

All Aboard!

Preparing for your journey to school by train

A practical guide for safe, confident and independent travel

For many students, travelling to school by train is an exciting new experience and an important step towards independence. While it can seem daunting at first, being prepared and knowing what to do, especially if things don't go to plan, will help you travel safely and confidently from day one.

Before Your First Journey

If possible, make a practice trip before term starts with a parent, trusted adult, or even one of your friends who may also be anxious about day one, just so that you are prepared and know what to expect on the first day of term.

Make Sure You Know:

- Which station you are travelling from
- What time your train normally departs
- Which platform it usually leaves from
- How to get from home to the station and from the station to school
- Alternative routes in case of disruption
- Who to contact if you need help

Please arrive a few minutes before the scheduled departure time to ensure you are ready to board. Train doors close 30 seconds before the departure time shown in the timetable, app, and CIS screens.



A practice run can make your first school journey much less stressful.

Check Before You Travel

Be aware that train services can change due to engineering works, weather, or other disruptions.

Before leaving home:

- Check train times
- Look for service updates
- Allow extra time for unexpected delays
- Make sure your phone is charged
- Make sure you have your ticket and/or allow enough time to purchase your ticket from the station

Recommended Apps For Train Information

These apps can help you stay informed and receive live travel updates:

SE Website - [Live departures and arrivals](#) | [Southeastern](#)

The Southeastern app provides journey planning, live train departures and arrivals, personalised disruption alerts, and real-time journey tracking. Students can receive updates about delays and cancellations, check platform information, see how busy their train is using the SeatFinder feature, and share their journey with family or friends. The app also allows users to store tickets and railcards digitally, making it a useful all-in-one travel companion for daily school journeys.

Key Features Include:

- Real-time train running information
- Personalised delay and disruption alerts
- Live departures, arrivals, and platform details
- Train crowding information with SeatFinder
- Journey tracking and sharing
- Digital ticket and railcard storage
- Delay Repay support for eligible delays
- Favourite routes and stations for quicker updates

Ideal for students travelling on Southeastern services, helping them stay informed and confident throughout their journey.

Download the Southeastern App - [Southeastern app](#) | [Southeastern](#)

The Southeastern app is a great way to help you manage your journey and stay informed when travelling. With the app, you can:

- Plan your journey and buy tickets.
- Receive live travel updates and disruption alerts.
- Store your tickets and Railcard in one place.
- Use the Track My Journey feature to follow your journey in real time and share your progress with family and friends.

Whether you're travelling to school, home, or meeting friends, the app can help you travel with confidence and keep up to date with the latest travel information. Download the Southeastern app from the App Store or Google Play before you travel.



National Rail App - [Real Time Live Trains Board](#) | [National Rail](#)

The official National Rail app provides journey planning, live departures and arrivals, disruption alerts, and train status updates. It also allows users to track trains and receive real-time information about delays and cancellations.

Realtime Trains - [Realtime Trains](#)

A popular independent service providing detailed real-time train running information across the UK rail network.

All the information covered in this guide is available at our stations. If you need travel information, assistance, or support before or during your journey, there are several ways to get help:

- **Station Staff** - Friendly station staff are available to answer questions, provide directions, and help with any concerns you may have.
- **Ticket Offices and Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)** – Where you can buy tickets, get travel information, and find details about your journey.
- **Help and Assistance Points** – These are located at many stations, these allow you to speak directly to a member of staff if you need information or assistance.
- **Customer Information Screens (CIS)** - Check these screens for live train times, platform information, and service updates.

Railway Safety Rules Everyone Should Know & Adhere To!

Railway stations and trains are generally very safe places, but it's important to follow a few simple rules every time you travel.

Stay Behind The Yellow Line

Always wait behind the yellow safety line until your train has stopped and the doors have opened or are ready to be opened.

Never Cross The Tracks

Tracks may carry fast-moving trains that can approach quietly and from either direction. Always use footbridges, subways, or designated crossings provided at the station

Be Aware Of Your Surroundings

Avoid distractions when near the platform edge. Keep headphone volume low and pay attention to announcements, station staff, and information screens.

Mind The Gap

Watch your step when boarding and leaving the train. Some stations have larger gaps between the train and platform.

