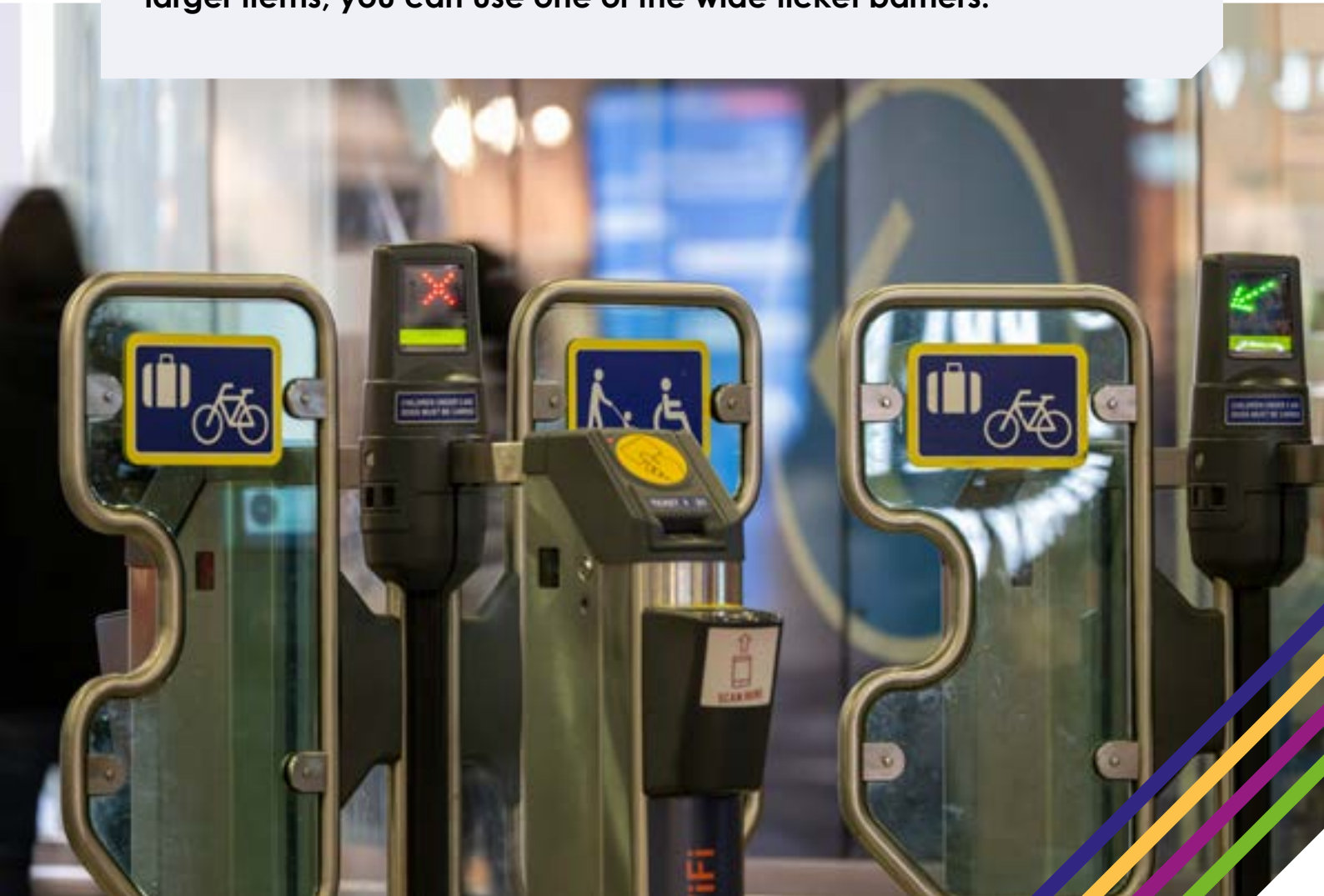


Digital ticket

- If you have a digital ticket (e-ticket), make sure your phone is on the brightest setting and ensure your ticket barcode is open and visible
- Hover your phone, with the screen facing an inch (2.5 centimetres) above the scanner, and the barrier should open
- If this does not work, ask a staff member nearest the barrier to assist you
- To keep your phone safe, only take it out just before you need it to use the scanner



If you are a wheelchair user, or travelling with a suitcase or other larger items, you can use one of the wide ticket barriers.



