

If you're booking a comedian, you're probably going to benefit from their skills, effort and experience.

Maybe you'll make money from tickets or drink sales, or you'll impress guests at your corporate event. Perhaps the comedian's public profile will attract new customers to your business.

Whatever the benefit will be, there's a reason you want a comedian to perform, so there is value in that performance. And just like plumbers, lawyers and checkout operators, comedians deserve to be paid for they do for you.

The NZ comedy industry is extremely diverse. The appropriate pay rate for a comedian will depend on the comedian's experience, profile and skill, the type of performance, even the region the performance will take place in.

The following guidelines are recommendations that have been developed in consultation with the comedy industry. They should be considered guidelines only; some comedians may expect higher rates than indicated here. In general, with the exception of Open Mic events, the Guild recommends a minimum **per minute** of fee of \$10 - \$17.50, but like buying a car – you usually get what you pay for. Don't expect a Porsche for the price of a Lada.

Why so much? When a comedian gets paid for a performance, they're not just getting paid for that minute of performance, they're also getting paid for the hours they spent writing and rehearsing the material and often the years they've spent building up their public profile.

It's worth noting that experience does not necessarily imply talent, and conversely a lack of experience does not imply a lack of talent. Talent and experience also doesn't mean a comedian will be suitable for every environment. Do your research and get to know the comedian before booking them.

If you'd like more advice, contact the NZ Comedy Guild by emailing admin@comedyguild.org.nz

Open Mics

The Guild recognizes that the benefit transaction is slightly different for Open Mic events. These events often offer emerging comedians valuable stage time that will help them refine their material and improve their stagecraft. For this reason, it is acceptable to offer performers complimentary food and/or beverage in lieu of a fee.

The MC will usually be more experienced, however, so standard live performance rates should apply.

The Guild also recommends clearly communicating the level of performance the audience can expect at an Open Mic night to avoid disappointment and to provide a safe and

supportive environment for emerging comedians. Likewise, if audiences will be charged an entry fee, it should be reasonable and commensurate with the level of performance.

Standard Live Performance (non-corporate)

For general live performances at pubs, clubs or theatres, where the audience is expecting professional performances, the Guild recommends a minimum per minute fee of \$10-\$17.50.

Comedians may expect more than this depending on the following attributes:

- **Ticket price:** when you charge more, the audience expects more, so the performer has to work harder
- **Venue / audience size:** likewise, a bigger venue takes more effort to entertain than a smaller one. It's also likely that you'll be charging more for tickets in a big venue.
- **Location:** There is a much bigger industry and audience in Auckland, so the Guild recommends the minimum per minute fee of \$17.50 for shows in Tāmaki Makaurau. The Guild recognizes that industries in smaller centres may not be able to support this rate.
- **Profile:** better-known comedians will expect higher rates. It's likely they've achieved this level of public profile as a result of talent, experience and hard work. A higher fee also reflects the benefits you'll receive as a result of their profile (audience appeal, media opportunities etc)
- **MC:** The role of the MC is critical to an event's success. The MC sets the tone for the show, warms the audience up, keeps the pace going, and has to be 'on' all night. For this reason, the MC fee should be higher.

Corporates

Corporate events incur higher rates than standard gigs, mainly because the expectation of the client and the effort required from the comedian are much higher. Often, the comedian is expected to edit their material, language and tone, and dress more formally. Corporate events can also be more challenging than standard gigs, as oftentimes the audience hasn't chosen to be there.

As above, rates will depend on the comedian's experience, talent and profile, and also on the venue/audience size, the location.

A minimum rate for corporate performance should be between \$50 - \$100 per minute.

Charity events

Comedians are frequently approached to donate their time and talent in support of a charity. But before you ask a comedian to perform for free, check what you are expecting from other supporters. Are you working for free? Are any other performers or celebrities? Are the lighting and sound technicians? The chefs? Unless the answer is yes, it's unfair to ask a comedian to be the only one working for free.

Payment

The Guild does not endorse 'cash' jobs. All comedians should provide you with an invoice for their work. The Guild can provide invoice templates if required. For further advice, please contact the Inland Revenue Department.

Payment terms should be agreed upon prior to the event, as part of the contracting process. We recommend formalising arrangements by way of agreement for every engagement, regardless of the scale of event or fee. The Guild has a basic performance agreement template if required.

What happens if I don't pay Guild recommended rates?

Guild rates are not enforced, per se. However, the Guild hosts an industry Facebook group where comedians share experiences and advice - if you consistently fail to pay a comedian within the agreed timeframe, or become known for paying rates below Guild recommendations, the community may share this knowledge on the Facebook page.