

Stop a bleed in six steps.

A free, plain-English quick guide based on current UK first aid guidance. Keep it somewhere you'll see it.

STEP 01

Spot a life-threatening bleed

A severe bleed usually slows with pressure. A life-threatening bleed doesn't, and can kill within minutes. These are most likely after a stabbing, a power-tool accident or a serious road collision.

WARNING SIGNS

- ✓ Blood is pumping or spurting from the wound
- ✓ Pressure isn't stopping or slowing the bleeding
- ✓ Blood is quickly soaking through dressing after dressing

REMEMBER

- ✓ Clothing can hide a wound, so look for blood pooling or soaking through
- ✓ Act fast: you don't need to be certain to start pressing

Based on [Resuscitation Council UK first aid guidelines](#) and [London Ambulance Service](#).

STEP 02

Stay safe and call 999

Check for danger before you go in. You can't help anyone if you get hurt too. Then get help coming straight away.

DO

- ✓ Call 999 and put the phone on speaker so your hands are free
- ✓ Follow the call handler's instructions; they'll guide you
- ✓ Send someone for a first aid kit or public bleed kit
- ✓ Wear gloves if you have them; a plastic bag or clothing can act as a barrier

AVOID

- ✗ Rushing into traffic, fire, or near a person who is still a threat
- ✗ Leaving the injured person alone to go and look for a kit yourself

Based on [London Ambulance Service](#) and [British Red Cross](#) guidance.

STEP 03

Press hard, and keep pressing

Continuous, firm, direct pressure is the most important and effective thing a bystander can do. You don't need special equipment.

DO

- ✓ Press a wad of material straight onto the bleeding: a tea towel, T-shirt or gauze
- ✓ Use both hands, lock your arms and lean your body weight in
- ✓ Keep pressing without a break until paramedics take over
- ✓ If something is stuck in the wound, press firmly on either side of it

AVOID

- ✗ Lifting the cloth to check. It undoes the clot that's forming
- ✗ Pulling out a knife, glass or other object. It may be plugging the wound
- ✗ Washing a heavily bleeding wound

Based on [London Ambulance Service](#), [NHS](#) and [British Red Cross](#) guidance.

STEP 04

Pack deep wounds

Some wounds are too deep for surface pressure to reach the bleeding, especially in the neck, armpit or groin where a tourniquet can't be used. Packing gets the pressure to where it's needed.

DO

- ✓ Feed gauze or clean material firmly into the wound, filling it
- ✓ Press down hard on the packing straight away and keep pressing
- ✓ Follow the call handler's advice if you're unsure

AVOID

- ✗ Packing a wound with something stuck in it
- ✗ Easing off once it's packed. Pressure still does the work

Packing is a skill best learned hands-on. It's a core part of every Bleed Ready session, practised on realistic wound simulators.

Based on [Resuscitation Council UK first aid guidelines](#).

STEP 05

Tourniquet for arms and legs

If bleeding from an arm or leg can't be controlled with direct pressure, a tourniquet can save a life. Very few injuries need one, so always start with pressure.

DO

- ✓ Place it 5–7cm above the injury, never over a joint
- ✓ Tighten until the bleeding stops. Warn them it will hurt
- ✓ Write down the time it went on
- ✓ If bleeding continues, add a second tourniquet above the first

AVOID

- ✗ Loosening or removing it. Only a healthcare professional should
- ✗ Stopping pressure to search for, or make, a tourniquet
- ✗ Using one on the neck, chest or body

Different tourniquets tighten in different ways. Practise with the type in your local kit before you ever need it.

Based on [Resuscitation Council UK first aid guidelines](#) and [London Ambulance Service](#).

STEP 06

Until help arrives

Serious blood loss can lead to shock. Your job now is to keep the bleeding controlled and the person as stable and calm as you can.

DO

- ✓ Keep pressing on the wound
- ✓ Lie them down and keep them warm with a coat or blanket
- ✓ If they're pale, cold or dizzy, raise their legs if you can
- ✓ Talk to them and keep reassuring them

HAND OVER

- ✓ Tell paramedics what happened and what you've done
- ✓ Tell them the time any tourniquet went on
- ✓ Afterwards, look after yourself. It's normal to feel shaken

Based on [British Red Cross](#) and [Resuscitation Council UK](#) guidance.

This guide is for awareness and doesn't replace hands-on training. In an emergency, always call 999 and follow the call handler's instructions.

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