Waiting on the Platform



When you are able to, proceed to the platform and prepare to board your train.



Check the information board

When you get to the platform, check the information board to make sure you are on the right platform.



Check the train destination

At some stations, there may be more than one train on the same platform. Please make sure you board the train based on the train's destination.

Sometimes the front part of the train may be going to a different destination from the back part of the train. Make sure you board the train at the right coach, to ensure you go to the correct destination.



Assistance

At staffed stations, you can get assistance boarding your train if you are concerned about getting on the correct train.

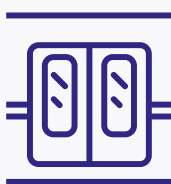


Waiting Rooms

Some stations have waiting rooms on the platforms with information screens inside.



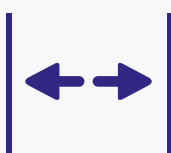
If you have a seat reserved, check which carriage your seat is in. Board the train in the correct carriage if you can



Different trains have different types of doors and so open in different ways. Some may open automatically; others may require you to press a button (which will light up or flash when it is unlocked and available to use)



Once the doors are open, you can board the train. However, if there are people disembarking the train at the stop you are boarding the train, allow them to exit the train before you board



When boarding the train, there may be a gap between the train and the platform. Take care when crossing over this gap to board the train



If there are lots of people waiting to get on the train, they will usually form a queue. There may also be lots of people getting off the train around the same time. In this busy environment, you may wish to stand further back from the crowd until it is your turn to board

Finding your reserved seat



When you go to board the train, look for the carriage number where your seat is allocated and board at that carriage if possible



Boarding through another carriage will mean you will need to walk through the train to your seat



Board the train and find your seat. You can find your seat number on your ticket if you have been allocated a seat



Sometimes people sit in seats that are not reserved for them because there is nowhere else to sit



If someone is sitting in your seat, it is ok to ask them to move – they sit there knowing they may have to move if the ticket holder appears



You may also choose to sit in another unreserved seat for your journey



If you have not booked a seat you can sit in any unreserved seat



LAX
LAX




Priority seats

Many trains have priority seating. These are seats which are easier to access within the carriage and generally offer some extra space. Priority seats are usually located near the doors and the information screens that display important information about the journey.



Emergency Buttons

Each carriage is equipped with at least one emergency button near the doors or priority seats. If you need emergency assistance, you can push these buttons to speak to a staff member.

A series of parallel diagonal stripes in purple, yellow, pink, and green, located on the left side of the page.

Once your train has come to a stop at your arrival platform (your destination), make sure that you have all of your belongings and make your way to the door.

If you will be the first person to exit the train, you may have to press a button or use a handle to open the door.

Please note that it might take a moment for the door to fully open.



Changes to your arrival platform

Your arrival platform number can sometimes change whilst you are on your journey. This can happen for a number of reasons, including unexpected disruption or the availability of platform space at your destination station.

You can check your arrival platform number on nationalrail.co.uk/live-trains, which usually shows the arrival platform for train services. If you have a connecting journey, you will be able to see what platform your next train should be arriving at.

You can also listen to any onboard announcements from train staff, or announcements at the station regarding platform allocations.



Delay Repay

There is a nationwide scheme that makes it easier for you to get compensation for delayed train journeys. This is called Delay Repay.

If you are delayed for any reason when you travel on a participating National Rail service, you can claim Delay Repay. Visit your train operating company's website to find out more about the scheme.



Providing feedback

If you would like to provide any feedback on your journey, your train operating company would be happy to hear about your experience. A list of train companies and their contact details can be found at [Find a Train Company National Rail](#).



Making a complaint

Unfortunately, sometimes you will not receive the high standard of service we aim to provide. If you want to complain or comment on a train journey, please contact the train operating company directly. Their contact details can be found at [Find a Train Company National Rail](#).

