**KNIFE LEGISLATION AND HANDLING AT AIRPORTS**

**IN**

**UK**

# Current legislation

The information provided is largely based on the analysis of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, both as amended, the information and guidelines provided by the United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority on [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk) and the guidelines published by the UK Home Office on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and the Crown Prosecution Service on: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/offensive-weapons-knife-crime-practical-guidance>.

*1.1 Which knives are banned under your local law?*

1.1.1 Offensive weapons

Under current UK legislation, the weapons and knives listed below are considered 'banned knives and weapons'. It is illegal to manufacture, sell, hire, offer for sale or hire, expose or have in possession for the purpose of sale or hire, lend or give to another person the following weapons (Criminal Justice Act 1988 s.141(1)):

* a knuckleduster, that is, a band of metal or other hard material worn on one or more fingers, and designed to cause injury, and any weapon incorporating a knuckleduster;
* a swordstick, that is, a hollow walking-stick or cane containing a blade which may be used as a sword;
* a “handclaw”, being a band of metal or other hard material from which a number of sharp spikes protrude, and worn around the hand;
* a “belt buckle knife”, being a buckle which incorporates or conceals a knife;
* a “push dagger”, being a knife the handle of which fits within a clenched fist and the blade of which protrudes from between two fingers;
* a “hollow kubotan”, being a cylindrical container containing a number of sharp spikes;
* a “footclaw”, being a bar of metal or other hard material from which a number of sharp spikes protrude, and worn strapped to the foot;
* a “shuriken”, “shaken”, “death star” or "throwing star", being a hard non-flexible plate having three or more sharp radiating points and designed to be thrown;
* a “balisong” or “butterfly knife”, being a blade enclosed by its handle, which is designed to split down the middle, without the operation of a spring or other mechanical means, to reveal the blade;
* a “telescopic truncheon”, being a truncheon which extends automatically by hand pressure applied to a button, spring or other device in or attached to its handle;
* a “blowpipe” or “blow gun”, being a hollow tube out of which hard pellets or darts are shot by the use of breath;
* a “kusari gama”, being a length of rope, cord, wire or chain fastened at one end to a sickle;
* a “kyoketsu shoge”, being a length of rope, cord, wire or chain fastened at one end to a hooked knife;
* a “manrikigusari” or “kusari”, being a length of rope, cord, wire or chain fastened at each end to a hard weight or hand grip;
* a disguised knife, that is any knife which has a concealed blade or concealed sharp point and is designed to appear to be an everyday object of a kind commonly carried on the person or in a handbag, briefcase, or other hand luggage (such as a comb, brush, writing instrument, cigarette lighter, key, lipstick or telephone);
* a stealth knife, that is a knife or spike, which has a blade, or sharp point, made from a material that is not readily detectable by apparatus used for detecting metal and which is not designed for domestic use or for use in the processing, preparation or consumption of food or as a toy;
* a straight, side-handled or friction-lock truncheon (sometimes known as a baton);
* a sword with a curved blade of 50 centimetres or over in length;
* a “zombie knife”, “zombie killer knife” or “zombie slayer knife”, being a blade with a cutting edge, a serrated edge and images or words suggesting it is used for violence;
* a “zombie-style knife” or “zombie-style machete”, being a bladed article with a plain cutting edge, a sharp pointed end and has a blade of over 8 inches in length, which also has:
  + - a serrated cutting edge (other than a serrated cutting edge of up to 2 inches next to the handle);
    - more than one hole in the blade;
    - spikes; and/or
    - more than two sharp points in the blade, other than: (i) a sharp point where the angle between the edges which create the point is an angle of at least 90 degrees; or (ii) a sharp point on the cutting edge of the blade near the handle;
* a “cyclone knife” or “spiral knife” being a weapon with a handle, a blade with two or more cutting edges (each of which forms a helix) and a sharp point at the end of the blade;
* a 'flick knife', 'gravity knife' or 'switchblade', being a blade hidden inside a handle which shoots out when a button is pressed or by gravity; and
* a push dagger, where the handle fits within a clenched fist and the blade comes out from between two fingers.

The above weapons are listed in legislation and on <https://www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives>. The gov.uk website should be checked for regular updates.

1.1.2 Bladed and sharply pointed articles

A "sharply pointed article" is any object with a sharp point. A sharply pointed article does not need to contain a blade.

