

The Ultimate Guide To Becoming A Driving Instructor

'A' GRADE
INSTRUCTOR TRAINING



'A' Grade

The reason I created this guide is not to sell you a dream. I have nothing to gain whether you decide to become a Driving Instructor or not, but my aim is to give people like yourself who are considering becoming a Driving Instructor a comprehensive, realistic and completely unbiased guide to the training required and the reality of life as a Driving Instructor.

As I said, this will be an honest guide and I'll paint an accurate picture, warts and all of everything you need to know to make a completely informed decision that, ultimately will change both yours and your family's life.



David Allen ADI Trainer

Why

Why are you considering becoming a Driving Instructor? The answer will vary from person to person but, in my experience most people who explore the possibility of becoming a Driving Instructor are hoping that they can achieve 3 things.

1. To be their own boss and take control of their own destiny.
2. To work when they WANT to work, not when they're TOLD to, thereby improving their work/life balance and quality of life.
3. To earn a comfortable income, allowing them and their family to make the most of their newfound work/life balance.

Why

That was certainly why I wanted to become a Driving Instructor as my previous job was a quality control engineer, which was very poorly paid, had no career progression and I had to travel daily on congested motorways that took 3 hours to get to work on some days. Having asked over to literally hundreds if not thousands of Driving Instructors why they became Driving Instructors, their reasons were surprisingly similar.

Obviously not all were bus quality control engineers previously but ALL of them were feeling disillusioned and undervalued in their previous positions. Some had even been made redundant and were at a crossroads in their working life.

So, if you can identify with that and want to achieve those 3 things, the good news is almost anyone can achieve them.

Who

At this point, you probably think I've lost my mind as I've just described the type of people who explore becoming a Driving Instructor, right?

Wrong, kind of, because now I'll describe the type of person WHO, in my experience will both enjoy and make a success of being a Driving Instructor. To do this, I'll make a "checklist" of attributes and you can see how many you identify with:



Who

1. You enjoy driving (sounds obvious right?) I certainly do and during the qualification process you'll become an expert in advanced driving!
2. You don't want to be chained to a desk, working a 9 to 5 job that takes up so much more time than 9 to 5!
3. You want some real job satisfaction (There's not many better feelings than taking someone who's never driven before and seeing them pass their driving test.)
4. You like helping people.
5. You're a "people person" and enjoy meeting different people from all walks of life.
6. You're patient.
7. You're calm.
8. You're reliable.
9. You're driven. (pardon the pun)



Who

- 10. You have a passion for road safety. (After all, you'll be helping to put the next generation of drivers on the road)
- 11. You want a career, not just another job.
- 12. You want a profession, not a position.

I could make a list a mile long but if you identify with just 3 or 4 of those attributes, take it from me, you have what it takes to not only qualify but have a long and successful career as a Driving Instructor. Still interested? You need to have held a full driving licence for at least 3 years and must not have been disqualified from driving in the previous 4 years. Now you can start the qualification process, details of which can be found on the GOV.UK website.



The Qualification Process

The first step is to read the Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) register guide. You can access this at www.gov.uk

N.B. You must declare that you have read this guide when you apply to become an ADI.

You must get a new Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS)



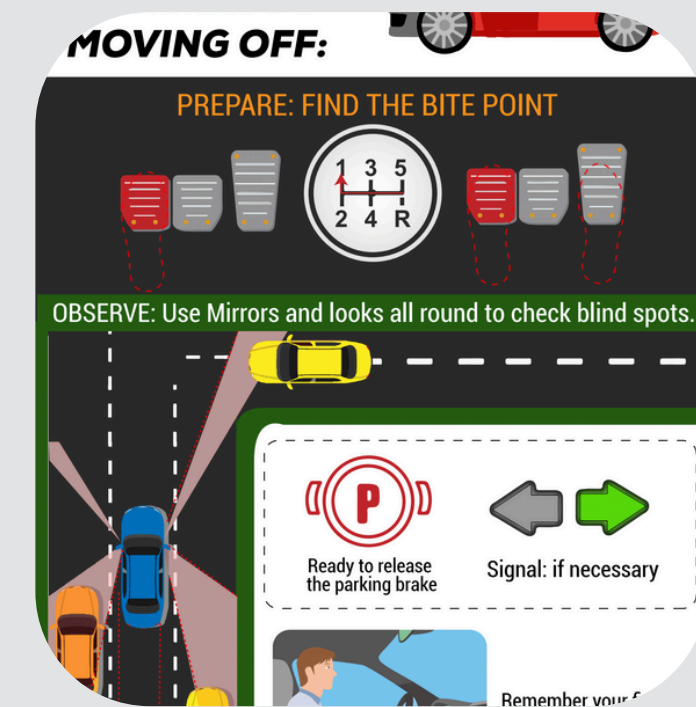
The Training

You now have one of the most important decisions of your new career to make and it's not one you can afford to get wrong.

There are several things to consider, the most obvious one of which is "Who should I train with?"