The sensory experience



Travel by rail may involve some unfamiliar or intense sights, sounds and smells.

We've put together some information on the different sensory input which you may experience during your journey. This information may be helpful when planning and completing your journey by train.



Balance

Escalators, moving walkways, moving on the train, the gap between the train and platform. All of these may require balance and coordination

Things that may be helpful:

Use lifts. If you feel dizzy speak to a staff member



Body awareness

Crowds in the station, crowds on trains and escalators.

Things that may be helpful:

Avoid crowds by standing back and waiting for your turn to board. Try to travel at less busy times where possible



Smells

Train fumes, food smells, perfume or cologne and cleaning solutions

Things that may be helpful:

Scented handkerchief, face mask



Sight

Digital information screens, a variety of coloured advertising, neon lights, and train lights at night

Things that may be helpful:

Sunglasses



Sounds

Train engines, crowd noise, announcements, mobility assistance buggies, train whistles and alarms

Things that may be helpful:

Music, headphones or ear defenders



Touch

Variety in temperatures, crowded areas or unfamiliar surfaces

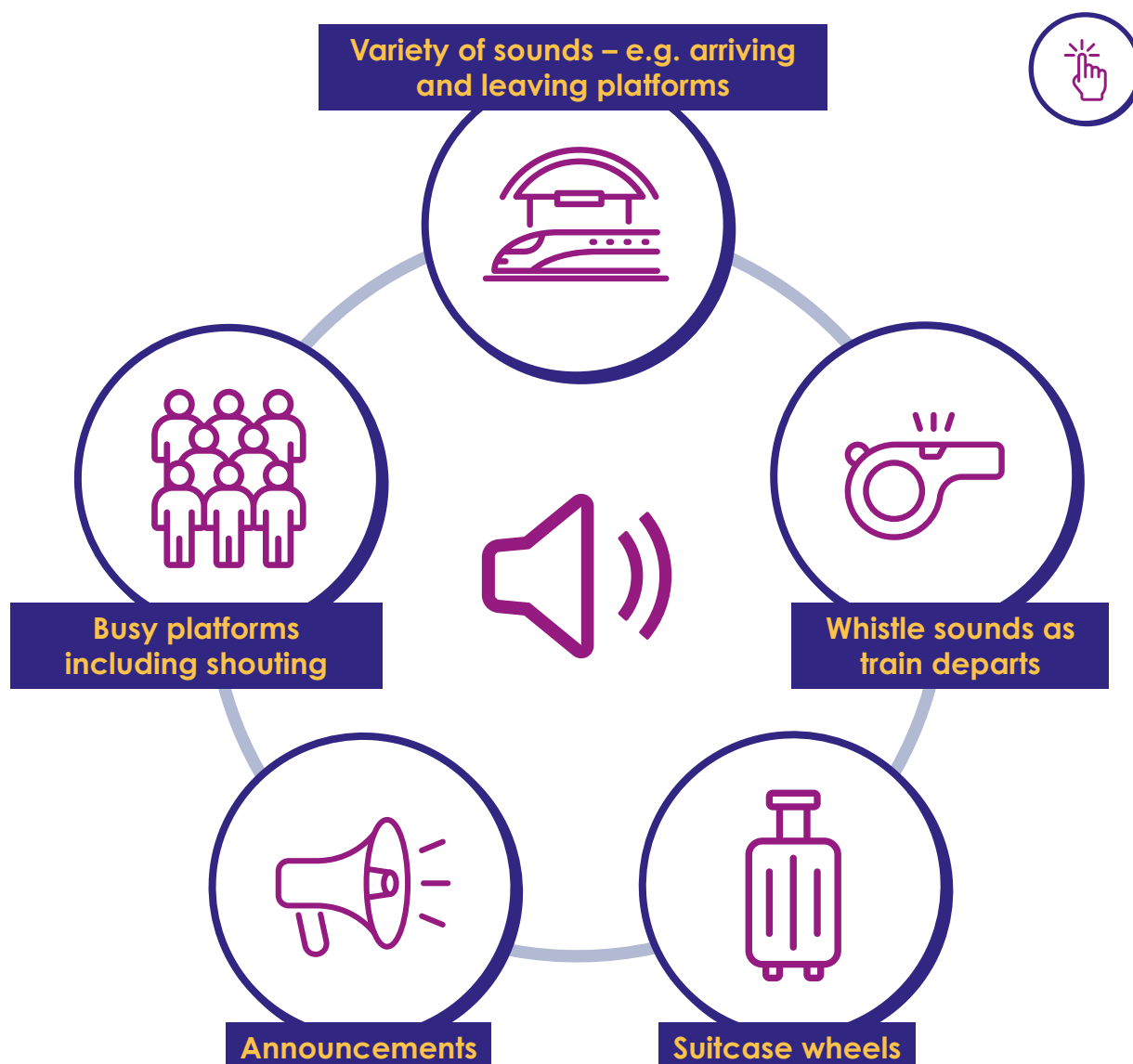
Things that may be helpful:

