

# A guideline to the various types of Entertainment available to book for your event.



Here is an alphabetical list of different acts and descriptions of performances. I hope that you find them a useful reference point when thinking about which type of entertainment you wish to book for your event.

Please note that all acts are individual. The entertainment which they will offer depends upon various factors such as: the nature of the event, the time scale during which they are required, the location of the event. etc....

Words which are **bold** in the descriptions relate to other definitions in the publication.

## Acrobat

An athlete who performs acts requiring skill and agility and coordination.

Most acrobats work as duos, (although some will perform solo) and usually offer either a show fully choreographed to music which lasts around 5 to 10 minutes. Some acrobats will also offer some **walkabout** entertainment as well as part of the package. Some also offer their skills as **Human Statues**.



An **Aerialist** is an acrobat who performs high off the ground.

Aerialists use such equipment as **aerial hoops, cloud swings, cordes lisse, trapezes, aerial silks**, etc. Like acrobats, they usually perform a set routine to music which usually lasts around 4 to 6 minutes. Some aerialists will also offer “hang around” as a form of **Meet’n’Greet** entertainment before the event.



**Balloon Modellers** twist special modelling balloons into almost any given shape, often a balloon animal. Balloon modellers often work as clowns, or restaurant entertainers. They are also very popular for corporate and local fun days, being able to provide a free gift of a balloon to hundreds of children throughout the day. Another venue where they are very popular is shopping centres, normally, once they start it is very difficult for them to stop, such are the queues which form. Many provide single balloon models, while some offer multi balloon creations.



**Belly Dancers** perform a variety of shows. Some are fairly traditional with their origins in Middle Eastern Dance (Egyptian, Turkish, Lebanese). There is a growing demand for more tribal belly dancing, and some incorporate fire into their dances. Many performers work in restaurants and usually provide one or two dances, possibly with audience participation. Various other skills used are sword balancing on the head, staff work and the flowing Isis Wings.



**Caricaturists.** A caricature refers to a portrait that exaggerates or distorts the essence of a person to create an easily identifiable visual likeness. Laughter is the greatest of all icebreakers and a caricaturist can add a unique flavour to an event, amusing guests by getting them to laugh at themselves and each other. Caricatures are something that guests can take away from an event as a wonderful memento of their time there.



**Clowns** are comical performers, stereotypically characterized by their appearance: coloured wigs, stylistic makeup, outlandish costumes, unusually large footwear, etc., who entertain spectators by acting in an hilarious fashion. The types of their acts vary greatly. Many utilize magic and balloons, while others use crazy props and miniature cars. Some are suitable for **walkabout** entertainment while others are perfect for **arena** events. Any event which has young children at can benefit from having a clown. One word of warning, some small children can be scared by some clown's make up.



**Contortionists** perform an unusual form of physical display which involves the dramatic bending and flexing of the human body. There are a number of excellent contortionists in Britain, mostly female, but there is an occasional male. Contortionists currently work in nightclubs, amusement parks, in magazine advertisements, at trade shows, on television variety shows, in music videos, and as warmup acts or in the background at music concerts and the like.



**Face Painters** artistically apply cosmetic paint to a person's face, using special water-based paints made for face painting. The face paints are non-toxic, top quality and easily removed with soap and water. They are hygienically applied at all times.

This is common entertainment at county fairs, large open-air markets and other locations where there are children and adolescents. Face painting is very popular among children at theme parks, parties, shopping centres, fun days, and festivals. Though the majority of face painting is geared towards children, many teenagers and adults enjoy being painted for special events, such as charity fund raisers.



**Fakirs, Sword Swallowers, Escapologists** perform a more extreme type of entertainment including: lying on beds of nails, walking on broken glass, putting nails or drills up a nostril, eating light bulbs, stapling items to their body etc. Different performers offer different skills and are usually suitable for **street shows** (if not too extreme) or **cabaret acts** (usually more extreme).



**Fire Performers** offer a wide range of entertainment. The main types are background or **Meet'n'Greet** and fully choreographed shows to music. In the former, they usually perform to people arriving at an event for periods between half and one hour. In the latter, the show lasts between 15 minutes and half an hour depending on how many performers are engaged. Skills used include: **juggling, staff, poi, fans, whips, swords, sparks, eating, body burning, and breathing**. Not all performers use the same skills, but most incorporate a selection.



