

A first-time strikers' guide



For many workers, the 1/3 March strike will be their first time going on strike. We've produced this handy guide to answer some frequently-asked questions, starting with the most basic...

What is a strike?

A strike is when workers withdraw our labour - stop working - in order to defend or improve our jobs and conditions.

Strikes remind employers that it's workers' labour that makes society move, by producing all goods and services. In our case, we're collectively "producing" Tube journeys for the travelling public, and in doing so, we facilitate the creation of huge amounts of revenue for other employers, by getting their workers to and from work.

Withdrawal of labour is the most basic form of direct action available to workers when we want to make change, or prevent detrimental changes imposed by our employers.

Why is RMT striking on 1 and 3 March?

RMT sought three assurances from LU: that it will not cut staffing levels; that it will not make detrimental changes to our terms and conditions; that it will not make detrimental changes to our pension arrangements.

LU refused to give those assurances. Instead, it has announced plans to cut up to 600 jobs from stations and impose new frameworks on the revenue department and the SRT.

Although it claims the ongoing review into pensions is "just a review", it is almost inevitable that review will recommend changes to the scheme which will detrimentally impact our pensions. We are striking to demand that management change course. We are striking to defend jobs, conditions, and pensions.

Who decided we'd strike?

We did. RMT reps told our National Executive Committee we wanted a strike ballot, a collective vote where members say if they're prepared to strike.

That vote took place via post from 13 December to 10 January. 95% of those who voted said they wanted to take action. Discussions were subsequently held in RMT branches, at the RMT London Transport Regional Council, and in a regional reps' meeting on 1 February. These discussions gave a steer to the NEC, which called the strike. Decisions about future action, including if and when we strike again, will also be based on collective discussion within RMT.

This isn't "the union", conceived of as an external body, making a decision and "telling us" to strike. We are the union: in calling the strikes, the NEC is acting on the collective democratic decision of the membership, expressed through our strike ballot.

Who can strike?

Any worker directly employed by London Underground, in any workplace covered by RMT's ballot, can participate in this strike, regardless of which union they're in.

Even workers who are not members of a union can participate in the strike. However, if you're not currently a member of RMT, we strongly encourage you to join. As individuals, we have extremely minimal ability to win change at work. Our power is as a collective.

Do I have to tell anyone I'm striking?

No. You don't have to inform your managers; you simply don't come to work on the days of the strike. If you are asked in advance of the strike whether you'll be striking, we hope you'll feel confident and empowered enough to say proudly that you will be participating in the strike. However, you are not under any obligation to answer, even if you are asked by a manager.

What should I do on the strike days?

It's simple: don't go to work. All members are encouraged to take part in picketing, but the most basic and important thing is that you do not work your allocated duty.

If the strike falls on your rest day or on annual leave, you technically won't be withdrawing your labour, as you wouldn't have been at work that day anyway.

However, you are still encouraged to attend a picket line.

What is a picket line?

A picket line is a group of striking workers making a physical stand outside a workplace. It acts as a visible expression of the strike, and allows us to come together as workers to discuss our dispute.

It raises the profile of the strike, and allows us to explain to the public why we're striking; the union will produce special leaflets to hand out to members of the public on strike days.

And it allows us to speak to workmates who have decided to come to work and attempt to persuade them to join the strike instead.

Picket lines will be organised at stations and depots all over London. If you can reach a picket line at your own workplace by travelling on non-LU services, that's preferable. However, if this isn't possible, you can attend a picket line nearer your home.

It's unlikely LU will be able to run any kind of service on strike days. If any service does run, please don't use it. If you're travelling to a picket line, please use buses or other non-LU services (e.g., London Overground, DLR, TfL Rail, etc.). Do not use your staff pass for travel. And attend picket lines in your own clothes, not uniform.

Can I get in trouble for striking?

No. The employer cannot make you suffer any detriment for taking part in official industrial action. Obviously, you won't be paid for strike days (unless the strike falls on your rest day or annual leave), but you won't get into any trouble.

I'm still on probation: can I strike?

Yes. Participating in a strike cannot be used against you as part of the probation process. If any manager suggests striking could affect your probation, speak to a rep immediately.

What about other industrial action?

RMT has called an additional industrial action, in the form of refusal to familiarise or train anyone who wouldn't usually work at your location. This is to stop LU using "Ambassadors" and workers from other areas of the business to keep stations open, or keep other parts of the service running, during our strikes.

Our ballot also gives us the option of calling other action, such as an overtime ban, in the future if we decide that will be effective.

What happens after the strike?

On 2 March and from 4 March, we will all work our normal allocated duties, until we decide to strike again. Your absence will be marked on SAP as "Industrial Action", and if you were rostered on duty (i.e., not RD or AL) on 1 and/or 3 March you will not be paid for those days.

It is likely we will be striking again after 3 March. The union is legally mandated to give the employer a minimum of 14 days' notice prior to any strike. If you have any other questions, please speak to a local rep.

Share this Q&A with your workmates, and get active in your union to have your say about where we go next. See you on the picket lines!

DO NOT BOOK ON FOR ANY DUTY BETWEEN:

00:01 and 23:59 on 1 March

00:01 and 23:59 on 3 March

DO NOT FAMILIARISE OR TRAIN ANYONE WHO WOULD NOT USUALLY WORK AT YOUR LOCATION UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

**FINALLY: If we need any more proof of what lies ahead, this is from TfL's own cost savings review (see right).
The writing is on the wall.
Now is the time to fight**

5.2 Operating costs: further efficien...

benchmarked against the Network Rail and Civil Service schemes, which have been reformed.

The scheme is outdated. There are a range of changes that could be considered, including for example using a career average model rather than the current final salary scheme, using the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) as the scheme's inflation index rather than the Retail Prices Index (RPI) and closing the scheme to new entrants. It is not in our scope to evaluate these potential options – we recommend that a commission be established to undertake this review separately.

A second issue relating to TfL's pension scheme is how it is treated. It is classified as a private sector scheme, where TfL is responsible for past and future liabilities, which will grow. A government guarantee on these liabilities would reduce TfL's contributions to the scheme and save the public sector money, noting that this might require legislation. If this is not possible, then reform as has been implemented in the private sector will be essential.

Modernisation of the pensions model, with Government supporting liabilities could generate saving of £100 million pa, and cap future liabilities.

The pension model is outdated and must be reformed. A commission should be established to look in greater detail at the options for modernising the scheme and reducing TfL's costs. A Crown guarantee of historic liabilities could go with a reformed scheme. This could reduce the funding gap by £100 million pa as well as limit future liabilities for the public sector.

Further efficiencies

We consider that any new funding must be conditional on a continued drive for transparent efficiency. Given