

# Deeson.

An audit of train company websites against  
the retail information code of practice

Office of Rail and Road

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# 1. Context

## The Action Plan for information on rail fares and ticketing

This research was commissioned by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to deliver a commitment from the action plan for information on rail fares and ticketing<sup>1</sup>, published on 13 December 2016.

The action plan sets out clear and agreed steps between Government, industry and consumer groups.

The actions are organised into four themes, which cover:

- How to choose a ticket
- What to buy
- Where to buy
- How to buy

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/579850/action-plan-for-information-on-rail-fares-and-ticketing.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579850/action-plan-for-information-on-rail-fares-and-ticketing.pdf)

*An Audit of Train Operating Company Websites Against the Retail Information Code of Practice*

and are designed to help deliver improvements that will make it easier for passengers to choose and buy the most appropriate ticket for their journey.

The purpose of the audit, which is the subject of this report, was to evaluate train company websites against the principles set out in the industry's Code of Practice for retail information for rail tickets and services<sup>2</sup>.

Essentially, to understand the extent to which train company websites provide the information that passengers need to make informed decisions and whether they do so in a way that is suitably prominent, timely, and clear.

The methodology and approach used to conduct the audit are set out in the following Chapter. The key findings and recommendations follow that.

In addition to the action covered by this report, the action plan includes a number of other actions that relate to the

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<https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/media-centre/press-releases/2015/186-2015-03-25-1.html>

2

provision of information about fares and tickets and to train company websites.

## The Code of Practice

The Code of Practice, which the ORR helped to develop, was designed to provide guidance for train operating companies (and third party retailers) on, and promote best practice in, meeting consumer law and industry standards associated with the provision of information to passengers in connection with the sale and use of rail products and services.

It was developed with input from train operating companies, other ticket retailers, and passenger bodies in response to research that showed that the quality of information provided to passengers was not always sufficient to help them make the best decisions when choosing, buying and using the products and services available.

The Code was designed around four principles that set out the information that is important to passengers and describe how this information might best be provided.

Principle 1 sets out the information that might be relevant to a passenger's decision making, whether before, during or after their journey. The list is not exhaustive, and includes

information that is likely to be relevant to most passengers, most of the time, as well as information that might only be relevant to some passengers, depending on their individual needs, the type of ticket they are buying, and/or the purpose of their journey.

Principles 2, 3 and 4 provides some guidance on how the information outlined in Principle 1, and other relevant information, should be provided.

## Other work on ticket retailing and information

As well commissioning this report to look at the information provided on train company websites, the ORR is working with train companies and other stakeholders to improve information provision in other areas.

## Ticket Vending Machines

The ORR has recently published (in February 2017) the findings of its review of ticket vending machines (TVMs)<sup>3</sup>.

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<http://orr.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/2017/rail-regulator-calls-for-ticket-machine-price-guarantee>

The ORR undertook this review based on concerns about the quality of the information provided to passengers using TVMs to purchase train tickets.

These concerns were summarised in its June 2016 “Measuring Up” report as covering five key areas: the use of jargon; information on the range of products; information on ticket restrictions; the timing of off-peak sales; and the filtering of fares.

The results of the research showed that overall 1 in 5 mystery shoppers selected a more expensive ticket than necessary or were at risk of a penalty fare when using a ticket machine. Of those, 13% would have suffered financial detriment as result of not choosing the appropriate ticket.

The research identified a number of areas of good practice where train operators should focus their efforts. These included the provision of clear, useable and timely information on the range of products available from TVMs, ticket restrictions and validities, and on and off peak sales.

The ORR also recommended that train operators introduce a voluntary TVM price guarantee to give a refund of the additional ticket costs to passengers who find that they could have bought a cheaper ticket for the same journey.

## Passenger compensation

Following the publication of its update report in December 2016<sup>4</sup>, the ORR is also continuing to work with train companies to deliver improvements to their compensation arrangements.

These improvements relate to the provision of information about compensation and passengers’ awareness of compensation, as well as to processes for claiming compensation.

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<http://orr.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/2016/delay-refunds-regulator-says-some-progress-made-but-train-operators-must-do-more>

## 2. Methodology

The methodology used for this audit combined an expert review by usability experts and an evaluation by real users in the context of real world scenarios to meet the research objectives. Both parts of the audit used the *Code of Practice on Retail Information for Rail Tickets and Services*<sup>2</sup> as a basis for the review. These activities were carried out during February and March 2017.

### 2.1 Expert review

An expert review is a systematic review and evaluation against criteria to provide quantitative measures and qualitative insights.

A framework was developed to review the compliance of each Train Operating Company website with the criteria set out in the code of practice.

For each piece of information a rating was given based on the scales below. The scales relate to the principles<sup>1</sup> outlined in the *Code of Practice on Retail Information for Rail Tickets and Services*<sup>2</sup>. Information is split into primary and secondary for the purposes of assessment<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Noted as P1, P2, P3 and P4 in the table below.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.atoc.org/download/clientfiles/files/publicationsdocuments/2015-03\\_retail\\_information\\_CoP.pdf](http://www.atoc.org/download/clientfiles/files/publicationsdocuments/2015-03_retail_information_CoP.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Information is considered primary if it is required during the selection and booking process. Information is considered secondary if it is useful supplementary information.

	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Provided (P1)</b>	This information is available in full to the user.	A significant amount of the required information is available to the user.	This information is either not provided, or is significantly lacking in substance.

<b>Prominent (P2)</b>	<p>1. Primary information is provided prominently during the booking process.</p> <p>2. Secondary information is well signposted on the site.</p>	<p>1. Primary information is well signposted and easy to access during the booking process.</p> <p>2. Secondary information is fairly easy to access on the site.</p>	<p>1. Primary information is hard to find or is difficult to access during the booking process.</p> <p>2. Secondary information is hard to find or is difficult to access on the site.</p>
<b>Timely (P2)</b>	Information is provided at appropriate times in the ticket selection process.	Information is provided during the ticket selection process but not at the most relevant time.	Information is either not present, or not clearly signposted during the ticket selection process.
<b>Clear (P2, P3)</b>	The information provided is stated clearly, is free of industry jargon and does not mislead.	Whilst some industry jargon may be used, the message is still mostly clear, easy to understand for the user and does not mislead.	The information is either not present, or presented in such a way that it is not clearly explained, hard for the user to understand or misleading.

A sample of a full expert review can be found in [Appendix B](#)

## 2.2 User testing

User testing is the testing of services with real world users. Users are recruited within suitable demographics and are provided with context and a set of tasks to complete.

Five scenarios were developed to test how well different types of information is provided. For each site, three users tested each scenario, making a total of fifteen user tests per site. Users were asked to provide written feedback and ratings that aligned with the code of practice. Each test video was reviewed for observations on both ease of access of information and general usability.

Each scenario followed a similar test pattern:

1. [TASK] Search for tickets as defined in the scenario.
2. [TASK] Select tickets and continue through to payment.
3. [WRITTEN ANSWER] What information helped make your decision?
4. [RANK 1-5] Ease of supplying particular criteria defined in the scenario.
5. [TASK] Search out additional information as defined in the scenario.
6. [TASK] Find out if there are any restrictions or terms and conditions for your selected journey that you should be aware of.
7. [WRITTEN ANSWER] What type of ticket did you select and what terms and conditions were associated with it? For example, restricted refund rights, what times it is valid at, and what trains you can use.
8. [RANK 1-5] How confident are you that the information you were provided during the selection process helped you make a good decision when selecting tickets?



9. [RANK 1-5] How prominent or easily accessible was the information that helped you make your ticket selection?
10. [RANK 1-5] How clear and easy to understand was the information during the selection and booking process? (e.g. free of jargon, clearly stated etc.)
11. [RANK 1-5] Overall, how easy did you find the selection and booking process on this site?
12. [WRITTEN ANSWER] What part(s) of the selection, booking process and information worked well, or were easy to use and understand?
13. [WRITTEN ANSWER] What part(s) of the selection, booking process and information did not work well, or needed improvement?

Full scenarios and user demographics can be found in [Appendix C](#).

# 3. Summary

## 3.1 Overall

Twenty four websites were audited using the Expert Review and User Testing methodologies described in Chapter 2.

Of these there were some anomalies. Merseyrail, Heathrow Express, and Gatwick Express only provide information about their own services. As a result, these sites were not subject to User Testing as the scenarios were designed to cover journeys across the national rail network. All three of these sites have been excluded from any average marks mentioned in this report. While not a train company website, the National Rail Enquiries site was also included as a comparator.

There were 22 pieces of information evaluated in the Expert Review against four measures; Provision, Prominence, Clarity and Timeliness. Each piece of information was scored 0, 1 or 2 as per the scales described in Chapter 2.1. A piece of information that scored a 0 for Provision subsequently scored a 0 for Prominence, Timeliness, and Clarity.

Overall we discovered that most of the relevant information was provided on all of the sites that we reviewed. The notable exceptions to this included information about current delays & cancellations and specific terms and conditions around railcards and group travel. Information about bike / luggage storage and amenities such as catering & wifi was also often omitted.

It was also found that, when information was provided, it was provided at an appropriate point. The main exception to this being information about travelling with a bike and on-train facilities, which had to be proactively looked for.

With regard to the prominence of information, this generally scored lower across all sites. This was largely down to information being hidden behind icons or links that were not clearly labelled.

Finally, with regard to the clarity of information, this scored similarly well to timeliness across all sites. Notable areas where clarity scored lower was in relation to terms and conditions, route validity, and travel time validity.

## 3.2 Provision of information

Mostly, the information that is outlined in the code was provided on all of the audited websites.

On average, across all information and websites this category scored 1.82 / 2 in the Expert Review.

In the User Testing ranking related to Provision, *“How confident are you that the information you were provided during the selection process helped you make a good decision when selecting tickets?”*, users rated the sites on average 2.17 on a scale of 1 (positive) to 5 (negative).

Both of these scores provide a good indication that information is being provided and that users feel they are being given the information they need to help them make a decision.

Where information was not provided, either fully or partially, it broadly fell into the following categories:

- On the day delays / cancellations (particularly where they concerned the services of other train operators);

- Key terms and conditions for applied railcards or discounts, most commonly for Group Save tickets;
- Class of travel, where class differed on a multi-leg journey, e.g. where First Class was not available for the whole journey;
- Additional information, such as on-train facilities, or arrangements for travelling with a bike or luggage (when this was provided, it was almost always in relation to the train company’s own routes/services); and
- Information about season tickets and associated terms and conditions.

## 3.3 Prominence of information

The Prominence of information received the lowest ranking/scores on average from the Expert Reviews (1.4) and User Testing (2.26).

However, it is worth considering the scoring scale definitions used for Prominence when drawing conclusions from these scores.

Information was scored as a 2 when it was displayed prominently on the page, and a 1 when it was well

signposted or provided via a link. In many situations, displaying all the required information in one place would clutter the page and could appear confusing so, in these situations, a score of 1 may in fact be acceptable or indeed preferable.

There were a number of themes that emerged with regards to prominence:

- In many instances an icon was used to represent extra data. Sometimes these icons were large and clear, but a lot of the time they were small and unintuitive, it was not clear what they represented. Information such as the terms and conditions of ticket types was often overlooked by users as a result;
- Other important terms and conditions and/or restrictions, such as those specific to Groupsave discounts, the use of Railcards, and permitted times of travel (e.g. off-peak times) were often only found by users when they were prompted via a task in the user testing to specifically look for this information.
- Where information such as that about the arrangements for travelling with bikes or luggage, or about on-train facilities was provided it was not

prominent, and often on another area of the site and not during the booking process (not timely).

One key takeaway from these findings is that it is clear that users often only find information when it is either put directly in front of them (very prominent) or it is very clearly signposted. When information is provided behind unclear signposting (such as small or unrecognisable icons and links) it is very likely to be missed.

In many instances during the user testing, we noticed that our test users would only find some information once we prompted them to look for it, demonstrating the lack of prominence of certain information and/or awareness that it might be relevant to their decision.

## 3.4 Timeliness of information

Timeliness of information was not assessed by ranking in the user testing however, when the information was provided, it generally scored well in the Expert Review, being provided at a point in the ticket selection process to be useful to the user in terms of being able to factor it into their decision.

Where information was not provided in a timely manner, it was most often related to information such as that about travelling with luggage or a bike and on-train facilities, although, in some instances, this also included more

important terms and conditions such as those relating to the use of Railcards and group tickets, and information about travel time validity.

## 3.5 Clarity of information

Interestingly, clarity of information scored best in the user testing (2.07), with users feeling like they had been communicated with clearly. In the Expert Review, clarity of information scored similarly well to timeliness of information but the more interesting finding here relates to the particular pieces or types of information that scored lower on for clarity.

Whereas Timeliness scored lower on things like the arrangements for travelling with a bike or luggage, Clarity scored lower in relation to more important information. This tended to be because of the use of ambiguous language and/or industry 'jargon'.