There are a multitude of training providers out there and you have to weigh up a number of things:

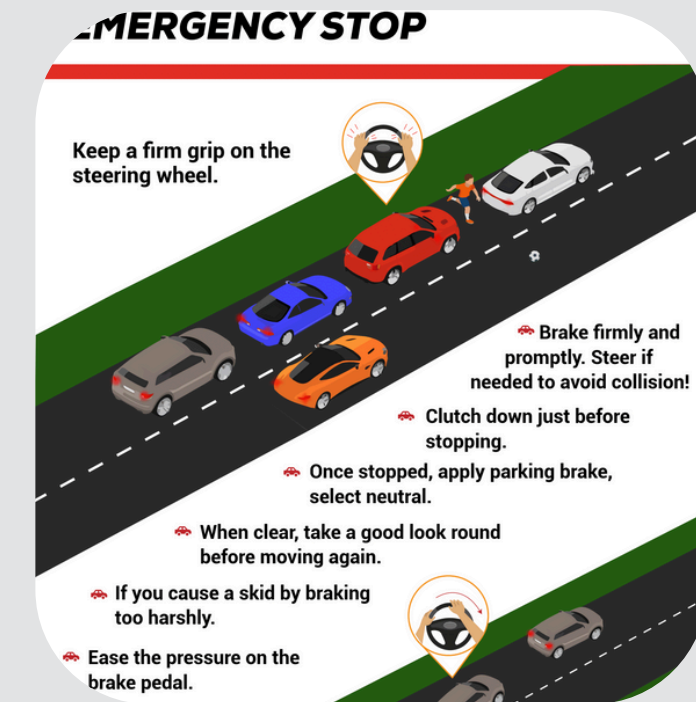
1. Cost. In the vast majority of cases I would apply the following rule of thumb. "Good training's not cheap and cheap training's not good" There are obviously exceptions to every rule but you have to ask yourself "Why is the training so cheap?" There are training companies who will train you cheaply, but only if you sign a contract to join their Driving School as a Franchisee when you've qualified. Quite often your qualification triggers a contract that could tie you into their Driving School for 1, 2 or even 3 years. This isn't necessarily a negative because, if you choose a good franchise it can be a marriage made in heaven, but BEWARE, if you choose the wrong franchise it'll be a marriage made in HELL! (I did say warts and all, didn't I?)



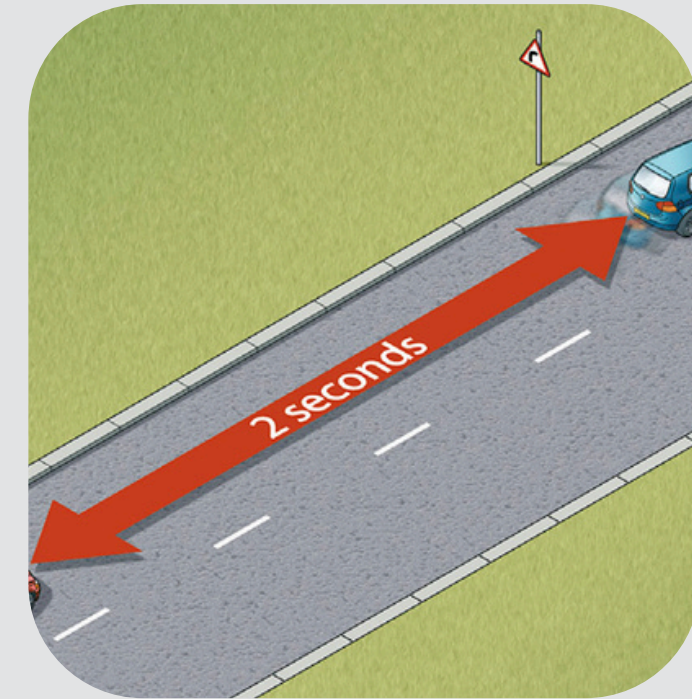
The Training

2. Quality. In my opinion, you should look for an ADI trainer that you get on with. You will find out learning is more effective that way, especially if the ADI-Trainer takes into account your learning needs. Also it's best to pick a ADI trainer who has a good reputation and as good reviews. Even if you get on with them, they need to be training you correctly.

3. Quantity. How many hours training are you GUARANTEED to have for each of the 3 qualifying exams? In my opinion, you can train for the Part One exam (Enhanced Theory Test) at home and in your own time but your training provider should supply all the necessary materials and resources to enable you to prepare yourself thoroughly and be available to assist you if required.



The Training



You SHOULD have AT LEAST 10 hours training for your Part Two exam (Advanced Driving Test)

You SHOULD have has AT LEAST 40 hours of combined training before taking your Part Three exam (Test of your ability to teach), the vast majority of which should be “in car”.

Although you get unlimited attempts to pass your Part One Exam, you only have 3 attempts at the Part Two and Three Exams so choosing the right trainer to give you the best chance of success is crucial. And remember this, the biggest doesn't necessarily mean the best!

The Training



So, in conclusion, Beware of cheap training as it often proves to be a false economy, “BUY CHEAP and you may have to BUY TWICE”.

