

What's (Not) Allowed on Air?

PC's Guide, Updated 2019-20

This document is intended as a **reference guide** for Cam FM presenters. **It should not substantively affect your creative freedom!** Use your common sense. Cam FM trusts you to be both sensible and creative, and to apply these rules when and where you need to!

This document is Cam FM's guide to **Ofcom regulations** (as found in the latest version of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code). It offers an **abridged summary** of those rules and regulations, not their complete version. It has **no formal bearing**. Any presenter unsure about interpretation of anything in this document should consult the [official Ofcom guidance](#) for more information, and/or email the Cam FM Programme Controller or committee.

These rules **apply to every show**, pre-recorded or live, that is broadcast on Cam FM.

In general:

'Broadcasters should be familiar with their audience and ensure that programme content can always be justified by the context and the editorial needs of the programme.'

Be careful and sensible. If you're not sure whether you can/should say or play something on air, don't!

Key Principles to be applied

- Be sensitive when discussing topics, ideas and opinions that could cause offence or that relate to crime.
- Be as fair, accurate, and impartial as possible, especially in matters relating to news and current affairs.
- Treat contributors to programmes fairly and without infringing on their privacy: be respectful.

Table of regulations

Relevant Ofcom section	Topic	Advice
1,2	Offensive topics/subjects: swearing, drugs, violence, sex, the paranormal, suicide and self-harm, hypnosis	<p>Never swear: this is Cam FM policy.</p> <p>Never condone, encourage or glamorise drugs, (incl. smoking, alcohol misuse, solvent abuse etc.). In context, reasonable adult discussion of drugs may be acceptable (e.g. in news or documentary programmes), usually with a content warning, and perhaps at a certain time of day.</p> <p>Never portray excessive violence; easily-imitable violence or dangerous behaviour. In context, 'appropriately limited' depictions of violence, usually with a content warning, and usually at certain times of day.</p> <p>Never broadcast BBFC R-18 material; 'adult sex material'; most sexual material. In context, discussion or portrayal of explicit material must strongly be justifiable (e.g. news programmes); it is best avoided where possible. It should have a content warning and should be confined to certain times of day.</p> <p>Never make demonstrations of exorcisms, occults, the paranormal for entertainment, except in context in drama, film and comedy perhaps with a content warning, and always at certain times of day. In context, treat demonstrations of these practices (where they purport to be real) with due objectivity.</p> <p>Never depict or discuss methods of suicide or self-harm.</p>

		<p>Never broadcast material in such a way as to hypnotise or cause adverse reactions among listeners.</p> <p>In context, simulated or fake news may be broadcast in such a way that an audience could not be misled into believing it to be real.</p> <p>In summary, never aim explicitly to cause offence without context or justification. Always provide an appropriate context for material that might cause offence. Context is crucial here. If in doubt about offensive subjects, contact the P.C.</p>
2	Competitions	Always make competitions and voting fair, do not mislead, make the rules explicit, and depict prizes accurately.
3	Crime and disorder	<p>Never broadcast material likely to encourage or incite crime or disorder (including hate speech). Never depict criminal techniques that might facilitate crime.</p> <p>Never discuss people or groups of people abusively or in a derogatory way.</p> <p>Avoid discussing ongoing criminal investigations.</p> <p>Always provide appropriate context when discussing or depicting criminal or disorderly actions/behaviour. (i.e. What does the programme set out to do? What 'position' does it take?)</p>
2,4	Religious programmes	<p>Never discuss views or beliefs of particular religion(s) abusively.</p> <p>Never promote beliefs by stealth or exploit your audience's susceptibilities.</p> <p>Always make clear the particular religion/religious denomination when it is the topic of a programme.</p>
5,6,7	Due impartiality and accuracy	<p>Always report news with due accuracy and due impartiality. Always correct significant mistakes in news quickly and on air.</p> <p>Always include and give due weight an appropriately wide range of significant views on matters of current controversy or public policy. Always adequately represent alternate views on these issues. Never include the views of Cam FM on such matters – nor ever include your personal views if you are on the Cam FM Board or are a Cam FM Committee member.</p> <p>If the programme is part of an editorially-linked series by means of which due impartiality is achieved, always make the series of programmes clear to the audience.</p> <p>If the reporter(s) or presenter(s) have personal interests that may affect the due impartiality of the programme, always make this clear.</p> <p>In some circumstances (e.g. 'personal view' or equiv. programmes), presenters may choose to express their own view(s). This must not affect the overall due impartiality of the programme.</p> <p>If you are a politician, you can never act as a newsreader, interviewer or reporter in news programmes.</p> <p>Never give undue prominence to particular views/people/bodies.</p> <p>Never misrepresent views and facts. Never omit, misrepresent or disregard important facts/details.</p>
6	Elections and referendums coverage	Always comply with due impartiality and accuracy rules, as well as Ofcom's specific elections and referendums guidance for election/referendum periods and election/referendum days (see specific election period guidance document).
7	Fairness	<p>Never treat individuals or organisations unfairly.</p> <p>Never interview or include under-16s without consent from their parent/guardian.</p>

