

Firework safety checklist

Figures have shown that more children than adults get hurt by fireworks. If you are thinking of using fireworks as part of your celebrations, you should follow the steps listed below.

Before your firework display

Preparation is key to enjoying fireworks safely, so:

- don't buy fireworks from anywhere you're not sure about, like a van or a temporary, unlicensed market stall
- only buy fireworks marked BS 7114 – this is the British Standard that all fireworks should meet (a reputable shop will know this)
- follow the instructions on each firework – read them in daylight or by torchlight, never by a naked flame
- make suitable supports and launchers if you're setting off catherine wheels or rockets

Things you will need on the night

It's easy to get a few household things together, these are:

- a closed metal box to store the fireworks – take them out one at a time
- a bucket of water – to cool sparklers and put out any small fires
- eye protection and gloves
- a bucket of earth to stick fireworks in

Lighting fireworks

Follow these simple guidelines to stay safe:

- only one person should be responsible for letting off fireworks
- don't drink alcohol if you are setting off fireworks
- light fireworks at arm's length, using a taper
- make sure everyone stands well back
- never go back to a firework that has been lit – even if it hasn't gone off it could still explode

Sparklers

Sparklers are fun, but always:

- supervise children with sparklers and never give them to a child under five
- light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves
- put used sparklers hot end down into a bucket of sand or water

Other tips on the night

Finally, follow these other rules for a safe night:

- keep pets indoors – most animals get very scared by the lights and noise from fireworks
- never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them

- never throw spent fireworks on a bonfire
- take care around bonfires – all clothes, even those labelled 'low flammability', can catch fire

Fireworks and the law

There are laws about when fireworks can be sold, and to who – as well as the times fireworks can be set off.

If you are under 18 years of age

If you are under 18, you can't:

- buy the types of fireworks which can be sold only to adults
- have fireworks in public places

If you do, the police can give you an on-the-spot fine of £80.

Using fireworks legally

It is against the law to:

- set off or throw fireworks in the street or other public place
- set off fireworks between 11.00 pm and 7.00 am – except during certain celebrations

If found guilty by the courts, you could be fined up to £5,000 and can be imprisoned for up to three months. You may be liable for an on-the-spot fine of £80.

When you can use fireworks during celebrations

You can let off fireworks :

- until midnight on Bonfire Night
- until 1.00 am on New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year

When fireworks are available to buy

Fireworks for private use, and from a registered seller, can only be sold:

- between 15 October and 10 November – around Bonfire Night
- between 26 December and 31 December – for New Year's Eve
- three days before Diwali and Chinese New Year

For the rest of the year, you will only be able to buy fireworks from shops that are licensed to supply them.

If you think a shop is unregistered, or selling fireworks when they shouldn't, contact your council's Trading Standards Officer. Your council will also have a list of registered sellers.