



The Distillery Historic District 2025 Busker Program Guidelines

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Note: As of August 11, 2025, Drop-In Buskers are no longer permitted at The Distillery Historic District.

This document is intended to provide an overview and establish guidelines for The Distillery Historic District 2025 Busker Program. Successful applicants will engage in a formal Agreement, wherein the terms set forth in the Agreement shall take precedence over the guidelines outlined herein

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1: Busking at The Distillery Historic District

The Distillery Historic District, a cornerstone of Toronto's renowned cultural landscape and widely recognized as Canada's premier arts and entertainment destination, is calling on Buskers from far and wide!

This is an open call for Buskers interested in performing during our 2025 season, which runs from May to October. We look forward to showcasing the incredible level of talent across the Busker industry!

Please ensure you have read this document in full and that you understand our Busker permit process prior to submitting your application. We ask that you use our online form to apply for your Busker permit. We do not accept applications submitted in person, via mail, via email, or by any other method (unless requested). If you require additional support, our team can be reached at: events@thedistillerydistrict.com

The Distillery Historic District welcomes the following types of Busker performances:

1. **Circle Show:** A performance that maintains a crowd and the attention of an audience for the duration of the act. A permit is required for Circle Shows.
2. **Fire Acts:** The use of fire is restricted at The Distillery Historic District. Those incorporating fire in their act will be required to disclose this in their application. The Distillery Historic District reserves the right to deny or halt a performance if the use of fire is deemed unsafe. These acts are permitted only at designated pitches and require approval from site management. A permit is required for Fire Acts. Fire acts are required to have a fire blanket readily available on site at all times during their performance.
3. **Animated Variety Acts:** Song, clown, puppetry, comedy, statue, close up magic, etc.
4. **Musical Acts:** Amplified or acoustic music that is accompanied by an instrument or performed a cappella. The type of amplification or instrument played must be disclosed at the time of application. The use of certain instruments such as bagpipes is restricted on site.
5. **Group Acts:** A group consisting of 2 or more members must indicate this on their permit application.
6. **Additional acts or activations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis** (face painters, caricature artists, etc.).

HAZARDOUS PROPS: The use of hazardous props is prohibited at The Distillery Historic District (i.e. sharp knives). Buskers who make use of props that could be *perceived* as hazardous by a visitor or security (for example, dull knives are safe in practice but could be perceived otherwise) will be asked to disclose this in their application. This will not impact our consideration of your application, rather it allows us to work directly with the Busker to determine which pitches on site are best for their act.

The Distillery Historic District 2025 Busker Program does not permit the following:

1. The Distillery Historic District does not host roving performances on site, unless agreed upon by site management. Otherwise, performances must occur at designated pitches on site as indicated on our Busker Map (see Section 14).
2. Buskers must be at least 18 years of age to obtain a permit. Permits will not be issued to those under the age of 18.
3. Performances that are centered around political or activist causes.
4. Performances that are centered around advertisement/promotion.

2: Classification: Permit Holders

At The Distillery Historic District, Busker Permit Holders are classified as follows:

Busker Permit Holders:

Buskers who submit an application and are approved by The Distillery Historic District will be issued a permit for our 2025 season. The Distillery Historic District Busker Permit Fee is \$25 + HST (CAD). The introduction of the Busker permit aims to support the success of **your** 2025 season by ensuring a seamless collaboration between you and our site management team. If, after review, The Distillery Historic District determines that your act is not a suitable match, we hope this advance notice allows you to pursue other opportunities across the City.

- a. Circle Shows and Fire Acts **require** a permit to perform at The Distillery Historic District. If you are unsure whether a permit is required for your act, please contact us!
- b. Only 1 fee payment is required for group acts. 1 permit will be issued per group.
- c. Permit holders are permitted to perform at pitches in prime locations on site designated only for permit holders. Please ensure you have reviewed our pitch reservation and lottery systems outlined in Section 5. Our Busker Map is available in Section 14.

3: Busker Permit Fee

The Distillery Historic District Busker permit costs **\$25 + HST (CAD)**. Permits will be issued to Buskers who are approved by The Distillery Historic District. This permit is non-transferable and non-refundable. Successful applicants will be notified of the next steps.

4: The Distillery Historic District 2025 Busker Program Overview

The Distillery Historic District 2025 Busker Program runs daily from May 26 through October 13, 2025.

Green room / dressing room space is not available. Buskers must come prepared with their own means for performance preparation. The intended use of the public washrooms on site at The Distillery Historic District is not for extended Busker preparation.

Performance times/dates: Performances are restricted daily between 11AM – 9PM. Busking after 9PM may result in the revoking of a Busker permit.

- a. **Blackout dates:** Blackout periods are imposed at The Distillery Historic District. A monthly schedule will be distributed to all permit holders on or around the first of every month, indicating these blackout dates. Additional blackout periods not indicated on the monthly schedule may be imposed with little to no notice, and in these instances, permit holders will be notified.

