

# Young Consumer Advocate Program (YCAP)



## HOW TO BOOK A LIMO

Unless your last name is Paris Hilton, it's not every day you arrive at an event in a limousine. Here's a rundown of all of the things you need to think about if you want to pimp your ride to prom.

**JUMP START** Don't miss the boat ...er, make that car. Since limos are in high demand during prom season, plan to book yours early. Two to three months before prom should give you enough time to make the arrangements.

**HOP IN** Limos come in all shapes and sizes. Figure out exactly how many people will be in your group since that will determine the kind of limo you end up with. A basic rule of thumb is that a super-stretch limos will hold 10-12 passengers; for a standard stretch limo, 6 passengers is plenty.

**GAS 'N' GO** If you're gonna ride like a star, prepare to shell out some cash. Renting a limo for the evening will start at around \$400. You can keep the cost down by going with a group and splitting the expense. You'll also need to tip the driver, usually 15-20% of the total fare. Some companies will include the tip in the total charge, so make sure to ask in advance. And don't forget to comparison shop -- prices vary widely, so you should check around to find the best deal.

**SPEEDBUMP** You might be asked to make a deposit in advance. This is to cover any mishaps that may happen during the night -- like big messes in the car, blah blah blah. Just keep everything under control and you'll see that money again post-prom.

**BUCKLE UP** It's crucial to find out if the limousine service is licensed by the state. If not, you may get stuck with poor service, a shoddy limo, and a rude driver. Check references and your contract carefully. And get an after-hours phone number for someone at the company -- just in case you hit a few unexpected curves.

## YOUR RIDE GUIDE

Think all limousines are alike? Think again. Whatever your budget or the size of your prom group, there's a limo option for you. Get clued in quick with our handy limo guide -- then get ready to roll up to prom in style.

**Standard Limo Sedan (passengers: 3)** Although most people think only of stretches, a standard-size luxury sedan such as a Lincoln Towncar or Cadillac is technically a limo. This luxury car is great for small groups who want to impress without being in-your-face about it. It's a closed automobile with two or four doors and front and rear seats. \$30-\$50 per hour\*

**Standard Stretch (passengers: 6)** A standard stretch is usually up to 70 or so inches from the driver's seat to the rear seat. A great option if you're going with a few couples. \$55-\$75 per hour\*

**Executive Stretch (passengers: 6-8)** This limo is approximately 72-100 inches from the driver's seat to the rear seat. \$70-\$95 per hour\*

**Super Stretch (passengers: 10)** If you've got five couples in your group, this one is your best bet! It measures 120 inches from the driver's seat to the rear seat. \$90-\$115 per hour\*

**Ultra Stretch (passengers: 14)** With a limo this long, you're sure to get some attention on the way to prom. It's at least 165 inches from the driver's seat to the rear seat. \$100-\$150 per hour\*

**Exotic Stretch** This limo style comes in all shapes and sizes and includes unusual vehicles such as a stretch New Beetle, stretch PT Cruiser, or a stretch Mercedes. \$150+ per hour\*

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**Stretch Sport Utility** Basically, what it sounds like. Stretch SUVs come in a variety of styles like the stretch Excursion, stretch Expedition, stretch Escalade, stretch GMC Yukon, stretch Hummer, stretch Navigator, and stretch pickup truck. \$125-\$150 per hour\*

**Limo Bus / Limo-Coach / Party Bus (passengers: 20-28)** This is a very comfortable, luxurious way for groups to travel. And with such a large group in tow, you won't have to pay as much per person!

**Trolley / Double-Decker Bus (passengers: 28-64)** Trolleys and double-decker buses aren't just ways to get to and from prom -- they could practically be the main event! Many are equipped with PA systems and even tour guides.

\* *Rental rates are approximate and DO NOT include a 15-20% gratuity (tip).*

SOURCE: [www.promspot.com](http://www.promspot.com)

## LIMOUSINE RENTAL MISTAKES!

Most people wouldn't hire the cheapest surgeon, or stay at the cheapest hotel, yet, many consumers shop for a limousine service in this fashion.



The biggest mistake you can make when looking to hire a limousine service is basing your decision solely on the "best price". This translates into a large risk for you. Do you want to accept the risks outlined below?

- ! Your limousine breaks down and you're late to your prom – yet, you saved \$35.
- ! A 1987 Lincoln limousine rusting at the seams arrives at your door when you were expecting at a 2006 model. Instead of being lavished in luxury, you are embarrassed.
- ! Your limousine chauffeur exercises poor customer service and your friends blame you.
- ! Your limousine service gets into an accident and does not have proper insurance to cover the damages involved in your injuries.
- ! Your limousine does not show up and you miss your prom – yet, you saved \$50.

💡 Is Any Of This Worth Saving a Few Bucks? 💡

### Ask to See the Company's Limos

Check out the vehicle you plan on renting. Some companies utilize older limo fleets. You don't want to be surprised on your prom day when a 1988 limousine shows up at the church when you were expecting a year 2003 model!

### Get A Signed Contract for Important Events

Reliable and professional service will be more than happy to provide you with a signed-contract for service. Companies who can't supply a contract may not be confident in their ability to fulfill.

### Ask About Limo Insurance & Permits

All limousines are required to carry commercial livery insurance and proper permits. Unfortunately, the Yellow Pages and many advertising services do not require the same in order to advertise. To protect yourself from "gypsy companies", ask for proof of these with your signed contract.

**Better Business Bureau (BBB) Education Foundation of Metropolitan Houston**

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## **Ask About Limo Industry Associations**

Companies who belong to industry associations usually must abide by special insurance regulations and service rules. Reputable associations such as the National Limousine Association (NLA) and the local livery association are good indications that your service provider does their due diligence. The **Better Business Bureau** also is a good research source- complaints about limousine services are not far behind auto mechanics complaints.

## **"The Limo Got Into An Accident"**

Don't be the couple that gets the "The Limo Got Into An Accident" or "We don't have your reservation" story. Cover yourself by getting a signed contract and by shopping smart. Shopping on price alone is dangerous. Some unethical operators do not hesitate to drop a reservation to pickup a better paying fare.

## **What Should We Expect To Pay for A Limo Rental?**

Most limousines rent between \$50-\$150 per hour. In addition, most limousine services require a minimum hourly booking. In high-demand time periods such as the spring time (with proms & weddings) hourly minimums can inflate beyond 6 hours.

## **Do We Pay For The Limo While We Attend Our Event?**

You still have to pay for the rental time during your event, such as prom, even if you aren't physically using the vehicle. Although the vehicle is not in use, it cannot be used elsewhere; even when there are 2 or 3 hours in between the drop-off and pickup.

**Can I Rent A Limo for 1 Hour?** Unfortunately, you cannot rent a limousine for 1 hour. Because of vehicle prep costs, travel times, and chauffeur salaries, a one-hour limo rental is not feasible for most limo services. Most companies require a minimum 3-hour booking to rent a limousine.

During prom season, expect this minimum to increase: as much as 8 hours minimum. Unfortunately, you are more likely to get struck by lightning than getting a limousine rental for 1 or 2 hours during prom season. Limo prices explode during prom season!

## **Are There Any Discounts for my Prom?**

No. Limousine services do not offer discounts during prom time. Why? The demand for limousines during the spring exceeds the supply. This shortage causes an increase in prices and hourly minimums. Some companies may offer a discount for a rental that exceeds 8 hours.

SOURCE: [http://www.limos.com/info\\_limo\\_service\\_rental\\_tips.asp](http://www.limos.com/info_limo_service_rental_tips.asp)