A "bladed article" is any object with a blade. A bladed article does not need to be sharp (e.g. a butter knife with no cutting edge and no point would still be considered to be a bladed article). The length of the article also does not matter.

UK legislation groups bladed and sharply pointed articles together, and any offences in relation to a "bladed article" shall also apply to a "sharply pointed article" (and vice versa).

1.1.3 Bladed products

A "bladed product" is a bladed article that is capable of causing serious injury to a person, involving cutting a person's skin. All rules relating to bladed articles will apply to bladed products. In addition, bladed products are subject to further restrictions on sale and delivery.

1.1.4 Knives and scissors

Knives and scissors will be considered a bladed article and therefore the rules at 1.1.6 will apply.

Depending on the nature of the knife and/or scissors (i.e. if they are capable of causing serious injury), they may also be considered a bladed product. If so, 1.1.7 rules will apply in addition.

Scissors would not count as "offensive weapons per se" as they are created for an innocent purpose. Please note that the knives listed at 1.1.1 count as "offensive weapons per se".

*As a general overview, it is illegal under current UK legislation to:*

1.1.5 Offensive weapons

* manufacture, sell, hire, offer for sale or hire, expose or have in possession for the purpose of sale or hire, lend or give to another person any offensive weapon referenced at 1.1.1 and 1.6.
* carry said weapon in public without good reason or lawful authority (Prevention of Crime Act 1953 s.1).
* use said weapon in a threatening way (Prevention of Crime Act 1953, s.1A).

1.1.6 Bladed and sharply pointed articles(including knives and scissors)

* sell said article to anyone under the age of 18, unless it is a folding pocketknife with a folding blade of 3 inches (7.62cm) long or less (Criminal Justice Act 1988 s.141A(1)-(2)).
* carry said article in public (as defined at 1.4) without good reason or lawful authority, unless it is a folding pocketknife with a folding blade of 3 inches (7.62cm) long or less (as set out at 1.2) (Criminal Justice Act 1988 s.139).
* use said article in a threatening way (Criminal Justice Act 1988 s.139AA).

Please note that a 'folding pocketknife' means it is immediately foldable, simply by pressing it into place. If any further action is required, such as pressing a button or releasing a catch (as is the case with a lock knife), the knife is not a folding pocketknife and so you cannot sell one to anyone under the age of 18, even if the folding blade is less than 3 inches (7.62cm).

1.1.7 Bladed products

* commit any of the offences listed under 1.1.6 above.
* deliver said product:
  + to a locker or residential premises (Offensive Weapons Act 2019, s.38); or
  + to a residential premises to a person under 18 (Offensive Weapons Act 2019, s.39).

Defences available for these delivery offences are set out in full in the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, s.40 and include taking all reasonable precautions and exercising all due diligence to ensure that when the product is delivered, it will not be handed to a person under 18.

Therefore, in practice, it is not prohibited to deliver a bladed product to a residential premises as long as there are suitable age verification procedures in place to ensure that the recipient is over 18. However, it is prohibited to deliver a bladed product to a locker because this does not allow for age verification procedures (subject to certain other defences, e.g. custom-made products).

*1.2 Is there a legal requirement to have a legitimate/justifiable reason for carrying and/or transporting a knife in the public? If so, for what kind of knives (lock knife, folding knife (depending on a special blade length or not?), fixed knife or any knife)?*

Please note that the rules set out in this section 1.2 apply to all bladed and sharply pointed articles and bladed products.

It is illegal to carry a knife in public without good reason, unless it is a folding pocketknife with a folding blade 3 inches long (7.62cm) or less, e.g. a Swiss Army Knife.

It is a defence for a person charged with carrying a knife in public if they are able to prove that they had a good reason or lawful authority for having the knife with them in a public place.

It is a defence if a person is able to prove that they had the knife with them for:

1. use at work;
2. religious reasons; or
3. part of any national costume.

The meaning of a 'good reason' is for the jury to determine and it does not have a legal definition. Therefore, context is always vital. By way of illustration, forgetfulness alone is not a 'good reason' but *could* be considered as such if in a combination with the circumstances of purchase, for example, a parent who buys a knife and puts it in the glove compartment of their car to keep it out of the reach of a child and then forgets about it.