Sensory tools, multi layered clothing



You may hear lots of different sounds at a railway station. They are often loud and happen at the same time.

Below on this page are some buttons you can press to familiarise yourself with some of the sounds you could hear. Each button will take you to a webpage to play the sound.





Passenger Assist is a service that allows you to request assistance in advance of travelling by rail. Any train company can organise assistance for your entire journey, even if you are travelling on multiple services.



Passenger Assist provides:



A member of staff who can support you to navigate the station



Help getting on or off the train as part of your journey



Meeting you from your train and taking you to your next train or the station exit



Assistance you require that relates to a non-visible disability



Deploying a ramp on or off your train (if required)



Luggage assistance (if you are a disabled person, older or less mobile). This can be requested in advance of your journey through Passenger Assist or you can also request this on the day at the station



Passengers can bring up to three (3) items of luggage as per the [National Rail Conditions of Travel](#). Some train companies have different luggage policies, so it's a good idea to check the luggage allowance for the train company you are travelling with on their website before you travel.

- If you would like more information on Passenger Assist, please follow this link: nationalrail.co.uk/help-and-assistance/passenger-assist If you would prefer to access the service by telephone, call 0800 022 3720. Select option 1 and you will be able to let us know the journey you plan to take
- If you have not been able to arrange assistance in advance of your journey, you can also speak to station staff when you arrive at a station to arrange your assistance
- You can also contact any train operating company directly and they can book any Passenger Assist needs you may require



Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard

You may choose to wear the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard, or other communication tool you are comfortable with, to indicate you may need a little extra help or time.

Our station and train staff are trained to recognise the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard.



Toilets

Toilet facilities are available at many of our stations. Where provided, there will be signs indicating where toilets are available.