Keep Doors & Aisles Clear

Allow passengers to leave the train before boarding. Once on board, keep bags and belongings out of aisles and doorways.

Never Attempt To Retrieve Dropped Items

If something falls onto the track, do not try to get it yourself. Inform a member of railway staff who can arrange for it to be retrieved safely.

Stay Off the Tracks and Never Cross the Railway Line

Never enter or attempt to cross the tracks, even if it appears safe to do so. Always use designated bridges, subways, level crossings, and station access routes.

Be Aware Of The Third Rail

Some railway lines are powered by a third rail, which carries a high-voltage electric current and can cause serious injury or death on contact. The third rail may not always be obvious, so never step onto or near the tracks under any circumstances.

Hold Handrails On Stairs & Escalators

Stations can be busy, particularly during peak travel times. Take extra care when using stairs, escalators.

In an Emergency

- Stay calm.
- Follow instructions given from railway staff, and/ or emergency services.
- Contact a parent, carer, or school as soon as it is safe to do so.

Remember The "STOP" Rule

S - Stay alert around trains and platforms.

T - Think ahead and plan your journey.

O - Observe signs, announcements, and railway staff instructions.

P - Protect yourself by following station and train safety rules.

Safety First - No train journey is so important that it's worth taking a risk. Taking an extra minute to stay safe is always the right choice.

Remember that railway staff are there to help if you are unsure about anything.

Travelling Safely

While on your journey:

- Keep your belongings with you at all times and secure.
- Avoid displaying expensive items unnecessarily.
- Travel with friends where possible.
- Be respectful to other passengers.
- Save important contact numbers in your phone.
- Let someone know when you arrive safely.

Report Concerns Immediately

If you see anything unsafe, suspicious, or someone who appears to need help, tell a member of railway staff straight away, and/or report it to the British Transport Police (BTP) on 61016.

Someone Behaving Badly or Making Others Feel Unsafe (Antisocial Behaviour)

If you see someone being disruptive, vandalising property, bullying others, or behaving in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, do not get involved.

Move away from the situation if you can and tell a member of railway staff, the BTP, or another trusted adult.

Remember, You're Not Alone

SE and all railway staff are there to help. If you are worried, lost, unsure where to go, or concerned about someone's behaviour, please don't be afraid to ask a member of staff for help.

When you are on the train, look out for the facilities available to make your journey more comfortable. Many of our trains have plug sockets for charging your devices, free Wi Fi, and toilets. Signs and stickers

on board will show you where to find these facilities when they are available.

Splitting Trains

Please be aware that some trains on our network split into two separate trains at certain stations, including Ashford, Tonbridge and Faversham. It is important that you are travelling in the correct part of the train for your destination. Announcements will be made at stations and on board the train to let you know if the train is due to split and which coaches you should be in. If you are unsure, please ask a member of staff for help before boarding or during your journey.

Short Platforms

Some stations on the Southeastern network have short platforms. This means that not all coaches on the train will be alongside the platform when the train stops, and you may not be able to leave the train from every carriage. There is no safety risk in these situations as the train doors will only open where it is safe to do so. Please listen carefully to announcements and follow any instructions from station or onboard staff. They will let you know if you need to move to a different coach before your stop. If you are unsure, please ask a member of staff at the station or on board the train for assistance.

What To Do If Your Train Is Delayed

Delays happen from time to time, and the most important thing is to stay calm.

If your train is delayed:

- Check information screens, listen out for announcements and/or speak to a member of staff.
- Use a rail app to check for updated travel times, next services etc.
- Stay on the platform unless advised otherwise.
- Inform a parent, carer, or school that you may be late.
- Follow instructions from railway staff.

Most schools understand that transport delays sometimes occur.

What To Do If Your Train Is Cancelled

If your train is cancelled:

- Stay calm and avoid rushing.
- Check for the next available service.
- Look for alternative routes using a rail app.
- Speak to station staff if you need assistance.
- Contact home and school to let them know your situation.
- Never leave the station or accept lifts from strangers.

If you are unsure what to do, speak to a member of railway staff who can help you find the safest way to continue your journey.