**Glow Performers** are a perfect alternative if you require colourful spectacular entertainment, but being indoors you can't use fire. The equipment used is electronic and produces a variety of coloured patterns. Items usually used include: **juggling** (clubs and balls), **poi** and **staff**. Some of the top end entertainers can even program their equipment to display words or company logos. An increasing number of performers also have illuminated costumes.



**Human Statues** The term human or living statue refers to a mime artist who poses like a statue or mannequin, usually with realistic statue-like makeup, sometimes for hours at a time. This is an art that requires a great deal of patience and physical stamina. It's important to pick a human statue performer that uses a costume that looks like it belongs to the venue. A dusty old statue that might have been in the same spot for decades will create a brilliant effect when people realise it's a real person.



**Jesters.** The jester is a must have for any type of Medieval event, banquet, wedding etc. Some jesters utilise circus skills such as juggling, object balancing, diabolo while others are more acrobatic or musical. Some jesters will even offer entertainment such as lying on a bed of nails or walking on broken glass. Generally, the jester will provide **Meet'n'Greet** entertainment as guests are arriving, then entertain around the tables during the banquet. Some provide short shows between courses.



**Jazz Bands.** Store openings, country picnics, riverboat cruises, fun days, parades, funerals and community events are some of the occasions you'd find a Jazz Band. Available in various sizes, duos, trios, quartets right up to full New Orleans style Marching Bands. One band even has its own vintage car for parades. Why not book one for background music in a restaurant or for a party. As an alternative, many jazz musicians also offer more specialised **Dixieland** music



**Jugglers.** Using a variety of props such as juggling balls and clubs, footballs, basketballs, **diabolos**, **devil sticks**, **poi** etc, the juggler can provide either **Mix'n'Mingle** entertainment or **static shows**. Some jugglers offer a combination of both during an event. Many jugglers are multi-skilled and might even be able to incorporate **stiltwalking**, **unicycling**, or **balloon modelling** into their repertoire during the course of a day. In order to get the best performer, it helps to know what entertainment they will be expected to provide.



**Lookalikes** are exactly that. They are performers who bear a resemblance to a famous person. The best lookalikes also have the voice and mannerisms of the original, so that sometimes it is difficult to tell them apart. They are perfect for themed events, such as Hollywood, James Bond, Openings, Corporate Dinners, Music Awards etc. They present a brilliant opportunity for photographs. Occasionally you will find a lookalike with an extra talent such as magic...two acts for the price of one!!



**Magicians.** There is a wide range of magicians in the country, and it helps to know what style of magician you require. The majority offer **table-hopping** with **close up** magic. Others offer full **stage**, **cabaret** style of magic, while others specialize in **mind reading** or **psychic** magic. Most magicians offer their services for between 2 and 3 hours during an evening event. They are especially suited as entertainers for weddings, corporate dinners, and similar events. Some can perform in theme such as Medieval, Western, Victorian etc



**Medieval Performers.** There are a number of options for Medieval events...corporate fun days, weddings, banquets etc. A basic minimum for an event would be a **Jester** with **Musicians**. Other suggestions would be **Fighting Knights**, **Falconry**, **Magicians**, **Archery**, **Character Performers**, or if the budget is large enough **Jousting**. There is always the option to hire everything you need, entertainment, tents, wooden crockery, food, serving wenches, and even a monk to perform a Handfasting Ceremony.



**Mime Artists.** There are two main types of mime: the traditional mime with the white face, gloves etc, or nowadays there are numerous robotic mimes. From nightclubs to store promotions, festivals to celebrations, these performers can add atmosphere to an event. Some dance, some involve the guests/audience, some even appear in the guise of Santa!!! Mime has come of age.





**Speciality Acts.** This is a term for acts which are not necessarily mainstream but which offer something a little different. They could include: **human tables, sword swallowers, escapologists, angle grinders, fakirs** etc.



**Stiltwalkers.** Standing head and shoulders (and usually more) above the crowd, stiltwalkers are a must if you need an act to be noticed. They are ideal for parades, fun days, store openings, festivals, leafleting and many other occasions. The vast majority of stiltwalkers also offer other skills so can incorporate juggling or balloon modelling into their act. As they are multi-skilled, they can usually offer stilts as part of the event, and some other skill for the rest of the time. There are some exceptions, notably those with special character costumes.