Examples of the Clarity issues that were highlighted during the audit include:

- It was not always clear which legs of the journey are affected by alternative transport arrangements;
- In some of the ticket selection tools used by some train companies, it was not immediately obvious, in the

presentation of results, which ticket prices applied to which journeys;

- Terms used to explain ticket validities/restrictions, such as “Any permitted route”, “Not valid on HS1”, “Off-Peak services only”, “Not valid at certain times”, and “London Terminals”, were often not well understood by users;
- Sometimes information that was clear, such as “by the route and Train Operator shown” was made unclear because this information was not then shown as stated;
- When booking first class travel it was not always clear which legs of the journey had first class services;
- The description of connecting services were not well understood, such as travel by ‘transfer’ to describe a bus, walk or London Underground connecting service;
- Ticket usage information, such as “London Zones 1-6” and “Zone U1\* London” to describe the interaction with London Underground services were not readily understood; and
- When describing a type of seat that customers could reserve in the checkout process, “airline style” for seat preference was not well understood.

Whilst the user testing scores suggest users were generally happy with the Clarity of information, this shouldn't be cause to dismiss the frequent instances where industry language was used in relation to important ticket terms or restrictions. It is possible that the positive user test scores for Clarity

could, at least in part, be down to misplaced confidence in their understanding of the information they consumed, rather than a genuine understanding of it.

It is important that all information is provided in clear language that is readily understood by customers, without the use of any industry jargon that may cause confusion.

## 4. Key findings

This section sets out the recurrent themes that were identified from the combined activities of the Expert Review and the User Testing across the 24 websites covered by the audit.

### 4.1 GroupSave discounts

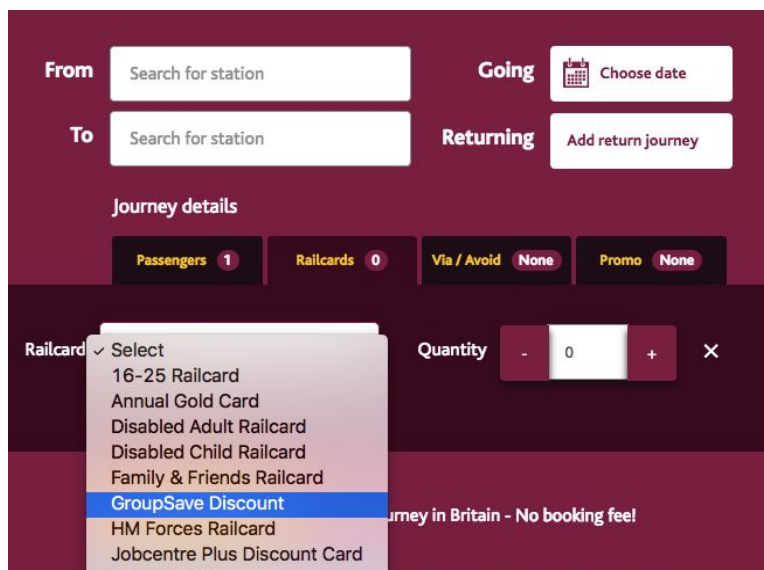
The majority of the websites audited failed to provide group discounts automatically and/or provide information about group discounts prominently and clearly, although some sites did perform well. Examples of these issues are set out below.

#### 4.1.1 The GroupSave discount was often not applied automatically

Approximately one third of the audited websites did not apply GroupSave discounts automatically when booking the relevant number of tickets. Instead, these websites required users to apply it themselves by adding a 'GroupSave discount' via the dropdown box used for adding a Railcard, despite GroupSave not being a railcard. An example of this is shown in *Figure 4.1a*.

*"I couldn't find any reference to a GroupSave ticket, although it might have been implicitly included in my ticket price."*

Figure 4.1a



All users who did not have prior knowledge of using the Railcard dropdown menu to access a GroupSave discount were unsuccessful in applying this discount when booking tickets for a group of four adults.

Of the sites that utilised the Railcard dropdown menu to access the GroupSave discount, only a couple clearly labelled the menu box as “Railcards/Groupsave”, rather than just “Railcards”, as demonstrated in Figure 4.1b. Despite this, some users still did not understand what ‘GroupSave’ meant and failed to select this option when buying tickets for a group of four people.

*“I’m not sure what should happen if I choose the GroupSave railcard - should I be looking out for a particular row for groupsave in the ticket selection grid? I only knew to look for a GroupSave railcard because my friend told me about this, otherwise I wouldn’t have known. This should be visible as an option in the results automatically, rather than having to select the railcard first”*

Additionally, these sites did not actively suggest applying the GroupSave railcard when an applicable journey was searched for. For example, when planning a journey with three adults where the GroupSave discount would apply, the ticket prices offered were full price with no warning or notification that a discount was available by applying the GroupSave “railcard”.



“I selected a Group Save railcard because I’ve recently learnt from a friend that this could be used when travelling in a group, but I wouldn’t have known to do this otherwise. I’m still not sure whether this means I’m supposed to have a card, or how many of us need one.”

The screenshot shows a train ticket booking interface with the following elements:

- Navigation tabs: Buy Tickets, Check Service, Next Train, Stansted Express.
- Origin/destination fields: From [Enter origin station] To [Enter destination station].
- Outbound/Return sections with date pickers (03/03/2017 and a dashed line) and time pickers (12:45 and 13:45).
- Via/Avoid field with a plus icon.
- Adults (16+) count: 1, Child (5-15) count: 0.
- Add Railcards/GroupSave field with a plus icon.
- One way / Open return radio buttons.
- Find times and tickets button.
- Looking for season tickets? link.

It was evident from the user testing that only the users who had prior knowledge of the GroupSave “railcard” were successful in applying a GroupSave discount, otherwise users were unaware that this discount existed or were under the impression that this was applied automatically to the ticket price.

Figure 4.1b

## 4.1.2 GroupSave terms and conditions were often not shown prominently

Where websites did apply GroupSave discounts automatically, the application of the discount and associated terms and conditions were not always shown prominently.

For example, some websites indicated that a GroupSave discount had been applied by showing a small 'G' icon next to the ticket price or name, but this was not very clear. Nor was it clear that further (key) information could be obtained by hovering over this icon. An example of this is shown in *figures 4.1c and 4.1d*.

Figure 4.1c

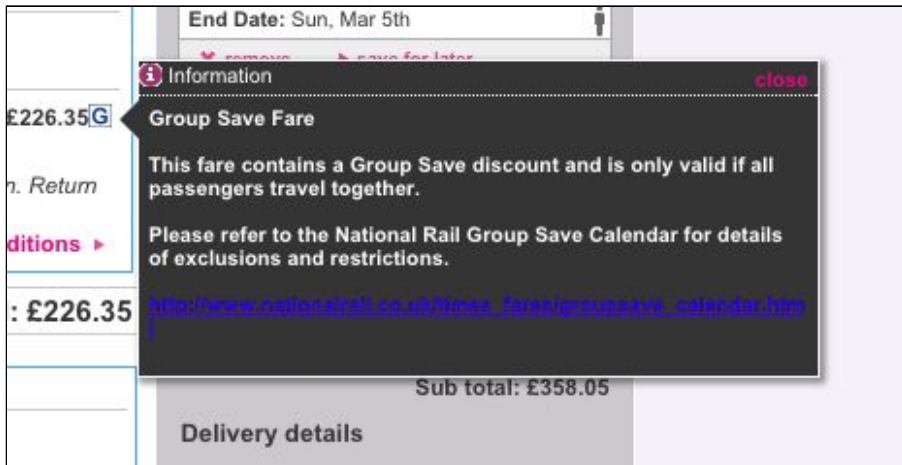


Figure 4.1d



Two of the audited websites failed to apply a GroupSave discount automatically or offer the discount as a manual option to users. These sites also failed to notify users that cheaper tickets with group discounts could be available on other websites.

### 4.1.3 GroupSave discounts were sometimes applied automatically and shown prominently

Approximately one quarter of the audited sites did provide the GroupSave discount automatically and showed this discount prominently in the results.

As shown in figures 4.1e and 4.1f the icons used to show that the GroupSave discount had been applied are clear and logical, explaining how the discount works and including a 'GroupSave' label for extra clarity. The terms and conditions associated with the GroupSave discount are also shown prominently within the ticket details drop down, with a link to read further details.

*"It automatically selected the GroupSave option which was good"*

*"It showed me that I got a GroupSave discount so I was getting the cheapest tickets for my money."*

**Figure 4.1e**

16:25 CBW → 17:23 STP - Wed 15 Mar

Best value ticket

Std GroupSave - save £41.80

Super Off-Peak Day Single £81.00 ✓

Flexible ticket valid on off-peak trains only

Canterbury East or Canterbury → London Terminals\* West\*

In addition to the normal permitted routes, this ticket is also valid for travel on Southeastern high speed services.

▼ Show ticket details

4 Adults at £20.25 GroupSave Discount £81.00

This fare contains a GroupSave discount and is only valid if all passengers travel together. [See details of exclusions and restrictions.](#)

**Figure 4.1f**

16:00 VIC → 16:30 GTW - Wed 15 Mar

Best value ticket

Std GroupSave + Discount - save £32.80

Anytime Single £46.80 ○

London Victoria → Gatwick Airport

Travel is allowed via any permitted route.

▼ Show ticket details

4 Adults at £11.70 GroupSave Discount £46.80

This fare contains a GroupSave discount and is only valid if all passengers travel together. [See details of exclusions and restrictions.](#)

Discount info













## 4.2 Disruptions to journeys

The majority of the audited websites did not provide any information for on the day journey disruptions in their journey planning tool. When it was provided it was often not sufficiently prominent.

### 4.2.1 On the day disruptions were not always provided

On the day delays or cancellations were not provided on many of the websites, despite this information being available on identical journeys on the National Rail Enquiries site, as *figures 4.2a and 4.2b* demonstrate.

Figure 4.2a

Outward Fri 03 Mar							Other cheap fares
Earlier trains							Single from <b>£3.40</b>
Dep.	From	To	Arr.	Dur.	Chg.	Status	Based on 1 adult
10:40	Lewisham [LEW]	London Bridge [LBG] Platform 9	10:49	09m	0	<a href="#">Details</a>  disrupted Alternative trains	<b>£3.40</b> <a href="#">Buy Now</a>  Anytime <a href="#">Other tickets</a>   Other services you can travel on
10:49	Lewisham [LEW]	London Bridge [LBG] Platform 9	10:58	09m	0	<a href="#">Details</a>  6 mins late	<b>£3.40</b> <a href="#">Buy Now</a>  Anytime <a href="#">Other tickets</a>   Other services you can travel on
10:56	Lewisham [LEW]	London Bridge [LBG] Platform 9	11:06	10m	0	<a href="#">Details</a>  9 mins late	<b>£3.40</b> <a href="#">Buy Now</a>  Anytime <a href="#">Other tickets</a>   Other services you can travel on

In many cases users were able to plan their journeys, and potentially book tickets, without any indication that their journey might be affected.

**Figure 4.2b**

		Out Friday 03 Mar 2017 Lewisham LEW to London Bridge LBG			Return Friday 03 Mar 2017 London Bridge LBG to Lewisham LEW			
		Earlier		Later	Earlier		Later	
Depart		LEW 10:49	LEW 10:56	LEW 11:10	LBG 19:25	LBG 19:28	LBG 19:34	LBG 19:47
Arrive		LBG 10:58	LBG 11:06	LBG 11:19	LEW 19:37	LEW 19:41	LEW 19:43	LEW 19:56
Duration		0h 9m	0h 10m	0h 9m	0h 12m	0h 13m	0h 9m	0h 9m
Changes		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Cheapest Standard Single</b>		£3.40	£3.40	£3.40	£3.40	£3.40	£3.40	£3.40

## 4.2.2 Disruption information was often not shown prominently

On the sites where on the day disruptions were provided they were often ‘hidden’ behind small icons whose purpose was not clear. For example a red ‘i’ icon, as demonstrated in *figure 4.2c*.

*“The icon indicated that there is something to be warned about - but I couldn’t find the warning.”*





Figure 4.2c

Train times					
Dep	Arr	Ch	Duration	Price	
18:47	21:27	1	2:40hrs		
19:15	21:52	1	2:37hrs		
19:47	22:27	1	2:40hrs		
20:10	22:52	1	2:42hrs		
20:40	23:30	1	2:50hrs		

In most cases this information was displayed with warning icons. They were often unnoticed during the user testing because they were not displayed prominently enough. These icons were also often placed within the ‘changes’ information, which does not make it immediately clear to users that journey disruption information could be found here, as demonstrated in *figure 4.2d*.