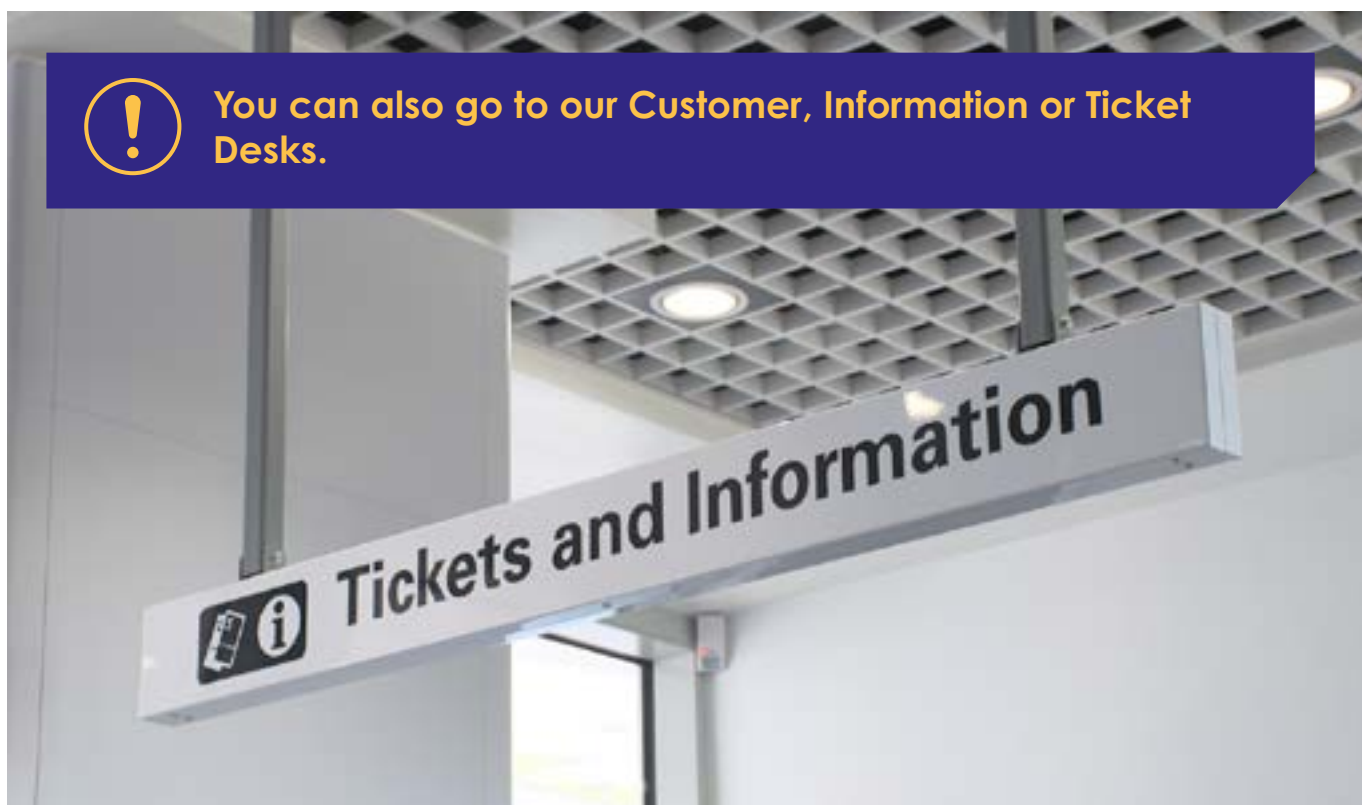


If you need help at one of our staffed stations

You can ask station staff. This can be done verbally or through other methods, such as communication cards. In some larger stations, staff uniforms may vary – however, you can ask for assistance from all members of staff.



You can also go to our Customer, Information or Ticket Desks.



If you need help at one of our unstaffed stations

Some stations on the railway network are not permanently staffed, whilst other stations are staffed only during particular hours.

If you are unable to find a staff member to support in-person at your station, you can use the help point at the station to ask for assistance. Help points feature an information button which you can use to speak with staff, and are monitored from first to last train.



If you need help while on the train

There may be a train manager on your train who you can ask for help. This could be done verbally or by using a communication device or card.

Some people choose to carry an information card they can use to explain to other people they are autistic or use to request help (without needing to talk).



What if I miss my train?

If you miss your train, please speak to a staff member to understand what your options are, when the next train will be to your destination and if you will need to change your ticket.

Alternatively, you can seek assistance by accessing a help point in the station and ask for assistance. These help points are monitored from first to last train.



Live information on current train delays, platform changes and departures via text message

nationalrail.co.uk/live-trains

Accessible Train Travel and Facilities

nationalrail.co.uk/on-the-train/accessible-train-travel-and-facilities

Passenger Assist

nationalrail.co.uk/help-and-assistance/passenger-assist

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard

hdsunflower.com

Station Access map

accessmap.nationalrail.co.uk

Find a toilet near you

toiletmap.org.uk

Railcards

nationalrail.co.uk/railcards

Disabled Persons Railcard

disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk



**National
Autistic
Society**

**Reviewed by the National Autistic
Society. To find out more about the
charity and their work, visit
www.autism.org.uk**

