

Reference: 02088805

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

6 November 2025

Dear,

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your further request for information concerning the definition of offensive language. We note that this request is in response to previous FOI requests: [C word and full complaints data](#).

We received this request on 10 October 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request

“What I am very keen to know is in terms of ‘offensive language’ - what is the exact definition of what this encompasses?

I want the figures for swear words strictly? What is the best search term to get this exactly?”

Our response

The ‘offensive language’ category on our system is used to capture any complaint where the complainant has objected to the use of potentially offensive language. There is therefore no exhaustive list of terms which would result in a complaint being logged under this category.

As we indicated in our first response ([Complaints about Offensive Language in UK Broadcasting](#)), complaints received about the use of discriminatory language on the basis of a protected characteristic would usually be categorised under a category specific to that characteristic.

Therefore, the ‘offensive language’ category is the most appropriate category for capturing complaints about swear words in particular. Please refer to our second response ([C word and full complaints data](#)) for information about complaints received that have been logged under this category.

You may find it helpful to refer to this published document about offensive language on TV and Radio: [Public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio](#)

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress.

Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).