**Unicyclists.** Performers who have mastered the skill of travelling on one wheel. These performers are perfect for Bike Days, Parades, **Mix”Mingle** entertainment and similar. Again, usually multi-skilled the unicyclist can double up as a juggler, stiltwalker, balloon modeller or similar. Some unicyclists use small machines, while others have **giraffe** unicycles. Occasionally, a performer may also use a separate front wheel for comic effect.



### A glossary of terms.

<b>Aerial Hoops</b>	<i>Similar to the trapeze, but in the form of a hoop. It is hung from a rigging point.</i>
<b>Aerial Silks</b>	<i>A long length of silk/material hung from a high point for the performer to work on. Can be 1 or 2 silks .</i>
<b>Angle Grinders</b>	<i>A relatively new form of entertainment often seen in clubs. The performer uses an industrial angle grinder to create streams of sparks. Some performers have metal built into their costumes, other grind a steel rod that is held in their hand. Most performances last the length of a record i.e 3 - 4 minutes.</i>
<b>Archery</b>	<i>One of the activities which can be part of a medieval package. Tuition is given on shooting at targets in a safe environment.</i>
<b>Arena Events</b>	<i>Events which take place in a large roped off area and are quite spectacular. These include stunt shows, suspended escapes and even crazy clown car shows.</i>
<b>Balloon Modelling</b>	<i>The art of twisting balloons into various models: animals, hats, caricatures, etc. Some modellers specialise in single balloon models, others use two or more balloons for a larger model.</i>

<b>Burlesque Performers</b>	Mainly female (though there are some male) performers with a slightly risqué routine, often involving tasteful striptease.
<b>Cabaret Performers</b>	Performers who work on a stage, usually in a nightclub or similar venue. Can include Burlesque, escapology, juggling etc.
<b>Character Performers</b>	Usually walkabout performers who adopt a "character" and interact with the audience in close proximity, maintaining this "character" throughout the performance.
<b>Cloud Swings</b>	Aerial act in which an individual performs on a loop of rope suspended from the top of a tent or other venue.
<b>Corde lisse</b>	<i>Corde lisse</i> is an aerial circus skill or act that involves acrobatics on a vertically hanging rope. The name is French for "smooth rope".
<b>Dixieland</b>	Dixieland, an early style of Jazz that was developed in New Orleans, is the earliest recorded style of Jazz music. The style combined earlier brass band marches, French Quadrilles, ragtime and blues with collective, polyphonic improvisation.
<b>Diabolo</b>	The diabolo is a juggling prop consisting of a spool which is whirled and tossed on a string tied to two sticks held one in each hand. A huge variety of tricks are possible using the sticks, string, and various body parts.
<b>Devil Stick or Flower stick</b>	A "set" of devil sticks is made up of three pieces – the baton and two control sticks. The manipulation of devil sticks (also devilsticks, flower sticks, devil-sticks, rhythm sticks, or juggling sticks) is a form of gyroscopic juggling.
<b>Escapologists</b>	Escapology is the practice of escaping from restraints or other traps. Most escapologists (also called escape artists) escape from handcuffs or straitjackets. Some perform on a stage, others in an arena.
<b>Fire Skills</b>	
<b>Body Burning</b>	The art of running naked flames around the body - notably hands, arms and torso.
<b>Fire Breathing</b>	Fire breathing is the act of creating a large flame by spraying, with one's mouth, a flammable liquid upon an open flame. The flame is usually held an arm's length away and the spray should be both powerful and misty.
<b>Fire Eating</b>	A fire eater is a performer who places flaming objects into their mouth and extinguishes them.
<b>Fire Fans</b>	A fire fan is a fan, typically made with between three and six vanes tipped with torches. They are used for fire dancing. Two fire fans are held, one in each hand and swung around the body, creating patterns of fire.

