

Advice on keeping noise to a reasonable level

Music/Entertainment

- **Keep the volume down to a reasonable level.** The best way to determine what is a reasonable level is to talk to your neighbours and try to reach agreement on what is an acceptable level. Music with a heavy bass content can be particularly annoying; keep the volume down on the bass.
- **Consider the time you play your music.** Playing music at noise sensitive times, such as late evening and during the night can cause the greatest disturbance to neighbours. Again discuss with them which time periods are least sensitive.
- **If you are having a party, inform your neighbours.** Keep windows and doors closed. If you receive a complaint, turn it down.
- **Positioning of loudspeakers is important.** Loudspeakers should not be mounted on party walls they should ideally be mounted on floor stands, this will minimise the transmission of sound from the speaker to the structure of the house and reduce the amount of sound transmitted to your neighbour's house. These stands cost as little as £10 from high street stores.
- **If you want to listen to loud music headphones may provide the answer.** Headphones allow you to enjoy your music at whatever level without disturbing your neighbours. Cordless headphones are available allowing you freedom to move about your house without the hindrance of a wire. They cost as little as £20 from high street stores. However it should be remembered that excessive noise levels can cause permanent hearing damage.
- **If you play a musical instrument** try to agree a reasonable time with your neighbour that allows you to practice and cause minimal disturbance. Try to keep windows and doors closed when practicing.
- **The sound insulation qualities of your house play an important role in the transmission of sound.** Several factors determine how good the structure of a house is at resisting the transmission of sound, such as the type of construction of the party wall, adequacy of construction i.e. small holes in the structure reduce the efficiency of sound insulation. There may be some cost effective measures you could take to improve sound insulation and you may wish to contact Environmental Health for further advice.

DIY activities

- Try to **plan your work** so as to minimise undertaking noisy activities at noise sensitive times e.g. late evening, night time and early morning periods.
- If you are planning something really noisy, e.g. sanding floors, drilling party walls etc. **let your neighbours know beforehand**. If you warn them in advance they will be less likely to complain.
- If you are employing contractors, **agree working hours** with them that will not annoy your neighbours.
- When undertaking maintenance work outside the property or undertaking car repairs **do it in a place and at a time that will cause least disturbance**.

Your home

- **Avoid slamming doors** and stomping up and down stairs or on hard surfaced floors.
- **When considering options for flooring coverings, be considerate** particularly if you live in a flat, apartment, terraced or semi detached house. The type of flooring you have directly influences the way noise can be carried in your home, especially if it is ill fitted or has a thin underlay in place. If wood or laminate flooring is used in an upstairs location every 'thundering' foot fall may be heard by neighbouring properties.
- If you decide to install laminate or wood flooring ensure you use **good quality sound insulation underlay**. Not only will your neighbour notice the benefits but so will you.
- Sound travels through party walls so if you are planning alterations to your home try to **avoid having rooms where noisy activities occur** e.g. kitchens/living rooms, **adjacent quieter areas** such as bedrooms.
- **Alarms can be annoying**. If you have an alarm make sure keyholder details are registered with Environmental Health. This will save you from inconveniencing your neighbours if it goes off while you are away; it may also save you the expense of it being disabled by Environmental Health.

Domestic Appliances

- Try to place washing machines, fridges, and dishwashers **away from party walls** and place them on a carpet or mat to minimise vibration, especially if you live in a flat.
- When purchasing new appliances **check the noise rating** and choose the quieter option.

- **Use noisy appliances at sensible times** such as during normal waking hours. Vacuuming or using a washing machine early in the morning or late evening is likely to cause disturbance.
- **Consider others at home when doing noisy activities.** Shutting internal doors will avoid the necessity for them to turn up the volume on the TV or music system thereby minimising noise transmitted to your neighbour.

Your garden

- **Use power tools with discretion.** Avoid strimming or shredding when neighbours are trying to relax in the sunshine.
- **Think before installing garden features that make a noise.** Splashing fountains and tinkling chimes may be soothing on a sunny after noon but maybe annoying at night.
- **When entertaining in the garden remember sound travels.** Try to avoid amplified music outdoors. Remember the later into the evening it gets the more noticeable and louder your activities will sound to neighbours.

Pets

- **Dogs will bark if they are lonely, bored or unhappy.** If you have to leave them get a neighbour to look after them or check on them.
- **Most domestic animals have the potential to cause noise problems.** Ensure they are kept healthy and happy. Site cages, kennels and enclosures in locations where they will cause least disturbance.