

How to choose a good driving instructor

This document has been produced to provide a guideline on how to choose a driving instructor and how you can gauge if they are providing you with an excellent service.

This guide is intended for those about to embark on or may already be taking driving lessons.

How to select a driving school

When first selecting a driving school we recommend that you consider the following:

- Have they been recommended?
 - It is reassuring to go to a driving instructor that has been recommended to you. However, please also look at the guidelines below to assess if they are delivering you a quality service.
 - If your recommendation was from someone who learnt to drive with a large driving school, make sure you find out the name of the specific instructor who taught them and make sure that you get that particular instructor.
- How long is the lesson?
 - Driving school lessons can vary, anywhere from 40 minutes to 1 hour. Therefore the prices quoted need to be put into context with the lesson duration. Lessons shorter than one hour are usually ineffective because you cannot adequately cover a complex subject matter in a short period of time.
- What are the ongoing lesson costs beyond any introductory packages?
 - Introductory packages are designed to entice you to that driving school. However, they often only discount the first 1 or 2 lessons so the ongoing costs should be a greater consideration.
- Do they do block booking discounts?
 - Most driving schools will offer this and it is this discount that will have the biggest impact on the overall cost of your lessons because, if you choose to take up this offer, they will constitute the majority of your lessons. However, block booking discounts are given because of your commitment to take that many lessons and because you will need to pay for the entire block of lessons in advance.
- Are there surcharges for evening and weekend lessons?
 - Most driving schools charge extra for these periods so you need to understand what that charge is if you cannot take your lessons in the daytime.
- Do they charge for lesson cancellations?
 - Driving schools usually charge for short notice cancellations because they cannot easily replace that booking. However, check to see if that cancellation period is 24 or 48 hours.
- What do they charge for the test?
 - Again most driving schools charge more for a test than a lesson. The fees usually include a lesson beforehand, hire of the car for the test and driving you home. The instructor will not be at the dual controls on your test but will have to pay for any minor damage that may occur so an additional charge is usually levied.

We strongly recommend that you initially only commit to a small number of lessons and assess if the instructor is delivering a quality service. We recommend that you assess them on the following criteria:

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Personable

- Do you like them?
- Are they friendly?
- Do they display patience, a non aggressive tone, and treat you with respect?
- Do they explain things clearly and always tell you why you have to do things rather than 'just do this please'?
- Can you be picked up from one place and dropped off somewhere different?

Professional

- Do they turn up on time?
- Will you be expected to either pick up the next pupil or drop off the previous one during the time allocated to your lesson?
- Do they provide a lesson plan and are you aware of that plan before the lesson?
- Are you asked to think about your key driving issues between lessons and given any homework to speed up the learning process?
- Do they bring you back on time or are they cutting the lesson short?
- Do they give you their full attention i.e. do they take phone calls during your lesson, do they take smoking breaks? You have paid for their time; ensure you are receiving their undivided attention.

Competency

- Is your instructor fully qualified – Approved Driving Instructor (ADI)? Does he display a green instructor's licence? If they do, he/she has passed all the relevant Driving Standards Agency exams. Some Driving Schools employ Provisional Driving Instructors (PDI). This means, they have not yet completed all their required exams, and there may be gaps in their knowledge, and will have less experience. These instructors will display a pink instructor's licence.
- All instructors should display the same core competences.
 - Identify faults
 - As driving faults occur your instructor should be able to identify what you did and why it happened.
 - Analyse faults
 - Your instructor should then let you know what the possible consequences of that fault could have been.
 - Rectify faults
 - Lastly your faults need to be rectified. You should be told how you can resolve that fault and reminded of that solution before the problem occurs on all occasions until the problem is resolved.
- Driving instructors are graded 1-6 through regular tests. Any driving instructor with a 4-6 grading has excellent teaching and driving skills. Of all those who seek to become driving instructors only 6% ever achieve these grades.
- Pass rates are statistics that can be manipulated, incorrect or inflated and cannot be verified. If the instructor meets the requirements set out in this document then the chances are you will get a great service.

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Teaching methods

- How are new subject matters covered?
- How do they explain driving situations that occur during the lesson?
 - Experience shows that the use of visual aids are better at providing a clear understanding of driving issues than the use of words alone.

Training vehicle

- Is the vehicle, particularly inside the car kept clean and uncluttered i.e. no annoying air fresheners hanging from the centre mirror? Rear head restraints blocking the view out of the back window, clean windows etc?
- Consider the type of vehicle used. Small vehicles i.e. Ford Fiesta, Vauxhall Corsa, Nissan Micra offer excellent visibility and can be manoeuvred accurately as they have particularly good turning circles.
- Some schools use convertibles, which owing to the nature of the folding roof, can provide poorer visibility.

Test preparation

- Do they know the area where your test will be taken?
- Are mock tests used to prepare you for the test itself?

Once you are happy with your instructor then if you can afford to do so, choose a block booking deal because it will provide the best value for money.

Once you have decided to take lessons do so at least once a week. Regular lessons will always be more effective than sporadic ones.

We wish you all the best when the time comes to take driving lessons and we sincerely hope that this guide will prove to be invaluable to you.