<b>Fire Jugglers</b>	A juggler using fire props - usually juggling clubs, but occasionally fire balls.
<b>Fire Poi - Fire Chains</b>	Fire props which consist of a wick on the end of a chain or similar. Performance consists of manipulating these around the body and head
<b>Fire Staff</b>	A long stick with a wick at both ends, spun around the body. Some performers use 2 staffs simultaneously.
<b>Sparks</b>	Impressive display of sparks created by burning steel wool in an enclosed container. Not offered by many performers.
<b>Fire Swords</b>	As the name suggests, a sword covered in wick which is set alight and wielded around the body. Again, not very common.
<b>Fire Whips</b>	A whip which contains a wick and is lit. Not very common.
<b>Fakir</b>	The name given to a performer who offers the more "dangerous" side of entertainment - bed of nails, broken glass, nail up the nose, ladder of swords, stapling note to the body etc. All fakirs offer different skills so it is best to have an idea of what you require.
<b>Falconry</b>	A falconer can offer different shows, from talking about, displaying and flying birds of prey, to flying a ring down the aisle to the bride and groom at their wedding.
<b>Fighting Knights</b>	Often seen at medieval events and weddings. Primarily two types, the re-enactors and the stunt men. The former are cheaper than the later.
<b>Human Statues</b>	The term living statue refers to a mime artist who poses like a statue or mannequin. It is an art that requires a great deal of patience and physical stamina.
<b>Human Tables</b>	A relatively new form of performance. Set in the middle of a table, the performer can be a statue, or can interact with guests by handing out drinks, hour 'devours etc.
<b>Juggling</b>	The art of keeping objects on the air as a method of entertainment. Usually balls or clubs, but can include fire torches, rubber chickens, tennis racquets or any other prop the juggler wants to use.
<b>Contact Juggling</b>	The art of manipulating balls (usually crystal) through the hands and around the body in a fluid and artistic manner
<b>Jousting</b>	The main attraction at a large Medieval event involving knights performing a variety of skills on horseback.

<b>Magic</b>	<i>Magic is a performing art that entertains an audience by creating illusions of seemingly impossible or supernatural feats, using purely natural means. These feats are called magic tricks, effects or illusions.</i>
<b>Table Hopping</b>	<i>So called because the magician moves from table to table during the course of a meal, entertaining the guests with close up magic.</i>
<b>Cabaret or Stage magic</b>	<i>A style of magic usually using large scale illusions and props, quite often with an assistant,</i>
<b>Close Up magic</b>	<i>Used to entertain small groups of people at a time, or around tables during a meal. This takes place right in front of the guests and utilises skills such as cards, coins, ropes and similar small scale props.</i>
<b>Mind Reading or Mentalism</b>	<i>This creates the impression in the minds of the audience that the performer possesses special powers to read thoughts, predict events, control other minds, and similar feats. It can be presented on a stage, in a cabaret setting, before small close-up groups, or even for one spectator.</i>
<b>Psychic Walkabout</b>	<i>Imagine for a moment, being told things that exist solely in your mind that no-one could possibly know. Having your actions predicted before you have made them, or even having your watch change to a time that exists only in your mind! Welcome to Psychic walkabout.</i>
<b>Meet'n'Greet Entertainment</b>	<i>Entertainment provided at the beginning of an evening where the performer(s) welcome guests to the event.</i>
<b>Stiltwalking (Stilt walking)</b>	<i>The art of walking on stilts, mostly about 2 foot high. Some stiltwalkers use taller stilts for parades etc. Ideal for Meet'n'Greet, parades, attracting attention for product launches etc. Some stiltwalkers also juggle or balloon model at the same time.</i>
<b>Street shows</b>	<i>Often performed at festivals, fetes etc where the performer entertains a crowd with a show of approximately half an hour. Content and styles vary tremendously.</i>
<b>Sword Swallowers</b>	<i>This is an ancient performance art in which the performer passes a sword through the mouth and down the oesophagus towards the stomach. A very dangerous and therefore expensive form of entertainment</i>
<b>Trapeze</b>	<i>The performer moves around the bar and ropes, performing a wide range of movements including balances, drops, hangs etc. while the bar itself stays mostly in place. The difficulty on a static trapeze is making every move look effortless</i>

<b>Giraffe Unicycle</b>	<i>This unicycle is taller than a normal one. An average height is 5 foot, but they can be 6 or even 8 foot tall.</i>
<b>Walkabout Entertainment</b>	<i>This form of entertainment involves the performer(s) moving freely around the event, normally entertaining a small group of people before moving on to another group. Some acts such as stiltwalkers or jugglers offer this in addition to other entertainment, while some acts are specifically designed for walkabout and offer nothing else.</i>
<b>Workshops</b>	<i>The main workshop offered is a circus skills workshop where the performer teaches a variety of circus skills. This can be formal, where the skills are taught to a specific group for the duration, or drop in where the performer is set up in an area and members of the public come and go to suit themselves. Other workshops could be balloon modelling, dance, etc.</i>

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