

# BBC Learning English

## 6 Minute English

### *Ticket touts*



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

**Rob:** Hello, welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rob.

**Neil:** And hello, I'm Neil.

**Rob:** Today we're talking about **ticket touts**. The verb 'to tout' means to sell tickets for an event such as a sports match or concert for more money than their real price – or **face value**. And the people who do it are called touts. Now, be honest Neil, have you ever bought a ticket from a tout?

**Neil:** No, if I don't get a ticket from an official source I tend to just miss the event.

**Rob:** Fair enough. Well, I've never been that desperate to see a show that I've needed to buy a ticket from a tout – but I guess, if a must-see match or a concert was a sell-out and there were no tickets, then I might be tempted.

**Neil:** It's a **dodgy** – or dishonest – and unreliable business and it's a big problem which we'll be discussing soon. But first, have you got a 'dodgy' question for me Rob?

**Rob:** Nothing dodgy here Neil, just a good honest question about ticket sales. Now, we know tickets to see a pop singer or band can sell out very quickly. But according to the Guinness World Records, which singer sold the most ever tickets in one day for his 2006 World Tour? Was it...

- a) Robbie Williams
- b) Bob Dylan
- c) Justin Timberlake

**Neil:** I'm going to go for Justin Timberlake, c).

**Rob:** OK. We'll find out if you're right later on. Let's talk more now about ticket touts. These are people who sell tickets dishonestly. Tickets can be bought honestly – or **legitimately** – through an official **agent**, sometimes on a website.

**Neil:** That's right but sometimes agents add on **commission** – an extra charge for processing the tickets. Plus there's sometimes a fee for credit card **transactions**. I find that really annoying.

**Rob:** Yeah, me too. And of course the best place to pick up a ticket is usually from the box office at the **venue** – the place where the event is happening. Then you get to pay the genuine price.

- Neil:** And even then ticket prices can be really high. Some people pay hundreds of pounds for the best tickets – possibly for front row seats.
- Rob:** Not me Neil. Being a **cheapskate**, I go for the cheapest seats, usually up in 'the gods' – I mean, the seats high up at the back – that's where you can get a bargain – even if you get a restricted view and you can't see too well!
- Neil:** Well, when even these seats have sold out, some people give in to the temptation of the ticket touts. These are the guys who stand outside the venue just before the event starts – or they operate online. But the tickets they sell are not always the bargain you think they are.
- Rob:** No. Sometimes they charge **inflated prices** – or high prices for the basic ticket for the sort of seats that I sit in. And sometimes they sell a **fake** ticket – so not a real one – for a seat that's already booked. It leaves you **out-of-pocket** – you lose your money.
- Neil:** It's a big problem in London and other cities around the world. It's especially a concern for theatres that are subsidised or receive money from the state.
- Rob:** Yes, such as London's Royal Opera House. Let's hear from its Chief Executive, Alex Beard. What is the solution to the problem – and what advice does he give for avoiding the touts?

**Alex Beard, Chief Executive, Royal Opera House:**

*People have been wrestling with this issue now for decades, and no one's come up with the perfect silver bullet, as it were, to take the touts out of business. There are, however, authorised agencies that sell tickets, and they are listed on websites. And I would recommend anyone who wants to get a last minute ticket to look at those, because they are reputable, they will charge a fair price and won't be effectively mis-selling tickets.*

- Rob:** Some interesting words. He says there is not a perfect '**silver bullet**' for stopping the touts. A silver bullet means one simple answer to completely solve the problem. So what does he suggest?
- Neil:** He says use authorised agencies – so companies that have been checked and approved by the venues. These are **reputable** – so people have a good opinion of them and they can be trusted.
- Rob:** Yes, and they will charge a fair price too. You won't be – as we sometimes say – ripped off.
- Neil:** In many cases reselling tickets and making a profit is not allowed, and if someone is found doing it, the tickets they're selling become **void** – or not valid, so the buyer can't actually use the tickets they've paid for.
- Rob:** A BBC investigation found one website was offering two tickets to see the play *Coriolanus* at a London theatre for £2,015. The face value was originally £20 to £35 each.

- Neil:** Well, luckily for me, I couldn't afford that kind of price so I would wait for a genuine cheaper ticket to become available.
- Rob:** Or, if that doesn't happen, choose another play to see. There's plenty of choice in London's West End!
- Neil:** Good advice there Rob, although it's harder to get tickets for a band or singer who's performing in your city for one night only.
- Rob:** A bit like buying a ticket for one singer who holds the record for selling the most ever tickets in one day. But who was it?
- Neil:** I said c) Justin Timberlake.
- Rob:** He is very popular isn't he, but not as popular as Robbie Williams was. He sold 1.6 million tickets in 24 hours. Did you buy one of them Neil?
- Neil:** No I didn't!
- Rob:** Before we go, Neil, could you remind us of some of the vocabulary that we've heard today?
- Neil:** Yes, we heard:
- ticket touts**
  - face value**
  - dodgy**
  - legitimately**
  - agent**
  - commission**
  - transactions**
  - venue**
  - cheapskate**
  - inflated prices**
  - fake**
  - out-of-pocket**
  - silver bullet**
  - reputable**
  - void**
- Rob:** Thanks. Well, that brings us to the end of today's 6 Minute English. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon. Bye.
- Neil:** See you.

## Vocabulary and definitions

ticket touts	people who buy tickets for an event in order to resell them at a higher price
face value	the price shown on the ticket
dodgy	dishonest, unreliable, (sometimes) illegal
legitimately	done properly according to the rules or the law
agent	(here) a person or company paid to sell tickets on behalf of someone else
commission	extra payment someone gets for selling something on behalf of someone else
transactions	buying or selling things
venue	building where large or important events take place
cheapskate	(informal) someone who doesn't like spending money
inflated prices	prices that are higher than they should be
fake	not real
out-of-pocket	losing money in a transaction
silver bullet	one simple solution to solve a problem
reputable	honest, reliable and trustworthy
void	not valid; cancelled

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