*“I found the notification that let me know part of the journey was by bus was too hidden and I might have not noticed”*

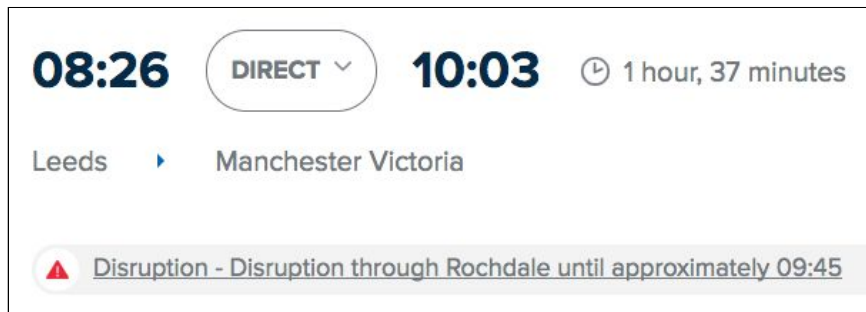
Figure 4.2d

Out				
Saturday 04 Mar 2017				
Colchester Station COL to London Liverpool Street LST				
	Earlier			Later
Depart	COL 09:39	COL 10:03	COL 10:19	COL 10:39
Arrive	LST 11:37	LST 11:57	LST 12:17	LST 12:37
Duration	1h 58m	1h 54m	1h 58m	1h 58m
Changes	2 	2 	2 	2 
Cheapest Standard Single	<b>Cheapest</b>			<b>Cheapest</b>
	<input type="radio"/> £10.50 Limited availability	<input type="radio"/> £15.00 Limited availability	<input type="radio"/> £24.90	<input type="radio"/> £10.50 Limited availability

### 4.2.3 Some sites showed on the day delays prominently

Some sites, such as National Rail Enquiries and South West Trains, were successful in showing on the day delay information prominently and clearly, as shown in *figures 4.2e and 4.2f*. The sites that did this well presented this information using clear warning icons with either a short summary of the disruption or a 'status' label. Further information was available upon clicking these icons.

Figure 4.2e



The screenshot shows a train journey card for a route from Leeds to Manchester Victoria. The departure time is 08:26 and the arrival time is 10:03, with a duration of 1 hour, 37 minutes. The service is labeled 'DIRECT'. A prominent warning banner at the bottom of the card reads: 'Disruption - Disruption through Rochdale until approximately 09:45'.

Figure 4.2f

The screenshot shows a train journey page for Saturday 04 March. At the top, it says "Outward Sat 04 Mar". Below this, there is a button for "Earlier trains" and a yellow banner that says "Long journey? Why not upgrade to First Class from £14.00". A table of train services is displayed with the following columns: Dep., From, To, Arr., Dur., Chg., and Status. The first row shows a train departing at 12:07 from London Euston [EUS] Platform 13, arriving at 14:21 at Liverpool Lime Street [LIV] Platform 7, with a duration of 2h 14m and no change in class. A yellow warning triangle icon is present in the Status column. A "Service Update" notification is overlaid on the right side of the page, stating: "Major disruption to and from Liverpool Lime Street expected until Monday 6 March". Below the notification are links for "Off-Peak", "Other tickets", and "Other services you can travel on".

Dep.	From	To	Arr.	Dur.	Chg.	Status
12:07	London Euston [EUS] Platform 13	Liverpool Lime Street [LIV] Platform 7	14:21	2h 14m	0	Details

#### 4.2.4 Planned engineering works are often shown

Whilst on the day disruptions were often not provided, future (planned) disruptions were provided in the majority of cases. However, they still suffered from many of the clarity and prominence issues discussed elsewhere in this section.

*“Rail journeys involving busses for part of the journey should be marked more clearly”*

*“I nearly completely missed the fact that part of my journey was by bus, this should be made more clear.”*

#### 4.2.5 Information indicated by changed icons was not prominent

When a current delay or future planned works were communicated via an icon, this sometimes caused prominence issues for other information. For example in *figure 4.2g* we see what the site normally looks like; the information icon shows further information about the journey when clicked on. In *figure 4.2h* we see what the site looks like when there are planned engineering works or delays. In the latter, users struggled to find journey information because they did not identify the warning triangle with journey information or overlooked these.



Figure 4.2g

Services					
Dep	Arr	Ch	Duration	Price	
08:33	09:33	0	1:00hrs		
09:34	10:34	0	1:00hrs		
10:34	11:34	0	1:00hrs		
11:34	12:34	0	1:00hrs		
12:34	13:34	0	1:00hrs		
13:34	14:34	0	1:00hrs		

Figure 4.2h

Services					
Dep	Arr	Ch	Duration	Price	
06:24	09:20	2	2:56hrs		
07:07	09:49	2	2:42hrs		
07:41	10:20	2	2:39hrs		
08:07	10:49	2	2:42hrs		
08:40	11:20	2	2:40hrs		
09:08	11:49	2	2:41hrs		
09:40	12:21	2	2:41hrs		
10:07	12:49	3	2:42hrs		

## 4.3 Ticket validities and restrictions

The majority of the audited websites failed to show ticket restrictions prominently. This information was also often lacking in clarity.

### 4.3.1 Ticket validities and restrictions were often shown by hovering on a piece of information or ticket name

At least one third of the TOC sites showed ticket validity and restrictions information only when a customer hovered on a particular piece of information or ticket name, as shown in *figures 4.3a and 4.3b*. It was evident from the user testing that the presence of this additional information often went unnoticed during the ticket selection process, even when users were prompted to look for it. When tasked with finding this information, users would often rely on the information displayed once a ticket selection had been made, presuming that this information was everything they needed to know, despite more information showing upon hover in some cases.

*“I found it really difficult to find information on refunds for my off-peak single ticket, the general T&Cs were just really generic and didn’t help me”*

Figure 4.3a

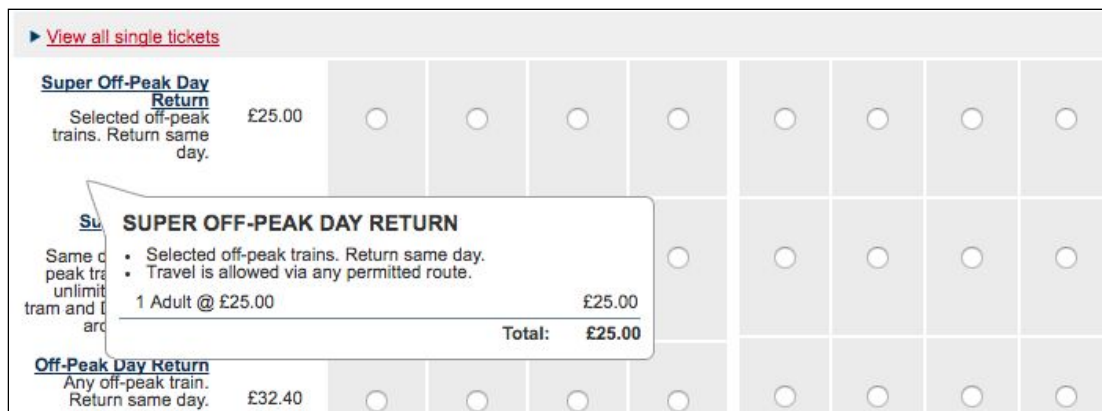


Figure 4.3b



### 4.3.2 Ticket validities and restrictions were often ‘hidden’ behind icons or links

Many sites also tended to show ticket restrictions behind unclear links or icons that were not displayed prominently or the function of which was not obvious. This often meant that users would miss this information. For example in *figures 4.3c and 4.3d* customers need to click on the small ‘i’ icon to find information on ticket time validity. Not only is the ‘i’ icon lacking in

prominence, but it is not a particularly intuitive icon for ticket restriction information. It is also worth noting in both these figures that even when the information is found, it still does not provide the information on off-peak times (and refers to a further link).

*“The importance of the terms and conditions of tickets could be made more clear and perhaps highlighted”*

*“I’ve no idea where to find my ticket restrictions”*

Figure 4.3c

The screenshot shows a train booking interface for Wednesday, 15 Mar 2017. The main heading is "Outward" with a "Return" tab selected. A fare table is displayed with various options and prices. An information popup is open, detailing the "Off-Peak Day Return" ticket. The popup includes a "Ticket Description" and a "Buy now" button.

Fares	
£30.80	£35.60
Return	Return
£39.40	£42.50
Return	Return
£44.80	£54
1st Return	1st Return
£68.10	Return

more expensive fares

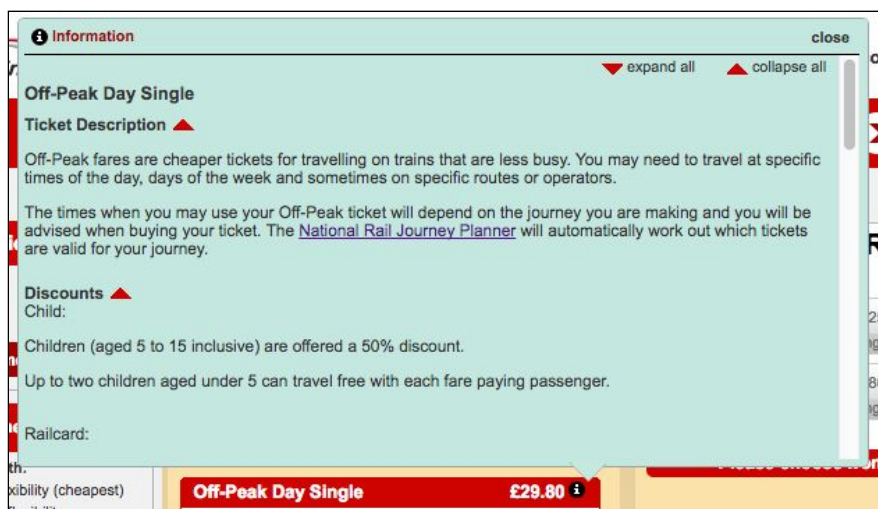
**Off-Peak Day Return** £35.60

Origin: Canterbury East or Canterbury West  
Destination: London Terminals [explain this](#)  
Date: Wed 15 Mar 2017  
Valid on off-peak services by the route and Train Operator shown.  
Return journey must be made the same day.

cost: **£35.60**

**Buy now**  
save for later

Figure 4.3d



In *figure 4.3e*, users need to click on the ticket name (for example, ‘Off-Peak Day Return’) to find the restrictions for this ticket type. It was deemed neither prominent nor clear to users that this type of information could be found here - and even then, it didn’t provide specific details of the times at which the ticket is valid.

*“The ticket restrictions could be made more obvious, I thought it was poor that I could only find these by clicking ‘more details’ in the journey summary and I had to scroll down quite far to find the information”*

*“I would never have thought to click there [on the ticket name in results view] for more restrictions. If you want people to read this, then this needs to be a lot more obvious”*

Figure 4.3e

Out  
Friday 24 Feb 2017  
Canterbury East CBE to London St Pancras

**Ticket restrictions** Close X

**OFF-PEAK DAY RETURN**  
TICKET TYPE  
OFF-PEAK DAY

**DESCRIPTION**  
Flexible ticket only valid at specific off-peak times of the day.

**VALIDITY**  
You must travel on off-peak trains on the date specified. Off-peak times vary by route - our journey planner only shows off-peak tickets on trains for which they are valid.

**BOOKING**  
Can be booked in advance or purchased on the day of travel.

**REFUNDS**  
If you decide not to use your ticket to make all or part of your intended journey then you can apply for a refund from the My Account pages, or through Customer Support within 28 days of expiry of the ticket. Please note, the outward portion cannot be refunded if the return portion has been used. A GBP 10.00 administration fee will apply and the amount of the refund will take into account any use you have made of the ticket and in some circumstances no refund will be paid.

**AMENDING YOUR BOOKING**  
You can change the time of your outward journey and the date and time of your return journey without changing your tickets. If you wish to change your date of travel or Class of ticket, you will need to buy a new ticket and apply for a refund on your current ticket.

**DISCOUNTS**  
Yes - normal railcard and child discounts available.

**BREAK OF JOURNEY**  
You may start, break and resume, or end your journey at any intermediate station along the route of travel.

**OTHER CONDITIONS**

**Super Off-Peak Day Return**  
Selected off-peak train. Return same day.

**Off-Peak Day Return**  
Any off-peak train. Return same day.

**Weekender**  
Return the same week.

**Off-Peak Return**  
Any off-peak train. Return within 1 month.

### 4.3.3 Ticket restriction and validity information often contained industry jargon

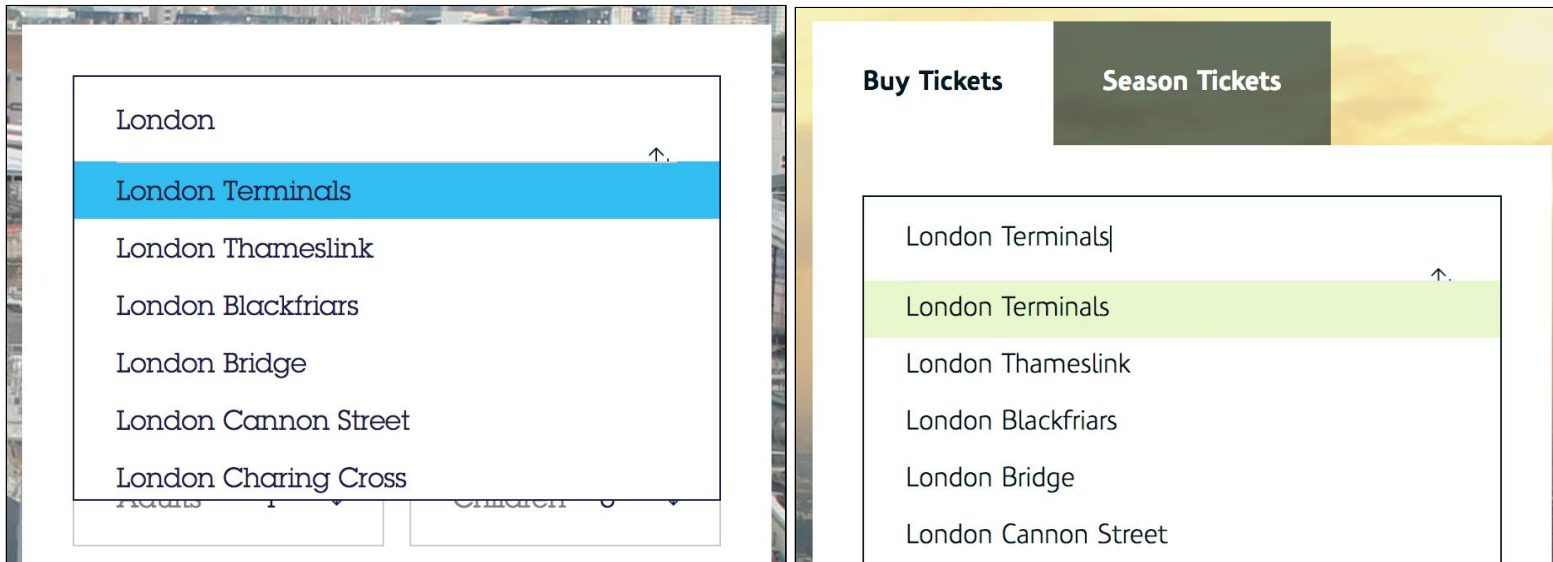
Ticket restriction and validity information was most often where the clarity of information was marked down in the expert review. This was due to the very common use of industry jargon. Terms such as ‘high speed’, ‘off-peak’, ‘any permitted route’, ‘London

Terminals’, ‘transfer’ and ‘legs’ were regularly used without further explanation. A few examples of this are shown below, in *figures f-j*.

