

FACTSHEET / EXHIBITOR DEADLINES

Which deadline catches you out?

When do exhibitors need to book and order, and what does being late cost? Conclusions from 21 UK exhibitor manuals, 29 dated compulsory submissions and published surcharge terms from 15 events.

- 1 Your first exhibitor deadline will usually land four to six weeks before the show opens.**
 Across the 21 UK exhibitions we checked, the earliest stand-service deadline fell a median 38 days (5.4 weeks) before opening, and at 20 of 21 it was at least four weeks out. Open the manual at least eight weeks out: that would have beaten the first deadline at 18 of the 21 events.
- 2 Space-only stand plans and health and safety forms are the deadlines most likely to catch you out.**
 Space-only stand plans and risk assessments were due a median 44 days before opening (13 events, up to 70 days), on or before the first service-order deadline at 8 of 13 events. Health and safety declarations were due a median 40 days out (12 events). These are compulsory, so a late submission can stop your build, not just cost more.
- 3 Most stand services close about a month before opening; only catering and a few site services can wait until the last fortnight.**
 Graphics, furniture and shell extras, electrics and flooring each closed a median 31 to 32 days before opening. AV and internet (23.5 days) and freight and storage (26 days) came later, and stand catering last at 10 days. Power is the one to watch: one event wanted electrics ordered 56 days out.
- 4 Missing the early-order date typically adds 20% to 25%, and ordering onsite up to 50%.**
 Where organisers or their contractors publish the penalty (15 events, 6 organiser or contractor families), late orders cost 20% or 25% more and onsite orders 20% to 50% more. On the GES order sites we read, onsite prices end up 44% above the early-bird price, whose deadline fell 29 to 43 days before opening. Late orders are also subject to availability.
- 5 Work to one countdown: plans at nine weeks, orders at eight, final services at five, catering at two.**
 Each step below is the latest point that would have met the published deadline at three out of four of the events we checked. Use it as your default plan, then move dates earlier if your manual says so.

Commissioned by Stand Central, which sells exhibition equipment; no organiser or retailer reviewed or endorsed it. Purposive sample of public manuals, not a national survey. Some dates come from past manuals: check your own edition.

Your exhibitor countdown

Each step is the latest point that would have met the published deadline at three out of four of the events we checked. Move it earlier if your own manual says so.

9 weeks

Space-only stands: stand plans, RAMS and construction phase plan to the organiser

Early enough at 85% of 13 events checked

8 weeks

Place stand service orders before the first price rise (early-bird or first webshop deadline)

Early enough at 83% of 6 events checked

7 weeks

Health and safety declaration and risk assessment

Early enough at 83% of 12 events checked

7 weeks

Graphics, electrics, furniture, shell extras and flooring

Early enough at 89% to 100% of the events checked for each item (9 + 14 + 14 + 7 event deadlines)

5 weeks

Nameboard wording, AV, internet and lead capture

Early enough at 90% to 100% of the events checked for each item (6 + 10 event deadlines)

5 weeks

Freight, lifting and storage, rigging, cleaning, water and waste

Early enough at 100% of the events checked for each item (10 + 2 + 6 event deadlines)

2 weeks

Stand catering

Early enough at 78% of 9 events checked

If you miss a date

Where organisers or their contractors publish the penalty (15 events, 6 organiser or contractor families), late orders cost 20% or 25% more and onsite orders 20% to 50% more. On the GES order sites we read, onsite prices end up 44% above the early-bird price, whose deadline fell 29 to 43 days before opening. Late orders are also subject to availability.

Event-level method: for each event we take the earliest verified deadline of each type, then the whole number of weeks that covers at least 75% of events. Grouped steps take the longest member. The register holds 222 source-linked records from 21 manuals; compulsory submissions and surcharges are separate, source-linked supplements.