Train Etiquette

Help make the train a pleasant place for everyone:

- Keep noise levels low
- Use headphones when listening to music, videos etc.
- Keep bags off empty seats if/when the train is busy
- Take litter with you or use the bins provided

- Offer seats to passengers who may need them more than you

First-Time Traveller Checklist

The Night Before

- Check train times
- Pack your school bag
- Put your ticket/pass somewhere safe
- Charge your phone

At the Station

- Check Customer Information Screens (CIS) boards for your train
- Confirm the platform number where your train will be departing from
- When on the platform ensure you stand behind the yellow line
- Listen for announcements just in case anything changes
- Prepare to board the correct train
- Wait for the train to fully stop before trying to board the train

Preparing to alight the train at your destination

- Make sure you know when your stop is – understand the calling pattern / how many stops, time, etc. until you are familiar with the journey
- Make sure you have all your belongings with you before you alight the train

Useful Information

Choosing the Right Ticket and Saving Money

There are a range of ticket options available to help make regular school travel more affordable. Depending on how often you travel, you may be able to save money with child fares, Railcards, season tickets, Advance tickets, or Off-Peak tickets.

Before buying your tickets, it may be worth taking a look at our [Tickets explained | Southeastern](#) for more information on the different types of tickets and discounts available. If you're unsure which ticket is best for your journey, station ticket office staff will be happy to help. They can explain the available options, recommend the most suitable ticket for your travel needs, and help you find the best value fare to save money where possible.

If you are planning to travel using a season ticket, please allow a little extra time to get it set up, as it can take longer than buying a standard ticket. To avoid any delays on your first journey, we recommend purchasing it in advance, maybe even a day or two before you intend to travel.

- You will also need a passport-sized photograph when buying a season ticket.
- Remember to bring both your ticket and photocard with you every time you travel, as you'll need both with you to validate your season ticket.
- Please also be aware that all tickets including season are non-transferable and cannot be shared.

Assistance & Accessibility

Most customers can simply turn up and go on Southeastern trains without booking any help in advance. Friendly staff are available at many stations and on trains to help make your journey easier.

If you do need help,

- Speak to a member of staff when you arrive at the station.
- Use a station Help Point if no staff are nearby.

Assistance can be requested on the day or booked in advance.

Booking assistance

Recommended if you would like help getting through the station, boarding the train, changing trains, or using a wheelchair ramp.

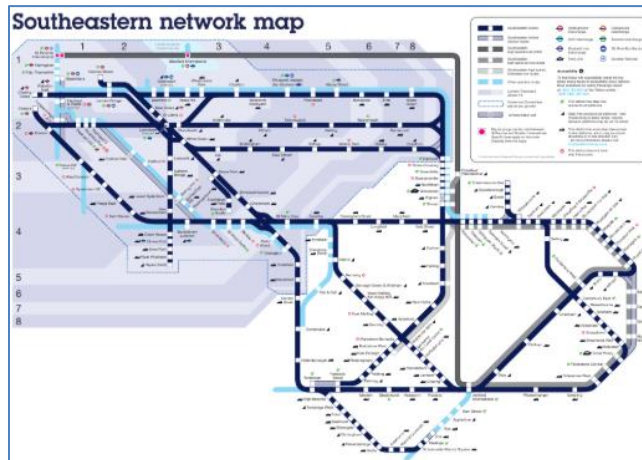
Not essential but, if possible, please book at least 2 hours before you travel.

Call 0800 783 4524 (24/7, *except Christmas Day*).

If a station or train isn't accessible for your needs, Southeastern can arrange alternative accessible transport at no extra cost.

Assistance is available for both visible and non-visible disabilities.

For full details about Passenger Assist, accessibility support, and how to book assistance, please see the full information using the link. [Accessible travel | Southeastern](#)



[Explore our network | Southeastern](#)

Final Thoughts

Travelling by train is a skill that becomes easier with every journey. By planning ahead, staying aware of your surroundings, and knowing what to do when delays occur or things go wrong, you will quickly develop the confidence to travel safely and independently.

Starting a new journey can feel daunting, especially if it's your first time travelling by train to school. If you have any concerns or would like some reassurance, please visit one of our stations where our staff will be happy to talk you through the process, answer your questions, and help you feel more confident about your journey.

Have a great journey and a successful start to the new school year!

Plan ahead • Stay alert • Travel safely