*“I found it confusing to find information and know what I should read and understand if I'd missed something important or not. Trying to find additional information felt like I was going down a rabbit hole where I was bombarded with unrelated information.”*

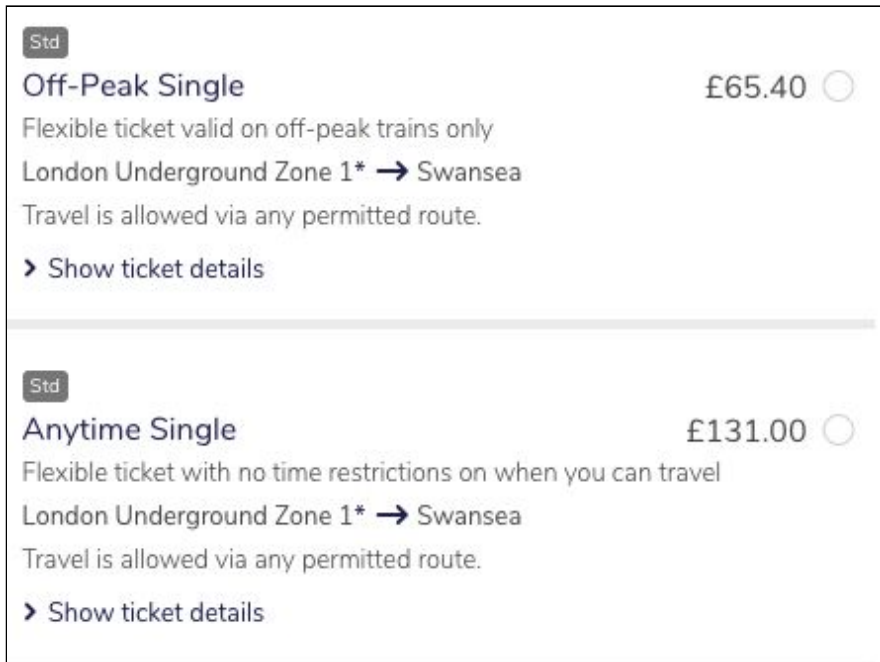
The term “London Terminals” was often used to describe what might more naturally be called “Any London station” as demonstrated in *figure 4.3f*. Even with this clarification, it is not made clear which stations are considered “London Terminals” (or stations).

**Figure 4.3f**



In figure 4.3g, the phrase “any permitted route” was used to describe the route on which the ticket is valid but the exact meaning of this is not defined. Explanations can be found in the routing guide but this is not easy accessible in itself (<http://data.atoc.org/routeing-guide>).

Figure 4.3g

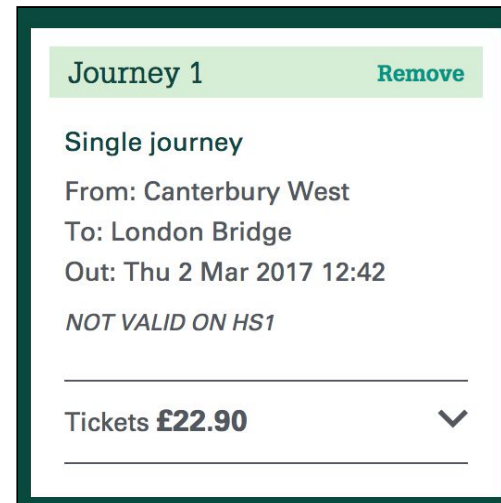


Std  
Off-Peak Single £65.40   
Flexible ticket valid on off-peak trains only  
London Underground Zone 1\* → Swansea  
Travel is allowed via any permitted route.  
➤ Show ticket details

---

Std  
Anytime Single £131.00   
Flexible ticket with no time restrictions on when you can travel  
London Underground Zone 1\* → Swansea  
Travel is allowed via any permitted route.  
➤ Show ticket details

Figure 4.3h



Journey 1 Remove

Single journey  
From: Canterbury West  
To: London Bridge  
Out: Thu 2 Mar 2017 12:42  
*NOT VALID ON HS1*

---

Tickets **£22.90** ▼

---

As demonstrated in *figure 4.3h*, the phrase “not valid on HS1” was used to describe that a ticket cannot be used for Southeastern trains into Stratford International or St Pancras International.

The phrase “not valid on Southeastern high speed services” was used in this example, as shown in *figure 4.3i*, to describe that a ticket cannot be used for Southeastern trains into Stratford International or St Pancras International. This example also



demonstrates a lack of clarity on travel times; “Selected off-peak trains”, and routes; “other permitted routes” which are not readily known by users.

*“It says off peak, but where can I see off peak times?”*

*“I could see that I can only use these on selected trains though it did not mention that these had to be at a specific time. I couldn't find the information on refunds.”*

**Figure 4.3i**

**Cheapest**  
£15.10

**SUPER OFF-PEAK DAY SINGLE**

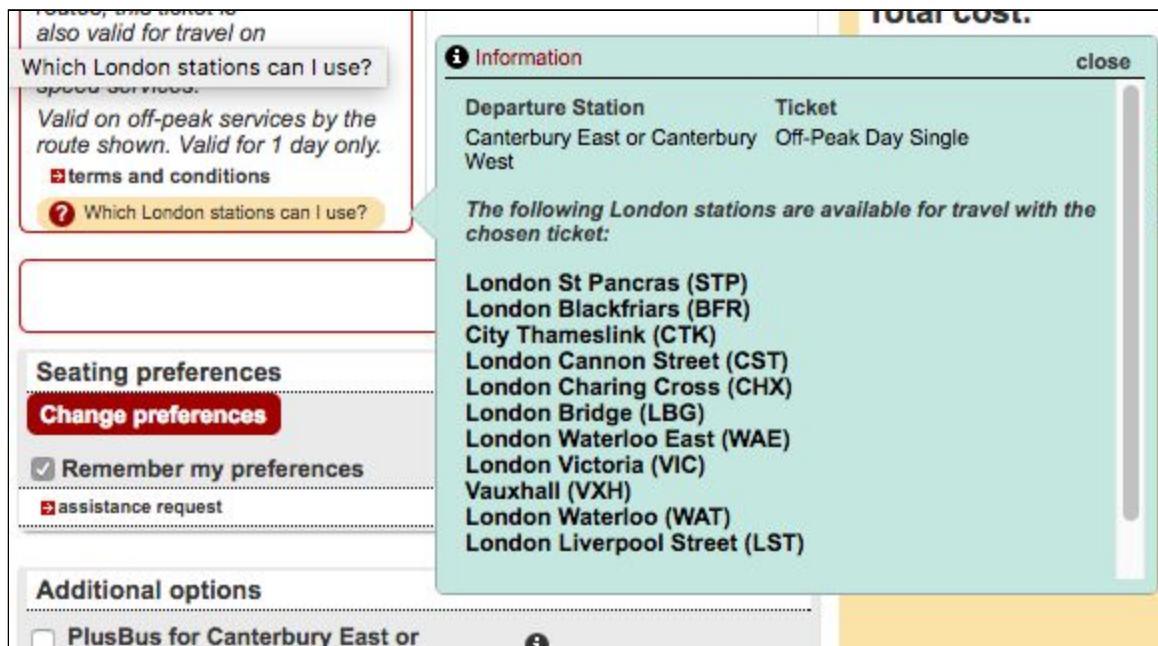
- Selected off-peak trains.
- Not valid for travel on the Southeastern Highspeed services, but valid on all other permitted routes between the named origin and destination.

1 16-25 Railcard Adult @ £15.10	£15.10
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£15.10</b>

### 4.3.4 Route validity is sometimes displayed more clearly

On some of the audited sites, route validity is shown more clearly through extra signposting. For example, in *figure 4.3j*, there is a signpost link for “Which London stations can I use?”. Once clicked, a list of all stations that the ticket applies to is shown.

Figure 4.3j



### 4.3.5 A small number of sites showed ticket restriction and validity information more prominently than others

Some sites were better at displaying ticket restriction and validity information to users by using more prominent and clear links to notify users of this information, as demonstrated in *figures 4.3k and 4.3l*. However this information still included some use of industry jargon.

Figure 4.3k

The figure compares two ways of displaying train ticket information. The top example, on a light background, shows a departure time of 13:25, an arrival time of 14:21, a 'DIRECT' button with a downward arrow, a 56-minute journey duration, and a 'Super Off-Peak Day Single' ticket type. The bottom example, on a dark background, shows the same departure and arrival times, but the 'DIRECT' button is larger and blue with an upward arrow. Below this, it lists the 56-minute duration and ticket type, followed by additional text: 'In addition to the normal permitted routes, this ticket is also valid for travel on Southeastern high speed services.' and 'Valid for travel from Canterbury East and Canterbury West.' At the bottom, it lists valid destinations: 'Valid for travel to London Blackfriars, London Charing Cross, London Cannon Street, City Thameslink, London Bridge, London Liverpool Street, London St Pancras International, London Victoria, Vauxhall, London Waterloo East, and London Waterloo.'

Figure 4.31

12:25 CBW → 13:21 STP - Thu 16 Mar

**Best value ticket**

**Std**

**Advance Single** £12.50 ✓

Canterbury East or Canterbury → London Terminals\*  
West\*

In addition to the normal permitted routes, this ticket is also valid for travel on Southeastern high speed services.

▼ Show ticket details

1 Adult £12.50

---

**Valid dates**

Outward Thu 16 Mar 2017

---

**Break of journey**

Outward You cannot break and resume your journey

---

**\*Valid from**

Canterbury West  
Canterbury East

---

**\*Valid to**

Your ticket is only valid for travel to the following London Terminal stations:

London St Pancras  
London Victoria  
London Waterloo

## 4.4 Journey planners/search tools

The journey planning tools for searching for services on the audited sites varied in quality. Some, such as provided by Great Western Railway, South West Trains and Greater Anglia were very well received by customers due to their pleasant design and good usability. Others caused confusion due to usability issues, a lack of information, or a lack of clarity in the information that they did provide.

### 4.4.1 User friendly designs and clear information

Approximately half of the audited sites provided journey search tools that were praised by customers. The feedback mostly related to the visual design of the search tools, as well as their general ease of use, and the clarity of information.

Examples of this can be seen in *figures 4.4a, 4.4b and 4.4c*. These search tools are well presented and were deemed easy to use. They have clear field labels and performed well for usability. These search tools were also good at auto suggesting train station names for users quickly and efficiently when users started to type their required destinations. A good example of label clarity is the 'Children 5-15' field which indicates that children under 5 do not require a ticket, which many other search tools failed to do.

*“The initial journey input process was very good and really well designed, it’s much better than most I’ve seen on other ticket sites.”*

*“Clear and simple drop boxes and entry fields made the whole process very easy and stress free”*

*“The whole process was very smooth, fluid and inspired confidence in me to go ahead and purchase my tickets”*

Figure 4.4a

The interface features a dark green background with a header image of a train station at night. At the top, there are two tabs: "Buy tickets" (active) and "Check your journey". Below the header, a dark green banner contains the text "Buy train tickets to any destination in Britain – no booking fee" and links for "Season tickets" and "Accessible booking". The main form includes a "Departing from..." field, a double-headed arrow, a "Going to..." field, a date field set to "Thu 16 Mar", a "Depart after" field, and a time field set to "12:00". Below this, there are buttons for "Single", "Return", and "Open Return", and dropdown menus for "1 Adult", "0 Children (5-15)", and "0 Railcard(s)". A red "Find tickets" button is positioned on the right.