Performance locations: See Section 14 for our Busker Map. Pitch locations are subject to change at the discretion of The Distillery Historic District management team without advance notice.

5: The Lottery System / Pitch Reservations

The Distillery Historic District features two types of Busker pitches:

Zone 1 Pitches – Online Reservation System:

Reserved for Animated Variety Acts and Musical Acts.

Group Acts may perform in Zone 1 as long as they remain within the designated pitch area.

Zone 2 Pitches – Lottery System:

Exclusively for Circle Acts, Fire Acts, and Group Acts.

If unoccupied or unreserved by a Zone 2 act, Zone 1 acts may temporarily fill a Zone 2 pitch.

However, they must vacate within 10 minutes upon the arrival of a Zone 2 act.

Zone 1 Online Reservation System:



Reserved for Animated Variety Acts and Musical Acts.

Zone 1 pitches operate on a first-come, first-served online reservation system. Information regarding our online reservation system will be made available to permit holders. Reservations are available in 1-hour increments, with a maximum of two hours per reservation. If no other act arrives at the end of a reserved slot, the Busker has the following options:

- If the pitch remains available, reserve the pitch again for up to another 2 hours using the online reservation system.
 - To ensure fair access, each Busker may reserve up to **4 hours per day** through the system, with a maximum of 2 consecutive hours at any one pitch. Reservations that exceed this daily or consecutive limit will be cancelled.
- Continue performing until another Zone 1 permit holder arrives, at which point they must vacate.
- Reserve another available Zone 1 pitch using the online reservation system.
- If a Zone 1 Busker is on site and notices that a Zone 1 pitch is unoccupied (including the pitch they are currently at) they may perform there until the next scheduled performer arrives, at which point they must vacate the pitch.

NOTE: Additional locations may be available on site for statue acts. Please consult with site management.

Zone 2 Lottery System:

Exclusively for Circle Acts, Fire Acts, and Group Acts.

The daily schedule is determined by a self-run lottery conducted by present Buskers at the start of the lottery time. Site management and/or security will not supervise this lottery. Buskers are expected to adhere to its rules.

Time slots are allocated in 45-minute increments, allowing for a 15-minute turnover period within the hour (i.e. 11AM-11:45AM, 12PM-12:45PM, 1PM-1:45PM, and so forth).

Lottery System Rules:

Names are drawn at designated daily times. The draw takes place at the north end of Trinity Street in front of our Security Gatehouse. The daily draw must not block the entrance to the security gatehouse at any time.

- **Morning/Afternoon Draw:** 10:45 AM for time slots between 11 AM – 5 PM.
- **Evening Draw:** 4:45 PM for time slots between 5 PM – 9 PM.

The first name drawn selects their preferred time slot first, the second name chooses next, and so on. If more time slots exist than Buskers, a second draw will occur until all slots are filled.

If 3 or fewer Buskers are present at the draw, they may opt for a rotating show order, drawing for positions (1st, 2nd, or 3rd).

Buskers may leave and return for their scheduled time but must be back at least 10 minutes before their slot begins. If a Busker is not present at their designated start time, the slot may be taken by another Busker. If multiple Buskers wish to claim the unused slot, the decision will be made through



a game of rock, paper, scissors. Buskers must continue to adhere to the established lottery rules, without the need for staff or security supervision at all times.

Additional Procedures

- a. Amplification is prohibited at Pitch #6 and #8. Please review our Busker Map in Section 14.
- b. Fire Acts are permitted only at Pitch #1 and Pitch #6 (conditions apply). Please review our Busker Map in Section 14. Fire Acts must phone security prior to the start of their performance to notify them that fire will be in use. Fire acts are required to have a fire blanket readily available on site at all times during their performance.
- c. A Busker may obtain a license to perform at both Zone 1 and Zone 2 pitches if they showcase more than one type of act. This must be disclosed in your application. During the lottery and/or online reservation process, Buskers are expected to specify which act they will be performing on a given day to ensure they are assigned to the appropriate zone.
- d. A Busker may not register for more than one pitch at the same time (e.g., 2 different pitches at 4 PM).
- e. Multiple Buskers may perform at the same pitch simultaneously, as long as their acts do not interfere with each other (e.g., a statue and a show).
 - i. Any such arrangement must be agreed upon by all parties before the time slot begins.
 - ii. This process is not supervised by security or site management, nor can it be facilitated using our Zone 1 online reservation system.
 - ii. Buskers may not approach a fellow performer mid-show to negotiate pitch sharing.

6: Content

The Distillery Historic District is a family friendly site. Performances must not include profane, insulting, or obscene language. Additionally, content should be free from discrimination against any group based on race, colour, religion, nationality, ethnic background, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any mental and/or physical disability.

