

The Guardian

Launched 1821

Circulation 165,000

Political leaning Left-wing (endorsed Labour in 2015; Liberal Democrats in 2010)

What should you know about it? The Guardian is the newspaper most associated with liberal middle-class Britain. Their investigative journalism is some of the best in the business, and the newspaper won with Pulitzer Prize for public-service reporting in 2014. Their popular style guide is written with a sense of humour.

The Telegraph

Launched 1855

Circulation 470,000

Political leaning Right-wing (endorsed the Conservatives consistently)

Nickname The Torygraph

What should you know about it? Yin to the Guardian's yang, the Telegraph is a right-wing paper

Can you rely on it? The Telegraph has been accused of playing too much to the desires of its advertisers (including not printing important stories about criticisms of their business practices), but its reporting is otherwise well-regarded.

The Times

Launched 1785

Circulation 405,000

Political leaning Centre-right (endorsed Labour in 2005, the Conservatives in 2010, and the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition in 2015)

Format Tabloid

What should you know about it? The Times is (as its launch date would suggest) one of the oldest newspapers in Britain, and if you want to know what contemporary opinion was of any time in the past 200+ years of British history, The Times is a good place to start.

The Financial Times

Launched 1888

Circulation 200,000

Political leaning Centrist, in favour of free trade (endorsed Labour in 2005, the Conservatives in 2010, and the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition in 2015)

What should you know about it? The Financial Times is not much like the other papers on this list. As the name would suggest, business and economic news are its priority, so expect to see world events viewed through the lens of their impact on the stock market. It's known for the distinctive pink paper on which it is printed. It also has a reputation for people buying it in order to look intelligent.

Can you rely on it? Yes, very much so.

The Independent

Launched 1986

Circulation 55,000

Political leaning Centre-left (called for anyone-but-the-Conservatives in 2010, and the Liberal Democrats to stay in government in 2015, with the Conservatives as a preferable coalition partner to Labour)

Format Tabloid

Can you rely on it? Not if you want a paper you can still buy next month. The Independent's news coverage has been criticised for lacking substance – it's been called a "viewpaper" rather than a newspaper, promoting opinion over content – but what content exists is generally solid.

The Daily Mail

Launched 1896

Circulation 1,590,000

Political leaning Right-wing (endorsed the Conservatives in 2010 and 2015, calling for anyone-but-Labour in 2015)

Nickname The Daily Fail

Format Tabloid

What should you know about it? Describing the Daily Mail is hard – it's the trusted paper of one-and-a-half million people, but it also publishes such predictably sensationalist headlines that someone created a tool to generate them automatically. It's concerned about things that cause cancer, house prices and immigration – and if there's a story that combines all three, so much the better. Its website, Mail Online, is the most visited English-language newspaper website in the world. Its 'Sidebar of Shame' – a section of the website that focuses mostly on the failings of celebrities – is one of the key draws for its 11 million daily visitors.

The Mirror

Launched 1903

Circulation 810,000

Political leaning Left-wing (endorsed Labour in 2010 and 2015, calling for anyone-but-the-Conservatives in 2015)

Format Tabloid

What should you know about it? It's currently Britain's most popular left-wing tabloid by quite some margin. It was initially launched as a newspaper by women, for women, but this was not a commercial success, so it moved to a broader focus not long after its launch. Though the Mirror is no more reliable than its other tabloid rivals (as a long list of libel suits and front-page apologies show), it tends to escape the harshness of criticism targeted at the Daily Mail and the Express, possibly because of its relatively lonely political position among the tabloid market.

The Sun

Launched 1964

Circulation 1,775,000

Political leaning Populist (endorsed every election winner since 1979)

Format Tabloid

What should you know about it? Britain's most-read newspaper, owned by the same group as the Times, the Sun is the paper to keep an eye on if you want to know the mainstream of British public opinion.