Figure 4.4b

The interface has a light background with a train station image. At the top, there are tabs for "Buy tickets" (active) and "Live Trains". Below the header, there are "From" and "To" fields with a double-headed arrow between them. Underneath, there are "Leaving" and "Returning" fields, a "Ticket type" section with buttons for "Single", "Return", and "Open", and a "Select time/date" field. The "Who is travelling?" section includes "1 Adult" and "0 Children (5-15 years)" with plus and minus buttons, and a "Railcards" section with "No" and "Yes" buttons. A disclaimer states: "With our journey planner, you will be offered the cheapest fares and in some instances, the fastest journey. Please be aware that other journey options are available." A yellow "Buy tickets" button is at the bottom.

Figure 4.4c

The screenshot shows a train booking interface with a dark header bar containing navigation links: 'Buy Tickets', 'Check Service', 'Next Train', and 'Stansted Express'. Below the header, there are two input fields for 'From' and 'To' with placeholder text 'Enter origin station' and 'Enter destination station'. A red double-headed arrow is between the fields. Below this, there are sections for 'Outbound' and 'Return' with date pickers. The 'Outbound' date is '03/03/2017'. The 'Return' date is a dashed line. There are also dropdown menus for 'Departing after' with times '12:45' and '13:45'. A section for 'Via/Avoid' and 'Add Railcards/GroupSave' has plus icons. Passenger counts are shown as 'Adults (16+) 1' and 'Child (5-15) 0'. There are checkboxes for 'One way' and 'Open return'. A red button says 'Find times and tickets'. At the bottom, there is a link 'Looking for season tickets?'.

## 4.4.2 Information was either not provided or lacked prominence

The journey search tools that caused confusion and frustration tended to do so because information was either omitted entirely, or it was not prominent enough. For example, many of the search tools did not indicate that children under 5 travel free, as demonstrated in *figures 4.4d and 4.4e*. This meant that users were more likely to select an unnecessary ticket.

*“I wasn’t made aware anywhere that children under 5 travel free, but I know they do from using previous train booking websites”*

In other cases, options such as adding a Railcard were hidden by unrelated dropdowns which meant that users missed them entirely. For example, *figure 4.4f* shows that a user would need to click on the passenger drop down in order to see the Railcard (and child) options. For users who were travelling alone, this information was missed entirely because it was not clear, as there was nothing to indicate that this information could be found. The passenger number is set as 1 by default so users would not have a reason to click here if travelling alone as there would be no need to edit this information.

**Figure 4.4d**

The screenshot displays a train booking interface with the following elements:

- Leaving from:** Canterbury West
- Going to:** St Pancras International
- Leaving on:** 06/03/2017
- Depart / Arrive:** Depart (highlighted) / Arrive
- Time:** 08:30
- Return:** 1
- Passengers:** 4
- Railcards:** 0
- more options** (text link)
- Submit** (button)
- 4 Adult** (button with person icon)
- 0 Children** (button with child icon)



Figure 4.4e

A screenshot of a train booking form. The origin is 'Sandling' and the destination is 'London Waterloo East'. The trip type is 'Single'. The departure date is '14/03/2017' and the time is '06:00'. There is 1 adult and 0 children. A button '+ Add a railcard' is visible. At the bottom is a dark blue button labeled 'Check times & buy tickets'.

Figure 4.4f

A screenshot of a train booking search bar. The origin is 'LONDON ST PANCRAS INTL' and the destination is 'CANTERBURY'. The departure date is '01/03/2017 10:30' and the trip type is 'Return'. There is 1 passenger. A red 'Search' button is on the right. A dropdown menu is open, showing 'Passengers: Adults (16+Yrs) 1' and 'Children (5 - 15 Yrs) 0'. Below this is a 'Railcards: Select railcard' dropdown. To the right of the dropdown is a promotional message: 'Travelling in a group of 10 or more? For a range of great discounts and benefits get in touch with our dedicated [Group Travel](#) team on 03457 125 678'.

### 4.4.3 Usability issues caused confusion and frustration

On a few of the sites, journey search tools were found to have some usability issues which caused confusion and frustration amongst users.

In *figure 4.4a* the journey search tool shows the 'check your journey' function as the default view. Users need to click on the 'Buy tickets' tab before they can use the journey search tool to search for tickets. This caused a lot of frustration amongst the test users, with 13 out of 15 users who used this particular search tool mistakenly searching for tickets using the check your journey function first before realising they had to click on the 'buy tickets' tab to do this.

Some of the journey search tools also performed poorly on the autosuggest functionality for the destination fields with expected suggestions not showing prominently. In *figure 4.4b*, when the user types in 'London', the result 'London all terminals' is not shown upon initial view as this result is found at the bottom of the list. Users expected this option to appear first.

Figure 4.4a

The screenshot shows a web form with two tabs: "Check your journey" (active) and "Buy tickets". The "From\*" field contains "Bristol Parkway". The "To\*" field contains "Birmingham International" with a swap icon (two arrows) to its right. Below the fields is a large purple button labeled "Check your journey >".

Figure 4.4b

The screenshot shows a mobile app interface for "Buy Rail Tickets" on "Thu 16 Mar 2016". It features a "Journey" section with a "close" button and radio buttons for "One Way" and "Return" (selected). The "From:" field is "Exeter St Davids" and the "To:" field is "london". A dropdown menu is open, listing various London stations: London Blackfriars (BFR), London Bridge (LBG), London Cannon Street (CST), London Charing Cross (CHX), London Euston (EUS), London Fenchurch Street (FST), London Fields (LOF), London Kings Cross (KGX), London Liverpool Street (LST), London Marylebone (MYB), London Paddington (PAD), London Road Brighton (LRB), London Road Guildford (LRD), London St Pancras (STP), London St Pancras Intl (SPX), London Terminals, London Thameslink, London Victoria (VIC), London Waterloo (WAT), London Waterloo East (WAE), London Zones 1-2, London Zones 1-3, London Zones 1-4, London Zones 1-5, and London Zones 1-6. Below the list are sections for "Outward" (March, Depart), "Return" (Open, March, Depart), "Passen" (1), and "Rail" (checkbox). A "Show n" section has checkboxes for "Stan" and "First". At the bottom, there is a "Timetables only" link and a "Search" button.

## 4.5 Ticket prices

Almost all of the audited sites provided ticket prices prominently. A large majority of sites showed the cheapest tickets more prominently than others to help draw attention to these fares, which drew praise from test users.

### 4.5.1 Cheapest tickets were often shown prominently

On a number of sites, the cheapest tickets were highlighted in some way to help draw users' attention to them. Some sites highlighted the cheapest tickets with a coloured outline and clear 'cheapest' label as shown in *figure 4.5a*. Others used a different button colour and label as shown in *figure 4.5b*. Another method was to highlight the whole ticket and display the best deal first in the results as shown in *figure 4.5c*.

This was praised by users as it sped up the process of identifying the cheapest deal. The user testing did show that users were less likely to notice the highlighted tickets when they were further down the page in the results (*figure 4.5d*), as users intuitively expected to find the cheapest tickets at the top of the page.

The cheapest tickets were most prominent to users when they were both highlighted and displayed first, as demonstrated in *figure 4.5c*. Some users also advocated the need for seeing the cheapest possible tickets for the day in question, not just the cheapest tickets for the times on display.

*"Finding the cheapest ticket was easy with the "Best Value" ticket."*

*"I really like how the cheapest tickets are marked with a yellow box. This really helps them stand out and helped me make a quick selection for finding the cheapest ticket"*

*"I liked the listing of fares with the cheapest one highlighted in gold at the top of the list. This made it visually very easy, as well as it being listed by departure time, because it gives me options if I choose to take a slightly earlier or later train."*

“I’d like to be shown what the cheapest possible rate could be, not just the cheapest ticket for the times shown”

Figure 4.5a

Return from Colchester to London Liverpool Street [change journey](#)

Out <b>Saturday 04 Mar 2017</b> Colchester Station COL to London Liverpool Street LST					Return <b>Monday 06 Mar 2017</b> London Liverpool Street LST to Colchester Station COL			
	<u>Earlier</u>		<u>Later</u>		<u>Earlier</u>		<u>Later</u>	
Depart	COL 13:03	COL 13:19	COL 13:39	COL 14:03	LST 13:00	LST 13:02	LST 13:18	LST 13:30
Arrive	LST 14:57	LST 15:17	LST 15:37	LST 15:57	COL 13:46	COL 14:04	COL 14:15	COL 14:22
Duration	1h 54m	1h 58m	1h 58m	1h 54m	0h 46m	1h 2m	0h 57m	0h 52m
Changes	2 ▲	2 ▲	2 ▲	2 ▲	0	0	0	0
<b>Cheapest Standard Single</b>	○ £10.50 Limited availability	○ £24.90	○ £9.00 Limited availability	○ £10.50 Limited availability	○ £9.00 Limited availability	○ £24.90	○ £9.00 Limited availability	○ £9.00 Limited availability
<b>Cheapest First Class Single</b>	○ £14.00 Limited availability	○ £46.50	○ £16.50 Limited availability	○ £14.00 Limited availability	○ £14.00 Limited availability	○ £46.50	○ £16.50 Limited availability	○ £14.00 Limited availability
<a href="#">View all single tickets</a>								
<b>Off-Peak Return</b> Any off-peak train. Return within 1 month.	£35.80	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Figure 4.5b

<b>07:18</b>	2 CHG	<b>11:07</b>	3 hours, 49 minutes	Anytime Single	<b>£321.00</b>
Canterbury West ▶ Manchester Piccadilly					
<b>07:48</b>	2 CHG	<b>11:28</b>	3 hours, 40 minutes	Anytime Single	<b>£321.00</b>
Canterbury West ▶ Manchester Piccadilly					
<b>08:25</b>	2 CHG	<b>12:07</b>	3 hours, 42 minutes	Off-Peak Return	<b>£109.00</b>
Canterbury West ▶ Manchester Piccadilly					
<b>08:36</b>	3 CHG	<b>12:49</b>	4 hours, 13 minutes	Off-Peak Return	<b>£109.00</b>
Canterbury West ▶ Manchester Piccadilly					

Figure 4.5c

07:13 EUS → 07:54 MKC - Tue 14 Mar

Best value ticket

Std  
**Advance Single** £17.00 ✓  
London Terminals → Milton Keynes Central  
Only valid on booked London Midland services and required connecting London Midland services.  
▶ Show ticket details

Select another single ticket in the next step from just £6.00 to get the best value of £23.00 for two single tickets [See return ▶](#)

Other single tickets

Std  
Anytime Day Single £20.00

Return tickets

Std  
Anytime Day Return £39.90

Figure 4.5d

Return from Canterbury West to St Pancras International [change journey](#)

	Out Thursday 02 Mar 2017 Canterbury West CBW to London St Pancras Intl STP				Return Thursday 02 Mar 2017 London St Pancras Intl STP to Canterbury West CBW			
	<a href="#">Earlier</a>		<a href="#">Later</a>		<a href="#">Earlier</a>		<a href="#">Later</a>	
Depart	CBW 16:25	CBW 16:41	CBW 17:25	CBW 17:40	STP 21:37	STP 22:12	STP 22:37	STP 23:12
Arrive	STP 17:23	STP 17:54	STP 18:23	STP 18:54	CBW 22:55	CBW 23:08	CBW 23:57	CBW 00:08
Duration	0h 58m	1h 13m	0h 58m	1h 14m	1h 18m	0h 56m	1h 20m	0h 56m
Changes	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
<b>Cheapest Standard Single</b>	£30.70	£30.70	£30.70	£30.70	£30.70	£30.70	£30.70	£30.70
<b>Cheapest First Class Single</b>		£47.20		£47.20	£47.20		£47.20	
<a href="#">View all single tickets</a>								
<b>Super Off-Peak Day Return</b> Selected off-peak trains. Return same day.	<b>Cheapest</b> £30.80							



## 4.5.2 Cheaper available tickets warning

Some sites displayed a popup notifying users that cheaper options were available once users had selected their chosen tickets and attempted to continue through the booking process. They were presented with an option to continue with their original ticket selection or to change their selection to the suggested cheaper option. This is an excellent example of transparency. Examples of this can be seen in *figures 4.5e and 4.5f*.

