

Minimum Wage: *Every Hour Counts*

The April 2026 rates, which time must be paid, what can be taken from your pay, and how to report underpayment.

 Last reviewed: October 2026

 GOV.UK · Low Pay Commission · Acas · LRA

 UK-wide (rates the same everywhere; how to complain differs in Northern Ireland)

ukworkrights.co.uk

What is the minimum wage from 1 April 2026?

- Aged 21 and over (the National Living Wage): £12.71 an hour
- Aged 18 to 20: £10.85
- Under 18 and over school leaving age: £8.00
- Apprentices: £8.00
- The rates are the same in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and change on 1 April every year.

▲ WATCH OUT

The National Living Wage starts at 21, not 23 or 25.
That changed on 1 April 2024.

Age, apprentices and school leaving age

- The minimum wage applies to most workers. The genuinely self-employed are not covered.
- It starts at school leaving age, not on a set birthday. Below school leaving age there is no minimum wage at all.
- Apprentice rate: apprentices under 19, or 19 or over in the first year of their apprenticeship.
- After the first year, an apprentice aged 19 or over gets the rate for their age. Example: aged 21, £8.00 in the first year, then £12.71.

Which time must be paid

You must be paid at least the minimum wage for all the time you are at work and required to be working, including:

- extra time added to your shift, such as a team handover or security checks on the way in and out
- time at the workplace when you are required to be available for work
- travel in connection with work, including from one job to the next (but not between home and work)
- training, or travelling to training
- waiting to collect goods, meet someone for work or start a job

Rest breaks you take do not count. Your average pay per hour, over the period each pay packet covers, must be at least the minimum wage.

Deductions and accommodation

- A deduction cannot normally take your pay below the minimum wage, even if you agree to it.
- Some deductions are allowed: tax, National Insurance, repaying a loan or an advance of wages, repaying an accidental overpayment, and accommodation provided by your employer.
- Accommodation: from 1 April 2026 the most an employer can count towards the minimum wage is £11.10 a day (the accommodation offset).
- Retail: money taken for till shortages or missing stock cannot be more than 10% of your gross pay on any pay day. This applies across the UK.

What you can do

- Check your payslips and the hours you worked. The government's "Check your pay" page is gov.uk/checkyourpay.
- England, Wales and Scotland: free advice from Acas, and the Acas "Pay and work rights" helpline and complaints service.
- HMRC enforces the minimum wage on behalf of the Fair Work Agency and considers all complaints from workers.
- You can also claim unpaid wages at an employment tribunal. Before most claims you must notify Acas for early conciliation.
- Time limit (England, Wales and Scotland): 6 months less 1 day if you were paid (or last paid, for a series) on or after 1 October 2026; 3 months less 1 day if that pay date was before 1 October 2026. A claim cannot go back more than 2 years.

Same rates, different route

- The rates are the same in Northern Ireland.
- Contact the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) on 03300 555 300. You can also report underpayment to HMRC: the LRA or the Acas helpline can transfer you.
- Before an industrial tribunal claim, notify the LRA, not Acas.
- Time limit: 3 months less 1 day from the date you were paid (the last one, for a series). The 1 October 2026 change to 6 months does not apply.

Frequently asked questions

Q I'm 17 and still at school. Do I get £8.00?

Not until you are over school leaving age. The date depends on where you live and when your birthday falls — the full guide explains each nation.

Q Does travel to my first job of the day count?

Travel between home and work does not count. Travel between one job and the next does.

Q My employer takes money for my room. Is that allowed?

Up to £11.10 a day can count towards the minimum wage (from 1 April 2026).

FREE RIGHTS GUIDANCE

Check your *minimum wage rights*

Get plain-English guidance on your rights and your employer's legal duties.

ACAS

0300 123 1100

Mon–Fri 8am–6pm · acas.org.uk

LRA (NORTHERN IRELAND)

03300 555 300

Labour Relations Agency

CITIZENS ADVICE

England 0800 144 8848

Wales 0800 702 2020 · Scotland 0800 028 1456

ADVICE NI

0800 915 4604

Northern Ireland

UK WORK RIGHTS — FREE GUIDE

**Minimum Wage in the UK
2026**

ukworkrights.co.uk/guide-minimum-wage.html

General rights guidance only — not legal advice · © UK Work Rights Ltd · Company No. 17228507 · ICO Registration No. ZC239465 · Registered office: 71–75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2H 9JQ ·

hello@ukworkrights.co.uk

Published by UK Work Rights Ltd

Drafted with AI assistance, using official sources.

Contains public sector information licensed under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).

KEEP GOING

More free *toolbox talks*

TOOLBOX TALK

Zero Hours Contracts

ukworkrights.co.uk/toolbox-zerohours.html

TOOLBOX TALK

Holiday Entitlement & Pay

ukworkrights.co.uk/toolbox-holiday.html

TOOLBOX TALK

Statutory Sick Pay

ukworkrights.co.uk/toolbox-sickpay.html

FREE GUIDE

Minimum Wage in the UK 2026

ukworkrights.co.uk/guide-minimum-wage.html