

Reference: 01446012

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Freedom of Information: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information for a list of words which are banned from broadcast on TV and radio services. We received this request on 21 April 2022 and have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request

You asked:

Is it possible for me to get a list of all the Ofcom banned words or other such words that may or may not be used in Radio or Television, this will range from Mild to Severe.

Our response

I can confirm that there is no list of words which Ofcom has determined cannot be broadcast on TV and radio services. We consider complaints about the broadcast of offensive language on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the relevant factors of the specific broadcast. When considering such complaints, we assess the broadcast against Rules 1.14 – 1.16 (in relation to protecting the under-eighteens from offensive language) and Rule 2.3 (in relation to harm and offence and generally accepted standards) of the [Broadcasting Code](#), in addition to such contextual factors as the scheduling and editorial content of a programme, likely audience expectations, and freedom of expression. For further information on this, please see [Rule 2.3](#) of the Code and the [accompanying guidance notes](#).

In our assessment, we also take into account relevant research in this area, such as our research into public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio. Please find a copy of the 'quick reference guide' to our 2021 research here: [Public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and Radio: Quick Reference Guide \(ofcom.org.uk\)](#). This document aims to provide all stakeholders, but broadcasters in particular, with useful information about how acceptable or unacceptable viewers and listeners regard the broadcast of specific potentially offensive words, and sets out tables classifying the perceived severity of potentially offensive words. Please note that the document contains highly offensive language and discussion of content which may cause offence.

If you have any queries, then please contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Childs

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire

SK9 5AF