Figure 4.5e

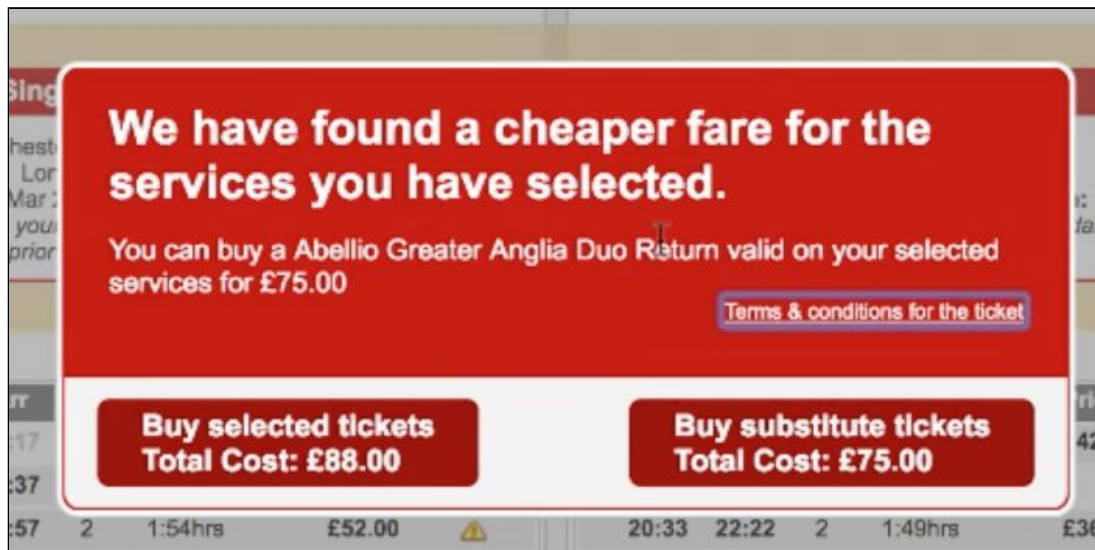


Figure 4.5f

The screenshot shows a train booking interface for a journey on Sat 25 Feb 2017 (Outward Journey) and Mon 27 Feb 2017 (Return Journey). A modal notification is displayed in the center, stating: "We have found a cheaper fare for the services you have selected. You can buy a Off-Peak Return valid on your selected services for £137.50". Below the notification are two buttons: "Buy selected tickets Total Cost: £270.00" and "Buy substitute tickets Total Cost: £137.50".

**Buy train tickets**

2 Adults  
1 Child (5-15yrs)  
0 Railcards

Amend search >

Show me ▾

Lowest fare finder >

Sat 25 Feb 2017

**Outward Journey** ◀ prev day next day ▶

Choose your fare

€68 to €106.75	€90.75 to €170.50	€135	€141
single	1st single	single	single

Mon 27 Feb 2017

**Return Journey** ◀ prev day next day ▶

Choose your fare

€68 to €134	€132.25 to €279.25	€135	€141
single	1st single	single	single

**Total cost: £270.00** (all passengers inclusive)

Sign in to collect points with these tickets

buy now >

save for later >

**Off-Peak Single**

Origin: Bristol Pa  
Destination: Birr  
Date: Sat 25 Feb  
Valid on off-peak  
Valid for 1 day only

€135.00

Terms & conditions for the ticket

Buy selected tickets  
Total Cost: £270.00

Buy substitute tickets  
Total Cost: £137.50

**Train times**

Dep	Arr	Ch	Duration	Price
08:09	09:26	0	1.17hrs	€135.00
08:39	09:56	0	1.17hrs	€135.00
09:09	10:25	0	1.16hrs	€135.00
09:39	10:56	0	1.17hrs	€135.00
10:09	11:26	0	1.17hrs	€135.00

**Train times**

Dep	Arr	Ch	Duration	Price
14:17	15:29	0	1.12hrs	€135.00
14:42	15:54	0	1.12hrs	€135.00
15:17	16:30	0	1.13hrs	€135.00
15:42	16:54	0	1.12hrs	€135.00
16:12	17:24	0	1.12hrs	€135.00

### 4.5.3 Cheapest tickets were not displayed prominently on some sites

On some of the audited sites, the cheapest tickets were not highlighted or displayed more prominently than other ticket prices, which did not help users find the best deal quickly, as demonstrated in *figures 4.5g and 4.5h*.

**Figure 4.5g**

Dep	Arr	Chg	Dur	Single
11:00	13:07	0	2h 7m	£74.00
11:20	13:28	0	2h 8m	£54.00
11:40	13:49	0	2h 9m	£82.00
12:00	14:07	0	2h 7m	£37.00
12:20	14:28	0	2h 8m	£37.00
12:40	14:49	0	2h 9m	£37.00
13:00	15:07	0	2h 7m	£82.00

*“I tried to choose the cheapest tickets but it didn't really recommend the cheap ones”*

*“The cheapest fare wasn't highlighted, so I had to just look and choose the options from those presented.”*

Approximately one quarter of the audited sites displayed the ticket price separately from ticket times, as shown in *figure 4.5h*. These sites did not display the cheapest fares prominently and customers are required to select a price before selecting a time. As these two variables are often linked this could cause selection difficulty for customers.

**Figure 4.5h**

Out					Return				
Fare	Type	Fare	Type	Fare	Type	Fare	Type	Fare	Type
£22.90	single	£30.70	single	£32.30	single	£25	single	£30.70	single
£33	single	£37.90	single	£33	single	£32.30	single	£33	single
£23	Return	£30.80	Return	£32.40	Return	£39	single	£49.50	1st single
£33.90	Return	£33.90	Return						

## 4.6 Ticket selection

The ticket selection stage is the most complex part of the booking process and was often the biggest cause of confusion for users. This was mostly down to what was perceived as a lack in clarity or prominence of certain information, too much information to process, and confusion around the layout and presentation of results.

### 4.6.1 Confusing ticket layouts and presentations

As mentioned earlier, approximately one quarter of the audited sites displayed ticket results where ticket prices were separated from ticket times, as shown in *figure 4.6a*.

With this layout a confusing range of seemingly similar ticket options are presented in the search results and users did not find it obvious that information about these ticket types, which might aid selection, was shown by hovering over the price. The user testing showed that some users struggled to understand that they needed to select a train fare as well as a train service in order to make the buy button activate. For some it was a trial and error approach to make the buy button activate.

The principle of separate sections to 'Choose a fare' and 'Choose a train time' wasn't readily understood by most users as selecting a fare affected the times and this wasn't immediately obvious. However, other users appreciated this layout because of the flexibility it provided by showing different services with different ticket prices making it easier for them to find the cheapest tickets.

Figure 4.6a

**Outward Journey**  
 Fri 17 Mar 2017  
 prev day next day

**Fares**

£30.70 single	£35.40 single	£37.40 single	£38.40 single	£40.40 single
£30.80 Return	£35.60 Return	£36 Return	£36.50 Return	£39.40 Return

more expensive fares

Please choose from Fares above ↑

Origin: Canterbury West  
 Destination: London St Pancras  
 Date: Fri 17 Mar 2017

Please choose from Services below ↓

**Services**

Depart	Arrive	Changes	Duration	Price
09:23	10:21	0	0:58hrs	i
09:52	10:46	0	0:54hrs	i
10:25	11:21	0	0:56hrs	i
10:42	11:54	1	1:12hrs	i
11:25	12:21	0	0:56hrs	i
11:42	12:55	1	1:13hrs	i
12:25	13:21	0	0:56hrs	i

**Return Journey**  
 Fri 17 Mar 2017  
 prev day next day

**Fares**

£30.70 single	£35.40 single	£37.40 single	£38.40 single	£40.40 single
£47.20 1st single	£50.20 1st single			

Please choose from Fares above ↑

Origin: London St Pancras  
 Destination: Canterbury West  
 Date: Fri 17 Mar 2017

Please choose from Services below ↓

**Services**

Depart	Arrive	Changes	Duration	Price
13:37	14:53	1	1:16hrs	i
14:09	15:08	0	0:59hrs	i
14:37	15:53	1	1:16hrs	i
15:12	16:08	0	0:56hrs	i
15:37	16:56	1	1:19hrs	i
16:12	17:08	0	0:56hrs	i
16:50	17:41	0	0:51hrs	i
17:20	18:11	0	0:51hrs	i
17:50	18:41	0	0:51hrs	i
18:20	19:11	0	0:51hrs	i

*“It was quite confusing when there are couples of price buttons there, I do not understand what exactly these buttons are for.”*

*“The ticket selection screen was confusing as I needed to select a price first to load the tickets”*

*“I think the pricing bit would need some improvement, it’s difficult to understand why there are different groups of pricing”*

*“I liked how the site showed different services with different ticket prices, so it was really easy to find the cheapest tickets”*

Other sites used a grid system to display ticket results, displaying both ticket prices and related train times together. Users said they recognised this layout from other train company sites, so this layout seemed more familiar amongst to them. Despite this,

most users still experienced some confusion when selecting tickets. This was mostly due to a lack of prominence of key links or buttons.

In *figure 4.6b* the user needs to click on the ‘show prices’ button before they are shown ticket options that relate to the times displayed. This caused some confusion and frustration amongst users as many clicked, numerous times, on journey times to try and select a ticket before noticing the ‘show prices’ button. Many users did not understand why ticket options were not shown automatically (although it is worth noting that only 2 out of the 24 audited sites used this approach).

**Figure 4.6b**

Return from Canterbury West to St Pancras International [change journey](#)

	Out <b>Tuesday 28 Feb 2017</b> Canterbury West CBW to London St Pancras Intl STP				Return <b>Tuesday 28 Feb 2017</b> London St Pancras Intl STP to Canterbury West CBW			
	<u>Earlier</u>		<u>Later</u>		<u>Earlier</u>		<u>Later</u>	
Depart	CBW 14:42	CBW 15:25	CBW 15:42	CBW 16:25	STP 20:12	STP 20:37	STP 21:12	STP 21:37
Arrive	STP 15:54	STP 16:21	STP 16:54	STP 17:23	CBW 21:08	CBW 21:53	CBW 22:08	CBW 22:55
Duration	1h 12m	0h 56m	1h 12m	0h 58m	0h 56m	1h 16m	0h 56m	1h 18m
Changes	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>

**Show prices**

*“When selecting tickets, the ‘show prices’ button wasn’t very visible”*

*“I shouldn’t have to click ‘show prices’, you should just show this information straight away”*

*“Obviously I’m going to want to see the prices, so why hide them behind a button?”*

The sites that used the grid system but showed ticket options automatically and did not require users to click a button for options to show were met with less confusion, as demonstrated in *figure 4.6c* below.

Although, some users struggled with proceeding to the next stage of the booking after selecting their tickets. This was mainly due to a lack in prominence of the 'select return option' heading that appeared once an outbound journey had been selected.

Users would often overlook the need to select a return option. Once they had selected an outbound journey they would attempt to continue to the payment stage, not realising they had to select a return journey. They would search for a 'next' or 'continue' button and were confused when they could not find one. All users who experienced this issue navigated to the bottom of the page and expected to find a 'Next' button, but instead found a 'Print' button. See *figure 4.6c* below.

*"When I had selected my tickets, I found it really difficult to find the next button because I expected it to be where the print button was"*

*"After choosing the departure dates and time, which was very easy to do, everything became a bit more confusing. It took me a while to work out I had to select a return journey before I could proceed to the next stage."*

*"I couldn't get past the ticket times stage because it wasn't obvious how I could proceed to payment"*

Figure 4.6c

Out Monday 06 Mar 2017 Canterbury West CBW to London St Pancras Intl STP				Return Monday 06 Mar 2017 London St Pancras Intl STP to Canterbury West CBW				
	Earlier		Later	Earlier		Later		
<b>Depart</b>	CBW 08:25	CBW 08:36	CBW 09:23	CBW 09:52	STP 21:12	STP 21:37	STP 22:12	STP 22:25
<b>Arrive</b>	STP 09:21	STP 09:54	STP 10:21	STP 10:46	CBW 22:08	CBW 22:55	CBW 23:08	CBW 00:08
<b>Duration</b>	0h 56m	1h 18m	0h 58m	0h 54m	0h 56m	1h 18m	0h 56m	1h 43m
<b>Changes</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Cheapest Standard Single</b>	£37.40	£37.40	£35.40	£35.40	£13.60	£13.60	£13.60	£13.60
<b>Cheapest First Class Single</b>		£47.20				£47.20		£47.20
<a href="#">View all single tickets</a>								
<b>Off-Peak Day Return</b> Any off-peak train. Return same day.	<b>Cheapest</b> £35.60		<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Off-Peak Return</b> Any off-peak train. Return within 1 month.	£36.50		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Off Peak Day Travelcard</b> Same day return off-peak	£39.40		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Journey summary**  
Total for 1 Adult, 0 Child  
**Select return option**  
Out: 09:23 06 Mar 2017  
Canterbury West (CBW) to London St Pancras Intl (STP)  
0 changes