The UK government considers the following examples as good reasons to carry a knife or weapon in public, including:

* taking knives you use at work to and from work;
* taking it to a gallery or museum to be exhibited;
* if it’ll be used for theatre, film, television, historical re-enactment or religious purposes, for example the kirpan some Sikhs carry; or
* if you have a certain occupation e.g. farmer or game shooter or anyone else who has reasonable grounds or expects to need a knife whilst pursuing a lawful activity.

*1.3 How must these concerned knives of section 1.2 be carried or transported in the public (e.g. in a closed or locked container)?*

There are no strict requirements in respect to how you carry or transport knives in public. However, care should always be taken in how the knife is displayed (if at all) in public, as a person can be guilty of an offence if they are considered to be threatening someone with an offensive weapon, a bladed or sharply pointed object, or a bladed product.

*1.4 Are there any public places which may be restricted by an authority (on certain days or at certain times) for carrying any knives or other dangerous tools (e.g. railway station, airport, market places, football stadium, event halls etc.)?*

The legislation relating to the carrying of knives prohibits knives (unless it is a folding pocketknife with a folding blade 3 inches long (7.62cm) or less) being carried without good reason, or lawful authority in public places, school premises, further education premises and prisons (Criminal Justice Act 1988 s139-139A).

A 'public place' for the purposes of the legislation includes any place to which at the material time the public have or are permitted access, whether on payment or not. This would mean that an otherwise private place is 'public' if and so long as the public have access to it at the invitation of the landowner. Examples of places held to be public places in case law include a football stadium, multi-story car park and a public house car park during licensing hours.

Note that the offence relating to the possession of an offensive weapon (ie the weapons listed in 1.1.1) also apply to private places (s141(1C) Criminal Justice Act 1988). A private place is considered somewhere other than a public place, school premises, further education premises or prison.

*1.5 How is the blade length measured (only the cutting blade or including the blade shank)?*



Only the cutting edge of the blade is measured. The blade shank is not included in the measurement.

Please further note that the blades of scissors are measured from the fulcrum to the point.

*1.6 Are there any further dangerous objects which legislation aims to target?*

Offensive weapons

UK legislation targets three types of offensive (dangerous) weapons:

1. 'offensive weapons per se' – i.e. those listed in 1.1.1 above;
2. weapons that have were not produced to be offensive but have been adapted to be offensive e.g. objects with a razor blade inserted; and
3. weapons that are not made or adapted to injure but have been used by someone to injure.

Bladed or sharply pointed articles – see 1.1.2.

Bladed products – see 1.1.3.

*1.7 Are there any exceptions?*

Bladed or sharply pointed articles and bladed products

As mentioned, the possible defences to carrying a bladed or sharply pointed article or bladed product (including a knife, but not a folding pocketknife with a blade under 3 inches (7.62cm) long or less) in public (as described above) include: having a good reason, reasonable excuse or lawful authority for having the article/product with them; or the article/product is for use at work, religious reasons, educational purposes or as part of a national costume.

Offensive weapons

There are further additional defences available for the offense of possession of an offensive weapon under s141(1)(A) Criminal Justice Act, such as functions carried out on behalf of the Crown or visiting forces, possessing weapons of historical importance.

*1.8 What are the consequences of a legal offence?*

Any person who is found guilty of an offence under sections 139 to 142 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 on a summary conviction, could be imprisoned for a term not exceeding a range between the general limit in a magistrates' court and 12 months (depending on the particular offence) or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both). If a person is found guilty on conviction on indictment, they could be imprisoned for a term not exceeding 4 years, or to a fine or to both.

*1.9 Are there any legislative developments? If so what do they concern?*

Recent legislative developments have focused on zombie knives and zombie-style knives to reflect the changing nature of knives used in knife crime in the UK. It is expected that the UK government will continue to 'plug the gaps' on the sale of knives which fall outside its definition of offensive weapons in s.141 Criminal Justice Act 1988.

The UK government has launched a test purchase operation to identify retailers and manufacturers who are still supplying offensive weapons online in response to ongoing concerns regarding the efficacy of current legislation.