7: By-Laws

Sound By-Laws: The Distillery Historic District is private property, and site management or security may request a Busker to adjust their volume at any time at their sole and absolute discretion. Amplification should engage visitors without overwhelming the surroundings. Sound levels must never exceed 80dB and may be measured without prior notice. If requested by site management and/or security, Buskers must lower their volume, even if it is under 80dB. A maximum of 2 speakers are permitted at a pitch. All performances must conclude by 9 PM sharp unless otherwise approved by site management.

Electrical: The use of generators is strictly prohibited in The Distillery Historic District. Power outlets are not available.



Equipment / Costumes / Props: Any costume, prop, or other performance equipment used by the Busker should be appropriate and professional. The Distillery Historic District reserves the right to remove any costume, prop, or equipment brought on site that is deemed unacceptable at their sole and absolute discretion. The Distillery Historic District is in no way responsible for any loss, damage, or theft of equipment, costumes, or props, etc.

8: Merchandise

All merchandise and its display must be approved by site management. Buskers may sell merchandise directly related to their act but are not allowed to sell other goods. Merchandise sales are only permitted during an active performance. Buskers may not occupy a pitch solely for the purpose of selling merchandise.

9: Donations/Tips

Buskers are allowed to solicit donations/tips from the public but should not otherwise interfere in any way with The Distillery Historic District visitors. The Distillery Historic District is in no way responsible for any loss, damage, or theft of donations/tips.

10: Weather

Busker pitches are open and subject to outdoor weather conditions. If there is a threat to the Busker's safety or the performance location due to extreme weather or force majeure events, including but not limited to fire, wind, rain, snow, water, or falling ice, the Busker may immediately stop performing and move to a safe location. Site management and/or security will inform the Busker if their scheduled time slot is cancelled. In extreme heat, Buskers may elect for shorter time slots during the lottery process to ensure audience and performer comfort.

11: Parking

The Distillery Historic District does not provide parking for Buskers. Parking is extremely limited during peak periods at The Distillery Historic District. Buskers are encouraged to plan their travel accordingly and make use of public transportation. Bicycle racks are available in and around The Distillery Historic District.

12: Accessibility and Inclusion

We are committed to providing an inclusive, barrier-free application and selection process. Please note that accommodation throughout each stage of the application process is available upon request. Our team can be reached at: events@thedistillerydistrict.com



13: Insurance

It is mandatory that permit holders secure and provide proof of Commercial General Liability Insurance for at least \$2 million per occurrence (\$5 million for Fire Acts). Upon approval of your application, additional insured information will be provided to the Busker. The Busker will be required to provide proof of coverage prior to their permit being issued.

14: Busker Map

[Click to view our 2025 Busker Map \(Published August 11, 2025\)](#)

[Click to view a map of The Distillery Historic District.](#)

15: Conclusion

The Busker will be provided with an **Agreement** upon approval of their application. Before submitting your application, please review the following:

- This document is subject to change. Such changes will be indicated by a version number and date on the first page of this document.
- Busker represents and warrants that they have the legal right to use all performance material.
- Performances shall not pose any danger, hazard, or risk to public safety. A minimum of three (3) feet of unobstructed, passable space must be maintained around the performance area to ensure safe pedestrian access.
- Busker shall not perform in locations that block entrances, exits, or pathways, or that interfere with the operations of residents, businesses, or offices within The Distillery Historic District.
- Busker's Designated Space (Pitch) must be kept neat and tidy at all times. Busker is responsible for returning the Designated Space (Pitch) to the condition in which it was found and must respect surrounding areas and property.
- Busker must be legally authorized to perform and work in Canada, including holding any necessary permits, visas, or other authorizations as required by applicable law.
- Busker shall be responsible for managing crowds and maintaining pedestrian traffic flow. During peak visitor periods, if the Busker is unable to manage the audience alone, they shall provide a non-performing group member to assist with crowd control before, during, and after the performance. Performances must remain safely integrated within the Designated Space (Pitch), preserving pedestrian safety and ensuring wheelchair accessibility at all times.
- Busker must conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times. Conduct deemed inappropriate, disruptive, or offensive may result in immediate revocation of performance privileges by The Distillery Historic District in their sole and absolute discretion.
- Busker applications will undergo a jury process to ensure all participants align with The Distillery Historic District's vision.
- Busker must provide The Distillery Historic District with at least one emergency contact to keep on file.

- In the event of an emergency, the Busker should call 911 and then notify site security (416-522-3258).

Thank you for your interest in The Distillery Historic District 2025 Busker Program!

We look forward to reviewing your submission. [Click here to apply.](#)

If you require additional support, please contact us:

events@thedistillerydistrict.com

NOTE: The Distillery Historic District produces year-round programming. Additional opportunities may be available to Buskers, such as during **The Distillery Winter Village**. If The Distillery Historic District contracts a Busker for a scheduled performance with a set fee, that Busker will be considered a hired Performer. Additional terms will then apply. The 2025 Busker permit is not valid during The Distillery Winter Village.

