

Small Laws, Big Fun



Having once had cause to read Schedule 1 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 for a real actual job, I found one way of entertaining myself during was to pick out the most striking laws.

This meant I read the document closely, because I was looking for odd or unusual rules, and that by the end of the project I had a page of jump-off points for stand-up comedy.

Looking at the laws listed below, can you imagine:

- *What happened that meant there had to be a law created on that particular issue*
- *A scene in which that specific law is broken*
- *A terrible crime spree in which many of these laws are broken*
- *Someone who has been fined for breaking one/some of these laws explaining to a loved one where all their money has gone, or planning a robbery to cover the cost (crime DOES pay)*
- *Someone boasting to actual tough guys & gals on their law-breaking activities, all of which are these mild nonsenses*

There is much funny to be found in the contrast between these laws, and what your audience think of as REAL CRIME. The small-scale surprise of these being real rules is also entertaining to a listener.

Over the next two pages, we have given you both the individual laws themselves, and some suggestions of things to focus in on when coming up with your own comedy.

26.1 If you give a dealer in second-hand goods (ie antiques, records, clothing) a false name or address when selling them something, you can be fined up to £200.

- *Make up some names & addresses you can't use while selling things to a second-hand dealer.*
- *Imagine impersonating different celebrities or fictional characters while trying to sell different items. Would anyone believe you were the Queen, for example?*
- *Act out the conversation between a liar and a suspicious/trusting shopkeeper.*

39.3 You do not need a street trader's licence if you are selling only newspapers, or coal. Or milk, provided you are a registered to do so under section 7 of the Milk and Dairies (Scotland) Act 1914. For anything else you might be selling in the street, you do need a licence.

- *List as many things as you can that are not newspapers, coal or milk. All of these items need a licence to be sold outside. Be as silly as you like!*
- *Imagine what you could be selling on a market, and how you might disguise that as a newspaper, or convince a police officer that it is in fact coal.*

43 'A licence, to be known as a "window cleaner's licence", shall be required for carrying on the trade of, or being employed as, a window cleaner.'

- *Imagine what an unofficial/home-made "window cleaner's licence" might look like. Or make one yourself! Would it pass inspection?*
- *Imagine being caught with a window cleaner's equipment, not having a window cleaner's licence – what excuses can you think of to explain what you are carrying?*

47. 'Any person who urinates or defecates in such circumstances as to cause, or to be likely to cause, annoyance to any etc other person shall be guilty of an offence and liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £50.'

- *Imagine how you could wee or poo in an annoying way. And in a way that is FINE.*

48.3 A guide-dog can poo where it likes, without the blind owner being fined. So can a sheepdog, provided it is being used to move animals.

- *Imagine a dog owner who doesn't pick up its poo pretending that they are blind, or that their sheepdog had just lost all of its sheep, to get away with it.*

49.1 If you are in charge of an animal, and you let it 'annoy or alarm' someone in a public place – pretty much anywhere but a taxi - you can be fined up to £50.

- *Think about how different animals could annoy or alarm people in public.*
- *Act out how frustrated a taxi driver might get with particular creatures in the cab, knowing there is no law against it.*

50.2 If you are drunk while looking after a child under 10 (or child who looks to be under 10), you can be fined £50.

- *Sometimes, when playing games with small children, or even just talking to them, adults can seem drunk. Act out this happening! How could a grown-up get in trouble by mistake?*

50.5 If you are drunk in a public place – again pretty much anywhere but a taxi - while in possession of a firearm (including a crossbow, airgun, air rifle or air pistol) you can be fined up to £50.

- *How would a drunk person pretending to be a sober person carry a firearm?*

53. A pedestrian who gets in someone's way and refuses to move can be fined up to £50.

- *Imagine why this would happen. Act it out!*

54. If anyone in public plays an instrument, sings, performs, or uses a TV / radio / boombox / stereo etc. and is deemed annoying with it, has to stop when asked by a uniformed police officer or risk being fined up to £50. This does not apply if the noisy person is helping in an emergency, or at a fair.

- *Imagine how this could affect buskers, or other street performers.*
- *Imagine being told off by a cop for humming or singing in public. Would this affect you, or someone you know?*

56. If you 'alarm or annoy' someone by starting a fire in a public place, you can be fined up to £200. I do not know for certain if this includes a taxi.

- *What are the most alarming or annoying fires?*
- *What are the nicest fires, that no-one would complain about?*

129. You can't just kill a dog. Seriously. GUYS. It has to be on your land, or your bosses land, AND be a danger to your animals/birds.

- *Audiences will likely be sad at the thought of killing real dogs, so you can help them out by imagining dangerous situations for fictional canines – like Scooby Doo or Sirius Black - from books, movies and TV shows.*