# Airports

*2.1 According to the Official Journal of the European Union laying down detailed measures for the implementation of the common basic standards in aviation security, any pointed or sharp objects which may cause serious injury, including a knife with a blade more than 6cm are not allowed to be taken into the security restricted areas or on board of an aircraft.*

* + 1. *Are there any further national regulations to be considered in this respect?*
    2. *If your country is outside the EU, what are the corresponding local regulations?*

The United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority (the **'CAA'**) has stated that 'sharps' are items that can be used to cause injury and that only some are allowed to be carried in cabin baggage (dependent on size) but most are prohibited. The most common sharp items removed from passengers are scissors, razors, pen knives, corkscrews and multitools and the recommendation is to pack these only in hold luggage. For cabin baggage, the following should be considered:

* + - Scissors may be carried if the blade measures no more than 6cm from the fulcrum to the point (e.g. nail scissors). Blunt ended scissors may be carried.
    - Razors - fixed-cartridge (disposable) razor blades can be carried in cabin baggage.
    - Pen knives are allowed if the blade is less than 6 cm.
    - Multi tools (e.g. Leatherman and Swiss Army knife tools). Although these may contain a knife with a blade shorter than 6cm, many of these tools contain other implements with a sharp point, which are prohibited.
    - Corkscrews are prohibited in hand baggage.
    - Tent pegs are prohibited in hand baggage.

Current international standards permit passengers to carry on dangerous goods either in carry-on baggage, checked baggage or on their person. However, airlines and security screening agencies have the power to refuse the carriage of certain dangerous goods.

The CAA have published guidance on the types of dangerous goods which passengers are permitted to carry in their carry-on baggage, in their checked baggage and on their person and those which are forbidden on an aircraft altogether. Some dangerous goods require the airline's approval before travel (this is discussed in further detail below).

It is an offence to import certain specified weapons into the UK including knives, swords and other blades (section 141ZB of the Criminal Justice Act 1988). This includes the weapons listed in 1.1.1.

There are certain exceptions to the prohibition on the importation of offensive weapons into the UK under section 141ZB of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. These include if the weapon is imported for the purposes of:

1. functions to be carried out on behalf of the Crown or a visiting force;
2. only making it the weapon available to a museum or gallery which does not distribute profits;
3. only making it available for theatrical performances, film/television production or; or
4. another government exception.
   1. *May the airports/airlines in your country issue any further (stricter) regulations for forbidden items?*

According to the CAA, airlines and security screening agencies have the power to refuse carriage of certain items. Airport security staff reserve the right to not allow anything through security which they consider dangerous, even if it is an item which is usually allowed on board an aircraft in hand luggage.

* 1. *May a pair of scissors or a saw be included in a pocket knife with a blade of max. 6cm? If so, is the size of the pair of scissors or the length of the saw of relevance?*

The UK guidance on hand luggage restrictions are set out at: <https://www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions>.

A person is not permitted to pack in their hand luggage a knife with a sharp or pointed blade and/or blade longer than 6cm. A person may be permitted to pack this in their hold luggage but an airline or the airport security screening staff have the right to refuse carriage on certain items altogether.

Generally, small scissors with a blade no longer than 6cm are allowed in hand luggage. Large scissors with a blade longer than 6cm is not permitted in hand luggage. Each airline will have their own rules and regulations about what the size of the knives that a passenger is able to bring onto an airplane.

See below a table of 'work tools' which may be permitted in hand luggage:

| **Item** | **Allowed in hand luggage** | **Allowed in hold luggage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Tool with a blade or shaft longer than 6cm (for example chisel) | No | Yes |
| Drill and drill bits | No | Yes |
| Stanley knife | No | Yes |
| Saw (including portable power saw) | No | Yes |
| Screwdriver | No | Yes |
| Hammer | No | Yes |
| Pliers | No | Yes |
| Wrench or spanner | No | Yes |
| Bolt gun or nail gun | No | Yes |
| Crowbar | No | Yes |
| Blowtorch | No | Yes |

* 1. *What is considered as a sharp object besides knives?*

See answer to 2.1.

* 1. *Are there any further aviation security regulations with respect to the Victorinox (pocket) knives to be observed?*

Please see 2.7 below.

* 1. *Are there any changes intended in the near future? If so what do they concern?*

Our advice provided in this report is based on Withers LLP's analysis of the current legislation. As of 10 December 2024, there are no further proposed changes to UK aviation security regulations and guidelines that are directly relevant to Victorinox.

Ibach, Switzerland, 13 December 2024 x

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