

Jewellery and Earrings During PE and Sporting Activities

Info Sheet 85

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Purpose

To explain the health and safety requirements around jewellery in physical education (PE) and sporting activities and to clarify whether taping earrings is acceptable. This guidance aims to support consistent, safe practice across PE lessons, sports fixtures and physical activity.

Scope

This applies to all PE lessons, swimming, sports events and extra-curricular physical activities. It is for pupils, staff and volunteers participating in physical activity.

Legal and Regulatory Context

Schools have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to protect pupils and others from foreseeable harm. Schools are required to manage risks in PE through suitable arrangements and safe practice. Physical Education is a statutory subject at Key Stage 1 and above, and safety controls must be in place during participation.

National Guidance and Expert Advice

The Association for Physical Education (afPE) is the recognised subject association for PE and school sport in England. The afPE strongly recommends the removal of all jewellery at the start of every PE lesson to create a safe working environment.

This advice applies to:

- Earrings and ear studs
- Necklaces and chains
- Bracelets and bangles
- Rings
- Watches
- Body piercings, including retainers and spacers

Why Jewellery Presents a Risk

- Jewellery can catch on clothing, equipment or another pupil
- Earrings can be pulled, tearing the ear lobe
- The post of an earring can be driven into the neck or head during impact
- Tape or plasters can fall off during activity, increasing risk
- Injuries can affect both the wearer and others nearby

Taping earrings

National guidance is clear that taping earrings is not recommended as taping creates a false impression of safety and does not remove the risk. Recorded incidents show injuries occurring where earrings were taped but still caught or driven into the ear or neck. For these reasons, many schools prohibit taping altogether.

Expected practice in schools

- All jewellery should be removed before PE and sporting activities
- Pupils should ideally not wear jewellery to school on PE days
- Staff must not remove or replace jewellery for pupils
- Schools should apply rules consistently to all pupils and activities

Recently pierced ears

Recently pierced ears often cannot be safely removed for several weeks, in these cases, to avoid exclusion while maintaining safety:

- Pupils should not take part in physical PE activities
- Alternative roles should be provided, such as refereeing, coaching or observation tasks

Religious and Cultural Considerations

Health and safety law normally takes precedence where there is a risk to others. Schools should:

- Discuss concerns sensitively with parents and carers
- Seek to be inclusive, while not compromising safety
- Consider alternative activity or modified participation where removal is not possible

Risk Assessment and School Policy

When dealing with the wearing of earrings in PE or sporting activities, schools should use the [EEC](#) risk assessment templates to assess the activity and set out appropriate controls, such as removal.

- Jewellery should be clearly identified as a hazard in PE risk assessments
- Control measures should state that jewellery must be removed
- A clear whole-school policy helps avoid confusion, particularly for:
 - Active lunchtimes
 - Competitions
 - Extra-curricular sport

Any incidents or near misses involving jewellery during PE or sports activities should be reported in line with the school's accident and near miss reporting procedures and reviewed to inform future risk assessment and practice.

What parents and carers should be told

- Children should not wear jewellery on PE days
- Earrings should be removed at home before school
- Ears should ideally be pierced at the start of the summer holiday to allow healing
- Schools cannot accept parental disclaimers for injuries caused by jewellery

Summary of Key Points

- Earrings should be removed at home before school
- Jewellery should not be worn during PE or sport
- Taping earrings is not recommended and is increasingly not permitted
- Removal is the only effective way to control the risk
- Where removal is not possible, pupils should take part in non-physical roles

Further Information / Links

This document is in the Guidance for Schools, on the Somerset Council H&S website: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/health-and-safety>.

Safe Practice Guidance [Association for Physical Education \(afPE\)](#)

afPE Health and Safety Update: [Jewellery in PE](#)

Department for Education – National Curriculum for Physical Education [National Curriculum](#)

Health and Safety Executive [Health and Safety: Responsibilities and duties for schools - GOV.UK](#)

Health and Safety Executive [Schools and Education - HSE](#)