

## Step-by-step: Circus

Great for: **EVERYONE!**

Fun factor: ★★★★★

Effort: ★★★★★

£ potential: £££££

**Not only does a circus offer great profit potential, but it makes a fabulous community event, too.**

**1** **Speak to your** school to confirm that you have space for a big top (usually a flat area with short grass of approximately 50m<sup>2</sup>), and that there is no underground pipework on the proposed site. Agree some preferred dates, bearing in mind that you may have to book up to two years in advance! Avoid selecting a date that clashes with any other local (or major national) events, as this could affect ticket sales.

**2** **Find a supplier.** There are several recommended circus suppliers listed in our online directory ([pta.co.uk/suppliers](http://pta.co.uk/suppliers)), so it shouldn't be difficult to find one that suits your school size and budget. Some offer 'little' big tops seating 230 people while others have 'big' big tops seating an audience of up to 600. Is your circus going to be a stand-alone event or part of your summer fair? Think about whether you want one big show, or several smaller shows. Some circuses will need to stay overnight, so discuss this with your Head before confirming your booking. Access to an electricity supply and toilets may be required, and may cost you extra if these have to be hired. All electrical equipment should be PAT tested.

**3** **Agree a pricing** strategy. Expect to pay between £1,200-£2,400, and check whether your circus supplier requires a deposit and whether travel is charged on top. Once you know the capacity of your big top, you can agree a price per ticket to ensure that you cover your costs. Most PTAs charge between £5 and £10 (with no differentiation for children or adults, who all take up the same amount of space!).

**4** **Start marketing your** event (see tips and advice, right) and work out when and how to sell and distribute tickets. Check whether your supplier provides tickets. If not and if you have more than one show, print sheets of tickets onto different coloured paper for each show, with the times clearly stated. Number the tickets so that you can easily see how many are left and sell them at school events such as sports day or celebration assemblies. Let parents know when and where you will be selling tickets so that they bring sufficient cash along.

**5** **Ask for a** copy of your suppliers' public liability insurance. Your circus supplier should provide risk assessment documentation for the big top, however you should carry out a risk assessment for the overall event. Consider whether a qualified first aider is required (see [pta.co.uk](http://pta.co.uk)).

**6** **Appoint a few** volunteers to check tickets and be on hand to help set up (providing coffee!) and to run any side stalls on the day.

### Tips and advice

**Boost profits:** Some suppliers sell their own popcorn and candyfloss, and may request that you don't do the same. So how else can you maximise profits? Set up stalls to run before, during and after each performance, with ready-made crafts, a bouncy castle and face painting. If the circus isn't selling any merchandise, source your own – look for juggling balls, spinning plates and diablos. Offer a variety of refreshments and run a BBQ (weather permitting)! For tips and advice on selling refreshments, stall ideas and much more, go to [pta.co.uk/fairs](http://pta.co.uk/fairs).

**Licences:** As of 6 April 2015, you no longer need a licence for 'regulated entertainment' to run a circus. If you plan to run a bar, then a TEN will be required. Go to [pta.co.uk/licences](http://pta.co.uk/licences).

**Safety and security:** Carry out a risk assessment. Think about any parking issues that may arise.

**Marketing:** A circus is nothing without an audience! Promote through posters, make announcements in school newsletters and send a media release to your local press. Social media is another great way to generate interest, so keep your online audience regularly updated with plenty of photos and a countdown to the big day. Some suppliers provide promotional materials, including laminated posters and leaflets, so make the most of what is offered to maximise ticket sales. After the event, let everyone know how much you raised and what school resources this money will help fund.

For more ideas and advice, visit [pta.co.uk](http://pta.co.uk)

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