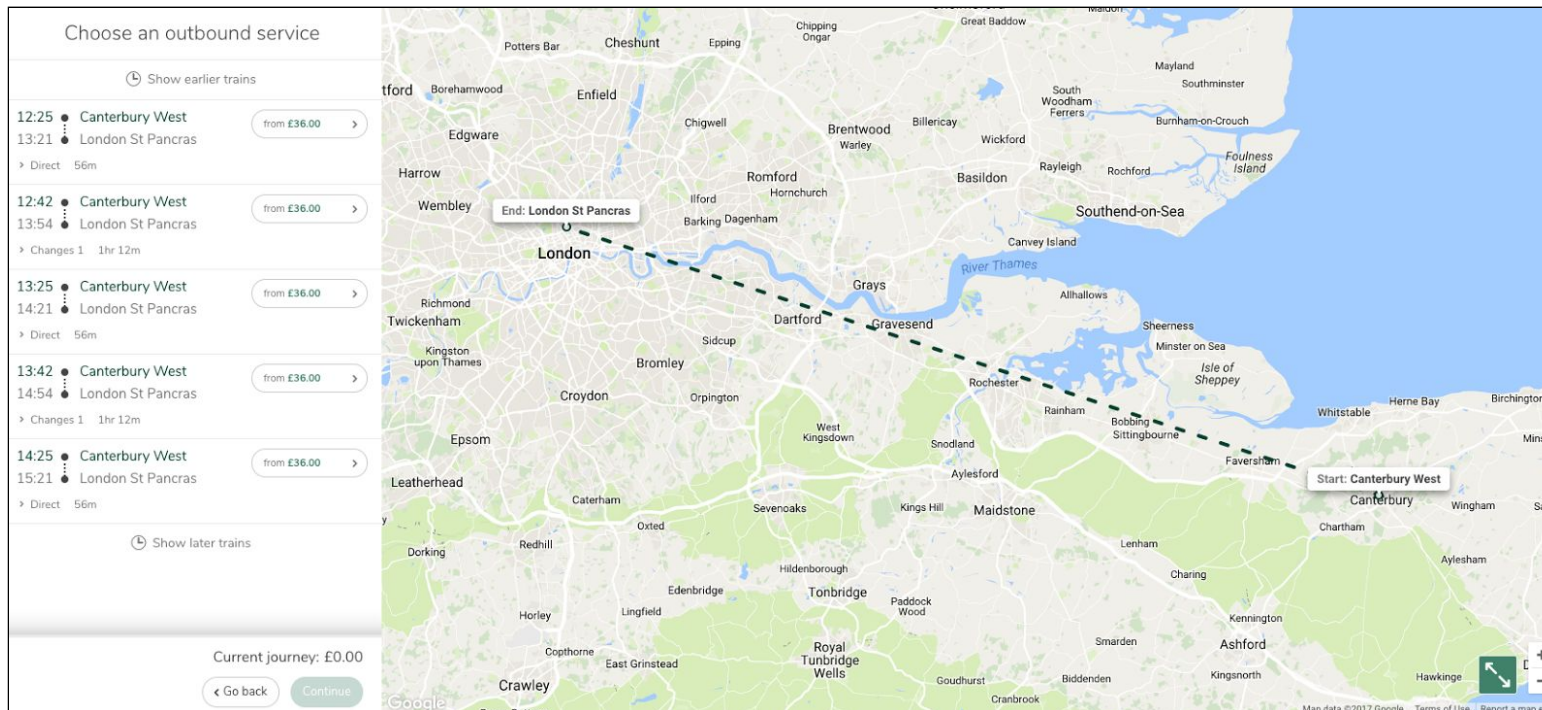
- Any off-peak train. Return same day.
- In addition to the normal permitted routes, this ticket is also valid for travel on Southeastern Highspeed services.

About a quarter of the sites used a map interface with the ticket results to help users visualise their route, as shown in figure 4.6d.

Although this approach was praised for its visual appeal by some, many users felt that the map took up too much of the screen and other information was too confined in a narrow column to the side. Many users also felt that the map did not provide any real value.



Figure 4.6d



*“Map of the route doesn't provide any value to me”*

*“Map not needed at all, taking up far too much space”*

*“Display on left-hand side was too small - seemed cramped. Lack of info about train facilities”*

## 4.6.2 An overwhelming number of options and lack of prominence for key information

To allow customers to make an informed decision on their ticket selection, prices and ticket options need to be clearly displayed with the relevant ticket information prominently shown or signposted. In some instances the ticket selection process did not display relevant information with sufficient prominence.

Figure 4.6e shows a number of seemingly similar tickets at a range of prices and it is not obvious that information that would help distinguish between these tickets is only shown on hovering over the price. As a result users were left confused about what these prices represented and the differences between them.

In some cases users would select what they thought was the cheapest option at first glance (a single ticket), not realising that the return ticket option was cheaper because the price shown would double once they selected another single ticket for their return journey.

Figure 4.6e

The screenshot displays two side-by-side fare selection panels for Monday, 6 March 2017. The left panel is for 'Out' journeys and the right panel is for 'Return' journeys. Both panels include navigation for 'prev day' and 'next day'. The 'Out' panel shows two rows of fare options: the first row contains five single tickets at prices £22.90, £30.70, £32.30, £33, and £37.90; the second row contains five return tickets at prices £23, £30.80, £32.40, £33.90, and £33.90. A link for 'more expensive fares' is visible below the return tickets. The 'Return' panel shows two rows: the first row contains five single tickets at prices £25, £30.70, £32.30, £33, and £37.90; the second row contains a single ticket at £39, a 1st single ticket at £49.50, and three empty slots. Both panels have a button at the bottom that says 'Please choose from Fares above'.

Category	Price	Type
Out (Mon 6 Mar 2017)	£22.90	single
	£30.70	single
	£32.30	single
	£33	single
	£37.90	single
	£23	Return
	£30.80	Return
	£32.40	Return
	£33.90	Return
	£33.90	Return
Return (Mon 6 Mar 2017)	£25	single
	£30.70	single
	£32.30	single
	£33	single
	£37.90	single
	£39	single
	£49.50	1st single

Return from Canterbury West to London [change journey](#)

**Out**  
**Saturday 25 Feb 2017**  
 Canterbury West CBW to London Victoria VIC or  
 Canterbury West CBW to London St Pancras Intl  
 STP

**Return**  
**Monday 27 Feb 2017**  
 London Victoria VIC to Canterbury West CBW or  
 London St Pancras Intl STP to Canterbury West  
 CBW or  
 London Charing Cross CHX to Canterbury West  
 CBW

	Earlier				Later	Earlier			Later
Depart	CBW 12:27	CBW 12:48	CBW 12:48	CBW 12:50	VIC 12:34	STP 12:37	VIC 13:07	CHX 13:10	
Arrive	VIC 14:21	STP 14:36	VIC 14:53	VIC 15:07	CBW 14:40	CBW 13:50	CBW 14:58	CBW 14:53	
Duration	1h 54m	1h 48m	2h 5m	2h 17m	2h 6m	1h 13m	1h 51m	1h 43m	
Changes	1	2	1	1 ⚠	1	1	1	0	
<b>Cheapest Standard Single</b>	<input type="radio"/> £22.90	<input type="radio"/> £30.70	<input type="radio"/> £22.90	<input type="radio"/> £22.90	<input type="radio"/> £25.40	<input type="radio"/> £30.70	<input type="radio"/> £25.40	<input type="radio"/> £25.40	
<b>Cheapest First Class Single</b>	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	<input type="radio"/> £47.20	

**[+] View all single tickets**

	Cheapest						
<b>Off-Peak Return</b> Any off-peak train. Return within 1 month.	£30.50	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Off-Peak Return</b> Any off-peak train. Return within 1 month.	£36.50	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Anytime Return</b> Any time of day, return within 1 month.	£63.00	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Anytime Return</b> Any time of day, return within 1 month.	£73.60	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Another area of confusion was the number of options provided, with most users feeling overwhelmed by choice and not knowing what these choices meant. As shown in *figure 4.6f*, users are presented with options for singles, first class singles, an array of return options and first class returns, if the user scrolls down.

In a number of cases users completely ignored the ticket options further down the page and selected the standard single tickets presented first despite cheaper alternatives being highlighted below. Most users did not immediately recognise that the table was showing both outbound and return tickets, which may explain why users chose to focus on the standard single tickets at the top of the page.

The lack in prominence of ticket information was another cause for confusion. Most users missed information that appeared by hovering over certain areas or information and almost all users missed the full ticket terms that displayed when the ticket name was clicked, as it was not obvious to users that this information was available. Most users relied on the ticket information that appeared once tickets were selected either at the ticket selection stage or in the payment stages.

Figure 4.6f

*“The out and return columns could be made more obvious, they seem to blend into each other making it hard to see which tickets are for my out journey and which are for my return”*

*“There are so many different options it’s a bit confusing. I don’t know how the bottom ones relate to the top ones”*

*“I’m not quite sure what all the options are down below, there seems like far too many options.”*

*“It was nice and clear what options were the cheapest because they appeared first [This user missed the highlighted cheapest option which was further down the page]”*

## 4.7 Additional information

On the majority of the audited sites, additional information such as that about on-train facilities or arrangements for travelling with bikes or luggage, were provided but not in a timely manner.

### 4.7.1 On-train facilities

Information about on-train facilities, such as catering or wifi, was rarely provided during the ticket selection process. In the rare cases where this information was shown during the booking process it was only shown for catering services.

When users were prompted to look for this information they only occasionally thought to look for these details outside of the booking process, elsewhere on the site. Most users expected to find these details at the booking summary stage when they were selecting seat preferences, for example.

Information on wifi or catering was often provided as/on separate information pages on the sites. In the majority of cases, this information tended to be only applicable to that train company's own services, which was not made very clear to users. Consequently, users expected these services to be available on all services booked through that website, which was not the case.

### 4.7.2 Bike and luggage arrangements

On a few of the audited sites, information about the arrangements for travelling with a bike was found in the booking process as shown in *figure 4.7a* but the majority of sites provided this information as a separate page found outside of the booking process, without signposting this information during the booking process. As with on-train facilities, most users expected to find this information, or at least see a signpost to this information, in the booking process.

**Buy Train Tickets**

1 Adult  
0 Children (5-15)  
0 Railcards

[Return to search](#)

Bicycle reservations available

Click on the 'bicycle space' link in this form to make a reservation.

[Journey Details](#) | [Delivery Details](#) | [Sign In](#) | [Payment Details](#)

**Journey 1: Canterbury West to Manchester Stations**

Outward journey	Return journey
<p><b>18 Mar 2017</b></p> <p>Depart: Canterbury West dep. 13:45</p> <p>Change at: Ashford International arr. 14:03</p> <p>London St Pancras dep. 14:13</p> <p>London Underground arr. 14:51</p> <p><i>London Underground</i></p> <p><i>Please check operating hours for this service <a href="#">more info</a></i></p> <p>London Euston dep. 15:40</p> <p>Arrive: Manchester Piccadilly, 17:49</p> <p>Changes: 3 Duration: 4h 4m</p> <hr/> <p>Passengers 1 Adult</p> <hr/> <p>Advance £36.50</p> <p><i>Virgin West Coast &amp; connections</i></p> <p><i>Valid on chosen train only. Non-refundable. Changeable for a fee before booked departure time.</i></p> <p><a href="#">terms and conditions</a></p>	<p><b>18 Mar 2017</b></p> <p>Depart: Manchester Piccadilly dep. 19:35</p> <p>Change at: London Euston arr. 22:01</p> <p><i>London Underground</i></p> <p><i>Please check operating hours for this service <a href="#">more info</a></i></p> <p>London St Pancras dep. 22:42</p> <p>Ashford International arr. 23:20</p> <p>London Euston dep. 23:34</p> <p>Arrive: Canterbury West, 23:55</p> <p>Changes: 3 Duration: 4h 20m</p> <p style="color: red;"><b>First class accommodation is not available on all legs of this service</b></p> <hr/> <p>Passengers 1 Adult</p> <hr/> <p>1st Advance £99.50</p> <p><i>Virgin West Coast &amp; connections</i></p> <p><i>Valid on chosen train only. Non-refundable. Changeable for a fee before booked departure time.</i></p> <p><a href="#">terms and conditions</a></p>
<p><b>Total: £136.00</b></p>	

As with on-train facilities, where information about travelling with a bike was found, it tended to be only applicable to the train company's own services and this was rarely made clear to users. Consequently, users were not aware that they might not be able to take or store a bike on their selected service.

A couple of the sites failed to provide any information about the arrangements for travelling with bikes or luggage, either in the booking process or elsewhere on the site.

Figure 4.7a

### 4.7.3 First class

With regard to booking first class tickets, in instances where journeys consisted of multiple legs, and some legs did not offer first class accommodation, this was not flagged clearly and caused confusion amongst users as to whether it was available or not.

Confusion occurred because the warning notice that not all legs of the user's journey has first class accommodation available was either not prominent enough, not clear enough, or both. For example, *figure 4.7b* shows the warning notice that appears when not all legs of a journey have first class accommodation/facilities. Some users overlooked this entirely and others noticed this but assumed they had made a mistake with their ticket selection because there was no explanation as to why this was the case. Other users noticed this but didn't know how to find out to which legs of their journey it applied.

Some sites dealt with this better by notifying users of more detailed information through clearer signposting. An example of this is shown in *figure 4.7c*.


Figure 4.7b

 **You do not have first class for all legs of your journey.**

**Journey details**

Date	Depart	Arrive	change(s)	Price
Fri 17/03/2017	14:42 Canterbury West	18:49 Manchester Piccadilly	3 <a href="#">Details</a> <a href="#">Text me</a>	£290.50

Figure 4.7c

 **First Class is not available for all legs of the journey. Click below for more details.**

**Journey details**

Date	Depart	Arrive	change(s)	Price
Mon 20/02/2017	19:25 Canterbury West	23:48 Manchester Piccadilly	3 <a href="#">Details</a> <a href="#">Text me</a>	£290.50

*“I chose the cheapest first class option for each way, however when I got to the next page it said I didn't have first class all the way, but it didn't clarify why or where this was which is really frustrating.”*

*“For some reason, I had real difficulty in making my complete journey first class [this user saw a notice on the booking summary page that not all legs of their journey were first class].”*



# 5. Recommendations

Chapters 3 and 4 set out our key findings and provided examples of both weaknesses and good practice in terms of providing clear, prominent, and timely information about fares and tickets to passengers. On the basis of these findings, we have identified some issues below that train companies should address (where applicable), to help ensure that passengers get the information to help them choose, buy, and use the cheapest most appropriate ticket for their journey, and to do so with confidence.

