

Ten Top Tips



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Ten Top Tips from the ICO to help public authorities comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

1. **Be positive.** Greater transparency is good for the public and democracy.
2. **Be active.** Use Publication Schemes pro-actively. Pro-active publication saves time, effort, resources and money.
3. **Anticipate requests** – don't wait to be asked.
4. **Why not?** The Act presumes disclosure. Public authorities should meet people's requests unless there is a good reason within the Act not to. Organisations do not have to withhold information if an exemption applies.
5. **Get talking.** A dialogue between the requester and the public authority can help you resolve requests more quickly.
6. **Don't fear precedent.** All decisions should be made on their own merits and on a case by case basis at the time of the request.
7. **Give clear reasons.** If you are turning down a request, write a clear Refusal Notice. Properly drafted and fully explained refusals can help avoid reviews and complaints.
8. **Give more if it helps.** Supply additional information where it is useful, such as an explanation of the data you are supplying.
9. **Meet it or beat it.** You must meet the 20 day deadline – beat it if possible.
10. **Help yourself.** Look at the ICO's guidance on www.ico.gov.uk for more information on freedom of information, as well as information on data protection, or you can ring our Helpline on 01625 545745.