

Consumer Guide

Ticket availability for live events

This Guide has been produced by Live Performance Australia (LPA) to inform Australian consumers of the operation of commonly used ticketing systems, and address issues of ticket availability for live events.

It addresses the following:

- How are tickets sold?
- What are ticket presales?
- Are the best available tickets sold through presales?
- Why do tickets sell so quickly?
- Why do I have a limited amount of time to purchase my tickets?
- I was in the process of buying tickets online, and then suddenly they were released for sale. Why?
- Why can I only purchase a limited number of tickets?
- Why do tickets sometimes become available later in the selling process?
- Who can I contact for further information?

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Ticket availability for live events

How are tickets sold?

- Major ticketing companies such as Ticketmaster and Ticketek generally release tickets for sale through multiple distribution channels at the time tickets for an event go on sale. This means tickets can be purchased online, over the phone, or in person at an official ticketing outlet, or venue box office.
- The release date and pricing of tickets is not set by the ticketing company. These matters are decided by the artist or the organisation producing or presenting the event ('presenter'), and the ticketing company acts at their direction.
- Tickets are not allocated for any specific distribution channel, and you have an equal chance of securing tickets through any means of purchase, depending on availability.
- For extremely popular events, the allocation of tickets can quickly be exhausted through online sales. This is not because the tickets have been allocated that way but simply because online sales, which use high volume transaction engines, provide the capability to sell large numbers of tickets very quickly.
- One common exception to this rule is internet-only presales.

What are ticket presales?

- Presenters will occasionally release a limited percentage of tickets for sale before release to the general public. These tickets are referred to as presales, **and are often limited to consumers that are signed up to, or are members of particular groups or promotions** (e.g. holders of specific credit cards, or members of fan clubs).
- Eligible consumers are provided with a password, or a dedicated link allowing them exclusive access to tickets within a short timeframe prior to release for public sale. **Presales provide the advantage of exclusive purchasing windows ahead of the general sale of tickets, with a smaller number of consumers competing for tickets.**
- As with other matters relating to ticketing (e.g. pricing and release date) the release and volume of pre-sales is not decided by the ticketing company. The ticketing company acts on the direction of the artist or presenter when releasing tickets for presale.

Are the best available tickets sold through presale?

- **Presales do not necessarily provide access to superior seating.** This depends entirely on which tickets in the venue are allocated for presale.
- Accordingly, it is sometimes possible to acquire tickets for better seats through the general sale, than it is through presale.
- As with any ticket purchase, tickets sold through presale are only subject to refunds or exchanges in certain circumstances.
- **The subsequent availability of tickets for additional seating does not provide grounds for a ticket refund or exchange if preferred seating later becomes available.**
- Presales are often conducted exclusively online. Occasionally presale purchases are available through venue box offices with these details typically available on the websites of major ticketing companies.

Why do tickets sell so quickly?

- **Tickets for popular events often sell out in minutes, even for large venues such as stadiums and arenas.**
- This is simply **due to demand and the capacity for thousands of transactions to be made very quickly through online sales**, which use high volume automated transaction engines to process sales. For example, if 1,000 fans are simultaneously buying two tickets each, then 2,000 seats can be sold in seconds, enabling large venues to sell out in a matter of minutes.
- **It should also be noted that a limited allocation of tickets may be held from public sale by the presenter, or could have been presold.**
- This may reduce the number of tickets available to be sold in the initial general sale. The 2014 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey found that of the 18.54 million tickets issued to live performances in 2014, approximately 11% of these tickets were complimentary or presenter allocated tickets.

Why do I have a limited amount of time to purchase my tickets?

- When purchasing your tickets, you are effectively putting them on 'hold' while you process the transaction. This means they cannot be purchased by anyone else during that time.
- The amount of time tickets can be held is limited to prevent buyers from reserving tickets and then deciding against the purchase, leading other buyers to potentially miss out.
- From the beginning of the process to the end, you will generally be provided with at least five minutes to complete your purchase.

- It is also important to note that congestion can occur in an online shopping environment, just as it can in a physical shopping environment.
- Time limits are also used to ensure that web traffic moves through the ticketing website, rather than congesting the system and potentially forcing it to crash.

I was in process of buying tickets online, and then suddenly they were released for sale. Why?

- When purchasing tickets online you should restrict your activity to one browser window, on one computer or electronic device. If you open another browser and order another set of tickets, the tickets held in your first window will be released for sale.
- The major ticketing companies require you to purchase your online tickets through a registered account which enables them to perform this function. This is an anti-scalping measure, and is designed to prevent automated programs from purchasing large numbers of tickets at a time by performing simultaneous transactions across multiple windows.

Why can I only purchase a limited number of tickets?

- Artists, presenters and ticketing companies take active measures to prevent ticket scalping operations, in which tickets are purchased for high demand events purely with the intent of on-selling them at a profit or to gain some other financial benefit.
- One of those measures is to limit the number of tickets that may be purchased by any one customer, or using any one credit card.
- These limits are generally set by the artist or presenter and will vary depending on the event. The measure seeks
- to limit the number of tickets purchased by scalpers, ensuring as many genuine fans as possible have access to tickets at the original price, while maintaining the protections that purchasing from the authorised ticket seller provides.
- For example, if tickets are not bought from the authorised ticket seller, and the event is then cancelled, you may not be able to obtain a refund, depending on the resale facility you have bought them through. Only holders of tickets bought from authorised ticket sellers will have an automatic right to access refunds in such circumstances.
- Ticketing companies take purchase limits seriously, and do track multiple purchases to ensure they are being made legitimately. In circumstances where they suspect systematic scalping is taking place, ticketing companies will refer the transaction to their internal fraud department for further investigation.

Why do tickets sometimes become available later in the selling process?

- Occasionally, tickets for live events will ‘appear’ for sale, where previously they appeared to be sold.
- This can happen for a number of reasons.
- Sometimes these are simply tickets that were being considered by a consumer who then decided against the sale, or whose credit card was declined. The ‘hold’ that the consumer had on the tickets while they considered the purchase expires, and the tickets are then made available to other consumers. In cases where consumers are found to have exceeded the allowable purchase time limit, those tickets may also come back into circulation where previously they appeared to be sold.
- In other occasions, presenters may release more tickets to the ticketing company for sale closer to the event date. This can happen for a number of reasons. Sometimes new seats become available as the staging details are finalised (for example, the location of the sound desk is determined), and sometimes the artist or presenter decides they no longer need a ticket allocation that they had previously reserved.

TIP: In all cases, it can pay to re-check ticket availability if you do not initially succeed in making a purchase.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you have further queries, please contact LPA at:

- **Telephone** (during business hours): **03 8614 2000**
- **Email:** info@liveperformance.com.au
- **Post:** Level 1, 15-17 Queen St, Melbourne VIC 3000