- **Use of jargon.** Customers need to be given clear information about how they can use their ticket. The audit found examples of many pieces of industry language which may not be understood by customers such as “By any permitted route”, “London Terminals”, or “London Zones 1 - 6”. To give customers confidence that they have the right ticket this language needs to be replaced with something meaningful, or further and specific explanation provided.
- **Off-Peak times.** When searching for, or purchasing, time restricted tickets the time restrictions should be provided as times e.g. “not valid on services arriving in London before 10am”, rather than the less specific terminology currently being used in many places such as “Time restrictions apply” or “only valid during Off-Peak”.
- **Restrictions, validities, and key terms and conditions.** To build trust and confidence, restrictions, validities, and important terms and conditions, such as those to do with time restrictions, route validity, operator, Railcard and GroupSave terms, and refund rights should be presented prominently, without the customer having to find the correct icon or link to click. It should not be assumed that a customer will notice and/or click on an icon or link.
- **Journey disruption.** To avoid unwanted ‘surprises’ for customers when they travel, information about current and future disruptions should be displayed prominently and clearly on the website during the ticket search/selection process. We found that the current practice for the majority of sites is to display future disruptions but not current disruptions. This information should also be displayed prominently and not hidden behind hard to notice icons or links. It should also be made clear to customers which part or parts of the journey are affected and what the impact is.

- **Groupsave discounts.** Information about, and access to, GroupSave discounts should be made more prominent, clearer, and easier. While some websites apply the GroupSave discount automatically and provide clear information about the key terms and conditions and show how the discount has been applied, others do not. On some sites, customers are required to apply the discount themselves and it is not always obvious when this is applicable and how to do it. For example, on some websites the customer needed to know that such a discount would be available and select it from a drop down menu marked “Railcards”. Even then, once selected, the relevant terms and conditions were not always shown prominently.
- **Children.** When using the search tools it should be stated prominently and clearly that only children aged 5 to 15 years require tickets, to ensure customers do not purchase a ticket for an under 5, or unintentionally purchase a child ticket for a young adult aged between 16 and 18.
- **On-board facilities.** Where information provided about on-board facilities is only applicable to the services operated by the train company whose website is being used, this should be clearly stated to ensure customers are aware that it may not be applicable even though they have used the website to plan their journey. Where this information can be considered important to ticket purchase (for example bike storage or amenities) this information should be provided irrespective of which TOC site is selling the tickets.
- **Booking summary.** It would be helpful, and could help mitigate information failures during the journey search/ticket selection process, if a summary of ticket details, times, restrictions, prices and other applicable information were provided at the final stage before purchase
- **General usability.** In terms of the way in which search results/ticket options were presented, many of the audited sites highlight the cheapest available fares. This practice should be replicated across other websites that do not currently provide this function. Users praised this as a really useful and transparent feature that gave them confidence in their selection. The grid layout for presenting ticket results where ticket price and ticket times appeared together, and did not have to be selected separately, was most familiar to the test users. Careful consideration should also be given to the ticket results presentation to make the ticket selection process as simple and easy as possible for users.

# Appendix A

## Audited websites

1. Arriva Trains Wales
2. C2C
3. Caledonian Sleeper
4. Chiltern Railways
5. Cross Country
6. East Midlands Trains
7. Gatwick Express\*
8. Grand Central
9. Greater Anglia
10. Great Western Railway
11. Heathrow Express\*
12. Hull Trains
13. London Midland
14. Merseyrail\*
15. National Rail
16. Northern
17. ScotRail
18. Southeastern
19. Southern
20. South West Trains
21. Thameslink (Great Northern)
22. Transpennine Express
23. Virgin Trains
24. Virgin Trains East Coast

*\* Due to the limited services offered by these Train Operating Company websites the user testing activity was not performed for these audits.*

# Appendix B

Below is a sample Expert Review audit.

Piece of information	Total	Provided	Prominent	Timely	Clear	Evaluation notes
<b>Timetable (1)</b>						
Departure and arrival times	8	2	2	2	2	
Journey duration	8	2	2	2	2	
Journey details	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> This information is provided by clicking on a small information icon in the timetable listing.
Delays/cancellations	0	0	0	0	0	<b>Provided:</b> Cancelled train not shown on this website.
Alternative transport arrangements	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> This information is provided by clicking on a small alert icon in the timetable listing.
<b>Price (1)</b>						
Ticket price	6	2	2	2	0	<b>Clear:</b> Multiple prices are displayed in the search results and it is not immediately clear that they don't all apply to the journey times requested. On occasions all visible fare's are greyed out.
Fulfilment / delivery charges	8	2	2	2	2	
Optional charges	8	2	2	2	2	
<b>Validity &amp; restrictions (1)</b>						
Routes validity	4	2	0	2	0	<b>Prominent:</b> The route validity statement is shown once you've selected a ticket fare and states "valid by the route shown". You then have to click on the information symbol for a particular train to see the route. <b>Clear:</b> You can book a fare without selecting a particular time journey, so you may not have selected a route and therefore the

						terms "valid by the route shown" do not make sense. Some terminology e.g. "Southeastern high speed services" or "Valid on any permitted route" not readily understood.
Travel company validity	5	2	0	2	1	<b>Prominent:</b> The train company validity for a ticket is shown by clicking on the information icon once a ticket fare has been selected. <b>Clear:</b> The terms list out all Train Operating Companies but does not state 'Valid on these train operating companies' to say what the list indicates.
Times at which the ticket is valid	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> Once you have selected a fare the Services listing displays all services valid for your ticket. There is also a statement showing '5 trains unavailable for your selected fare' which you click to show the unavailable trains.
<b>Key terms and conditions</b>						
Advance tickets (1)	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> Advance ticket terms and conditions are shown by clicking the small information icon once an advance fare has been selected.
Off-Peak (1)	6	2	1	2	1	<b>Prominent:</b> Off peak ticket terms and conditions are shown by clicking the small information icon once an off peak fare has been selected. <b>Clear:</b> Whilst the services listing shows which trains are applicable the terms and conditions state "Valid on off-peak services" and suggest using National Rail Planner to determine when off peak starts and stops.
Railcards (1)	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> Railcard terms and conditions are shown by clicking the small information icon once a relevant fare has been selected.
Group tickets (1)	6	2	0	2	2	<b>Note:</b> GroupSave discount is not shown on this site. They only show Group discount for their own service journeys. <b>Prominent:</b> Group travel discount is shown by a small 'G' icon when selecting a fare. On clicking this a description of Small Group

						Discount is given. Passengers then need to click for more information and then the terms and conditions tab to see the terms.
Any other terms and conditions (1)	8	2	2	2	2	
General Ts & Cs (2)	6	2	2		2	
Season tickets (2)	6	2	2		2	
<b>Additional information</b>						
Ability to break a journey (2)	5	2	1		2	<b>Prominent:</b> For all ticket types the terms about breaking a journey are provided in the ticket terms which appear on clicking the 'information' icon for a fare.
Availability of on-train services (1)	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> Amenities information is shown by clicking the 'information' icon on a particular service. Icons are then shown to indicate which amenities are available for each leg.
Luggage or a bike arrangements (1)	7	2	2	2	1	<b>Clear:</b> Information about bicycle storage is only shown if bicycle storage is available. There is no information for services where specific bike storage is not available. On the site information about bike storage is shown for this particular companies trains.
Class of travel (1)	7	2	1	2	2	<b>Prominent:</b> It is stated on hover of the 'information' icon and by looking at the service amenities which legs first class is available on.

# Appendix C

## Scenario 1

You and your family have decided to book a last minute weekend trip to see your parents in Birmingham. You would like to book some train tickets for the coming weekend.

You have the following criteria for your journey:

- You are travelling from Bristol to Birmingham
- You are aiming to arrive in Birmingham on Saturday by midday
- You are returning to Bristol on Monday at a time that best suits you
- You need to book tickets for yourself, your partner and your two children (aged 4 and 9) [2 adults & 2 children total]
- You are looking for the cheapest deal
- Ideally you'd like catering or wifi facilities for the children.

### Participant demographics

- Aged 30 - 50
- Has kids
- UK

### Tasks

1. Please search for train tickets that suit your criteria. What ticket types are available to you? [TASK]

2. Select the best train tickets for your criteria and continue through the booking process until you get to the payment section. [TASK]
3. What information during the booking process helped you make the decision of selecting your chosen tickets? [WRITTEN ANSWER]
4. Please rank how easy you found adding children of different ages to your booking. Please note children under 5 should travel free. (1 - 5, 1 = Very Easy 5 = Very difficult) [RANK]
5. You'd like to feed and entertain your children on the journey. Did you find any information about catering or wifi? If not, see if you can find this information for your selected journey. [TASK]

The scenario ends with questions 6 - 13 as stated in the methodology.

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## Scenario 2

You have been invited to attend a job interview in London next Tuesday. You wish to book a train ticket for your journey.

You have the following criteria for your journey:

- You are travelling from Doncaster to London
- You need to arrive in London no later than 2pm on Tuesday.
- You are returning the next day (Wednesday) at a time that best suits you.
- You have a young person's card (16-25).
- You are looking for the cheapest deal.
- You don't have time to have your ticket posted to you so would prefer to collect it at the station or have it sent to you electronically



## Participant criteria

- Aged 18 - 25
- High school graduate
- UK

## Tasks

1. Please search for train tickets that suit your criteria. What ticket types are available to you? (Reminder: insert criteria) [TASK]
2. Select the best train tickets for your criteria and continue through the process until you get to the payment section. [TASK]
3. What information during the booking process helped you make the decision of selecting your chosen tickets? [WRITTEN ANSWER]
4. Please rank how easy you found applying your 16-25 young persons railcard to your booking. (1 - 5, 1 = Very Easy 5 = Very difficult) [RANK]
5. Did you manage to find a ticket that you can print at home or collect at the station? If not, see if that is an option. [TASK]

**The scenario ends with questions 6 - 13 as stated in the methodology.**

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## Scenario 3

You and your friends have booked to go see a concert in London at the weekend, so you are looking to book some train tickets.

You have the following criteria for your journey:

- You are travelling from Colchester to London
- You need to arrive in London at 2pm on Saturday March 3rd (this was selected specifically as rail replacement services were in operation)
- You are returning the same day at 9pm
- You need to book tickets for yourself and your 3 other friends, as you are all travelling to the concert together
- You are looking for the best deal

#### Participant criteria

- Aged 20 - 60
- UK

#### Tasks

1. Please search for train tickets that suit your criteria. What ticket types are available to you? (Reminder: insert criteria) [TASK]
2. Select the best train tickets for your criteria and continue through the process until you get to the payment section. [TASK]
3. What information during the booking process helped you make the decision of selecting your chosen tickets? [WRITTEN ANSWER]
4. Did you end up with a GroupSave ticket? How easy was it to get the best deal through GroupSave? (1 - 5, 1 = Very Easy 5 = Very difficult) [RANK]

5. Did you notice any information that would affect your journey time or route with your ticket selection? If not, check to see if your chosen journey is affected in any way. [TASK]

The scenario ends with questions 6 - 13 as stated in the methodology.

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## Scenario 4

You are looking to book a weekend away to Exeter with your partner in two months time. You wish to book some train tickets.

You have the following criteria for your journey:

- You are travelling from London to Exeter
- You are looking to arrive in Exeter on a Friday, in early April
- You are returning from Exeter 4 days later, on the Tuesday
- You are flexible with what time you arrive and depart
- You need to book tickets for yourself and your partner

### Participant criteria

- Aged 35 - 65
- \$75k+ household income
- UK

### Tasks

1. Please search for train tickets that suit your criteria. What ticket types are available to you? (Reminder: insert criteria) [TASK]
2. Select the best train tickets for your criteria and continue through the process until you get to the payment section. [TASK]
3. What information during the booking process helped you make the decision of selecting your chosen tickets? [WRITTEN ANSWER]
4. You should have been offered an advance ticket because you are booking tickets weeks before you go. Please rank how easy you found finding an advance ticket for your journey. (1 - 5, 1 = Very Easy 5 = Very difficult) [RANK]

**The scenario ends with questions 6 - 13 as stated in the methodology.**

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## Scenario 4

You have booked to see a football match in Manchester next week, so you are looking to book yourself a train ticket.

You have the following criteria for your journey:

- You are travelling from Canterbury to Manchester
- You are looking to arrive in Manchester by 1pm next Wednesday
- You are returning the same day, but you are flexible when you leave
- You would like to travel first class

### Participant criteria

- Aged 21 - 65
- UK

## Tasks

1. Please search for train tickets that suit your criteria. What ticket types are available to you? (Reminder: insert criteria) [TASK]
2. Select the best train tickets for your criteria and continue through the process until you get to the payment section. [TASK]
3. What information during the booking process helped you make the decision of selecting your chosen tickets? [WRITTEN ANSWER]
4. Please rank how easy you found upgrading your ticket to first class. (1 - 5, 1 = Very Easy 5 = Very difficult) [RANK]
5. Find information on ticket refunds for your selected tickets, in case your football match is cancelled. [TASK]

**The scenario ends with questions 6 - 13 as stated in the methodology.**