		<p>In almost all cases, never seek material through misrepresentation or deception.</p> <p>Never represent contributions to programmes unfairly. Never omit or misrepresent important facts. This applies to all genres (e.g. dramas).</p> <p>If there is a situation within which an omission of an opportunity to contribute would be unfair to an individual or organisation, offer that opportunity. In the event that your programme is making a significant allegation, give the accused person/organisation good opportunity to respond. If that invitation is declined, this should be made clear on air.</p> <p>If the views of somebody <i>in absentia</i> should be represented, always do this fairly.</p> <p>Always make clear to contributors to programmes: the kind of programme; reason for contribution; time(s) of broadcast; areas of questioning; big changes to programme; contractual rights; whether they will be able to make changes (to a preview). This is 'informed consent'.</p>
8	Privacy, consent	<p>Always be careful to respect the privacy of individuals and organisations in obtaining material for broadcast, esp. under-16s – always collect consent from relevant people. In almost all situations, never infringe on individuals' privacy.</p> <p>Always get permission from management when recording in private places.</p> <p>(Almost) always get permission from people before recording them (incl. telephone calls: identify yourself; explain the call's purpose; state that the call is being recorded). Callers to phone-in shows are deemed to have given consent to broadcast.</p> <p>If obtaining material for entertainment (only) by surreptitious means (recording; doorstepping; wind-up calls), always check that such actions do not constitute significant infringement of privacy and always obtain consent from identifiable persons before broadcast.</p> <p>Never record people caught up in emergencies or accidents. Never pressure people in distress to take part in recording. Never broadcast material involving trauma (past or present) that has potential to cause distress to victims or their relatives.</p> <p>Never reveal the location of a person's home.</p> <p>Fringe cases surrounding privacy (surreptitious recording, 'doorstepping', etc.) largely revolve around whether or not there is a story in the public interest, and whether or not that material might be obtained by other means. If in doubt about matters relating to privacy, contact the P.C.</p>
10	Commercials, commercial references	<p>Always clearly signal programming associated with a commercial agreement.</p> <p>Always clearly separate adverts from your programmes (Cam FM usually achieves this through the top-of-the-hour jingle).</p> <p>Never make commercial references in news programmes.</p> <p>Never allow a commercial arrangement to affect your selection of music.</p>
10	Charity broadcasts	<p>Always broadcast charity streams free of charge and free from commercial arrangements with that charity.</p> <p>Always make clear the purpose of the appeal and the amount raised when making appeals for donations.</p>

Special notes for this table

- 'In context' refers to material being 'editorially justified'
 - Certain material might be editorially justified only if it is broadcast at certain times of day (see below), or it is a certain kind of programme (perhaps e.g. documentary), or it is broadcast with certain context or has disclaimers (explicit verbal warnings about material).
- 'Certain times of day'
 - Certain material might be editorially justified only if broadcast 'at times when children are particularly likely to be listening'. Interpretation of this rule may or may not be obvious. If you're worried about whether material is suitable for your timeslot, check with the Programme Controller.
- 'Due impartiality'; 'due weight'
 - These are especially important for programmes discussing issues and items in the news. Impartiality is 'due' as it might not apply in an equal manner to *every single* view but consists of being impartial on all the main *appropriate or relevant* views *in context* (especially in matters of current political or industrial controversy).
 - These views will be accorded 'due weight' relative to their importance, standing, or relevance – again, in context. In practice, this might mean that the main arguments and counterarguments are discussed equally, and 'fringe' arguments to a lesser extent, or not at all. For more information about these principles, consult the Ofcom guidance (esp. Section 5).