

Summary of Age Limits

PRODUCT	MINIMUM AGE
Alcohol	18
Confectionary containing alcohol	16
Cigarettes including from vending machines	18
Fireworks including sparklers	18
Party poppers, caps, cracker snaps, novelty matches, serpents, throwdowns	16
Videos, DVDs, computer games	12, 15, 18, 18Restricted
Cigarette lighter fuel, refill canisters containing butane	18
Solvents e.g. solvent based glues, marker pens, correction fluid	18
Lottery tickets, scratch cards	16
Imitation weapons	18
Offensive weapons, knives	18
Aerosol paint, petrol	16
Crossbows	18

Alcohol

It is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 18. In addition: -

It is illegal for a young person to buy or attempt to buy alcohol. It is a criminal offence for any person to buy or attempt to buy alcohol for a person under the age of 18 years.

Confectionary containing Alcohol

Sweets containing alcohol including liqueur chocolates etc must not be sold to children under 16 years. The maximum penalty for not following the law is a level 5 fine of up to £5000 under the Licensing Act 2003 and the liquor licence may be removed or suspended.

Summary of Age Limits

Cigarettes

It is illegal to sell tobacco products to children under the age of 18 years even if they are for someone else including their parents. It is not a defence that the child or young person looked over 18. You must take steps to establish the age of the child or young person - if there is any doubt as to a person's age then they should not be sold cigarettes.

Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigarette papers, cigars, pipe tobacco, products containing tobacco intended for oral use or nasal use and smoking mixtures intended as a substitute for tobacco.

It is only permissible to sell cigarettes in packets of 10 or more in their original packaging and must not sell loose cigarettes or split packets. It is an offence to break open packets and sell loose cigarettes to both adults and children. Sale of cigarettes to any person under the age of 18 years could result in a fine of up to £2500. It is a requirement that a clear notice stating "It is illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18" is displayed. The sign must have letters at least 36 mm high, be (A3 size) 297mmx420mm and be visible where tobacco products are sold. Failure to display this sign then you could result in a fine of up to £1000.

Cigarette vending machines

It is an offence to allow persons under the age of 18 years to obtain cigarettes from vending machines. Vending machines should be placed where they can be seen and where their use can be controlled. Where it is evident that a person under 18 has used a vending machine, a Court can make an order regulating its use or its removal. A sign must be displayed on the vending machine stating "This machine is only for the use of people aged 18 or over". The sign itself should be at least 60mm x 100mm with the letters being at least 6mm in height.

Fireworks

It is an offence to sell fireworks to any person under the age of 18 years (remember sparklers are fireworks). It is an offence to sell party poppers, caps, cracker snaps, novelty matches, serpents and throw-downs to anyone who you feel or looks under the age of 16 years. Sale of these products to children could result in a fine of up to £5000 in the magistrates court, or face a term of imprisonment of up to 6 months or both. Firework vendors must display the statutory notice (min size 400mm x 300mm, letters at least 16mm in height) with the wording: - "It is illegal to sell adult fireworks to anyone under the age of 18" and "It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to possess adult fireworks in a public place".

Summary of Age Limits

Video cassette tapes/DVDs/computer games

A vendor must not sell, rent or supply a video cassette or DVD unless the British Board of Film Classification has classified it. It is an offence to supply (including hiring out) a video cassette tape or DVD to a person who is under the age marked on the video cassette tape/DVD. Most computer games are exempt from classification but if the game is classified then it must not be supplied to a person who is under the age marked on the game. The age restrictions are 12, 15 and 18.

The maximum fine for selling or renting an age restricted cassette/DVD to a child under the specified age is £5000 and/or up to 6 months imprisonment. Restricted 18 video cassettes and DVDs can be supplied only in licensed sex shops to persons 18 years of age and older.

Cigarette lighter fuel

It is an offence to sell or supply cigarette lighter fuel or any lighter re-fill canister containing butane or any other substance containing butane to any person under the age of 18 years.

Intoxicating solvents

Examples are solvent based glues, aerosols, dry cleaning fluid, correction fluid and thinners, marker pens, antifreeze. It is an offence to sell or supply any substance to a person under the age of 18 years, which the vendor believes they may inhale for the purpose to cause intoxication.

Lottery tickets

It is an offence to supply lottery tickets and scratch cards to children under 16 years. Vendors must display a notice in your shop warning against supplying lottery tickets and scratch cards to children under the age of 16 years. It is illegal to supply these items to a child even if they say they are for their parents or for another adult. It is important to note that if a vendor sells lottery tickets to a child then they, the vendor, may be breaching the contract with the supplier of the Lottery Terminal, which could result ultimately in the terminal being removed.

Imitation Firearms

Imitation firearms are items that have the appearance of being a firearm, whether or not they are capable of firing any shot, bullet or other missile. It is an offence to sell an imitation firearm to anyone under the age of 18. It is also an offence for anyone under 18 to purchase one. The maximum penalty for breaching the restrictions is 6 months imprisonment and/or a £5000 fine.

Crossbows

It is an offence to sell or hire a crossbow to a person under the age of 18 years. The maximum penalty on summary conviction is 6 months imprisonment, a fine of £5000 or both.

Summary of Age Limits

Knives

It is an offence to sell knives to any person under the age of 18 years. Vendors cannot market a knife in a way that indicates it is suitable for combat or to encourage violent behaviour. The maximum penalty on summary conviction is 6 months imprisonment or a fine of £5000 or both.

Aerosol paints

It is an offence to sell an aerosol paint container to a person under the age of 16 years. Maximum penalty £2500.

Petrol

Vendors must not sell petrol to any person under the age of 16 years. No person under the age of 18 years should be left in sole charge of a filling station.

Steps to avoid breaking the law

- Never assume the age of the young person.
- If in doubt, or if they look young, then ask the person their age and always seek proof.
- If they cannot prove their age then refuse to sell.
- Ensure that all staff (including temporary and part time staff) are fully trained to not sell age restricted products to children. Document staff training.
- Regularly remind staff not to sell age restricted products to children and provide regular training. It is also good practice to maintain a refusal book.
- Display the statutory notices for the sale of cigarettes, fireworks and lottery tickets.
- Also display notices about lighter refills, alcohol and solvents.
- Separate age restricted videos from general videos and keep solvents out of view to make it easier for you to control their supply.
- Cigarette vending machines must be located where their usage can be monitored and controlled.
- Consider a minimum 21 policy for any 18 restricted products such as alcohol, fireworks, cigarettes or knives.