Always check out the company’s reviews online and take the time to thoroughly read any agreements BEFORE you put pen to paper and DON’T BE AFRAID to ask any questions you may have. The only stupid question is the one that you DON’T ASK!

Once you have passed your Part Two Exam you can, if you so wish apply for a Trainee Licence (Also known as a Pink Badge)

This should be used primarily to gain practical experience to give you the best chance of a first time pass on your Part Three Exam.

It also gives you a chance to earn while you learn but, as I said, it’s main role is to allow YOU to learn how to do the job!

A Trainee Licence is only valid for a maximum of 6 Months which, if you chose a good training provider is plenty of time to gain the necessary skills to pass your Part Three Exam.

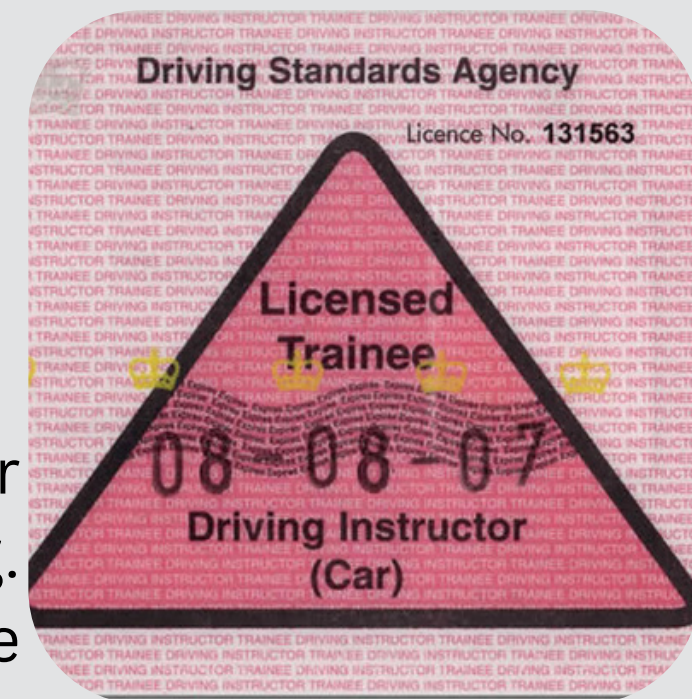
The Training

If you decide to apply for a Trainee Licence you will need to be sponsored by an existing Instructor or Driving School. Part of the sponsorship is either providing you with an additional 20 hours of training. Although, legally only 5 of those hours must be “in car”, or having 20% of any driving lessons you have supervised.

Whichever option you choose, the training / observation must be recorded accurately.

Once you have passed your part three exam, you can then apply for your ADI licence (The Green Badge) Your Green Badge has to be renewed every 4 years.

To ensure that you're still at the required standard I would definitely recommend that you invest in yourself and your future by attending a Standards Check Workshop and other CPD (Continued Professional Development) courses you may feel would benefit you.



The Car



Obviously, you're going to need a car, and again, you have an important decision to make. You should look for and test drive any cars you're considering using as a tuition vehicle. The main things to take into consideration are as follows.

1. Is it comfortable? Remember that you'll be spending several hours a day in the car, mostly in the passenger seat!
2. What is the visibility like? From the passenger seat, you should be able to see the instrument panel (Being able to see the speedometer is crucial) and from both front seats you should have good all round visibility, especially out of the rear window.
3. Economy. You need to find out the fuel consumption, insurance, servicing, maintenance and tyre replacement costs.

The Car



Once you have decided on the car you have several options open to you:

1. Buy a car outright. (You will have to pay all the above costs and you can only offset a limited percentage against your taxable income)
2. Buy a car on finance. (You will have to pay all the above costs and you can only offset a limited percentage against your taxable income)
3. Lease a car. Most, if not all the costs except fuel are included in the price. If you only use the car for providing driving lessons you can offset 100% of the cost against your taxable income)
4. Join a Franchise that provides you with a car. (All costs except fuel should be included in the price. You can claim 100% of the cost against your taxable income)

The Car



The cheapest option would be to buy the car outright, followed by buying the car on finance. The third cheapest would be to lease a car.

The most costly would be the Franchise option but remember, your Franchise provider will (Hopefully) be providing most of your pupils and providing the support you need that you may not get as an independent Instructor.

The Job



As a Driving Instructor you will have options on how you want to operate your business:

1. Join a big National Driving School as a Franchisee.
2. Join a local Driving School as a Franchisee.
3. Operate as a completely independent ADI.

Before you join any Driving School, local or national as a Franchisee there are very important questions you need to ask.

The Job



- How much is the franchise fee?
- Are there any hidden costs?
- How long is the contract for? (This is very important as, you will be committed to paying the Franchise Fee for the duration of the contract regardless of your earnings)
- Will you get any Franchise Free Periods?
- If you decide to leave, what is the notice period?
- Will you be forced to subsidise any low priced, introductory or special offers the driving school may choose to offer?
- What will be the hourly rate that you'll be earning and how many hours at that price will you need to work to cover the Franchise Fee?
- What level of ongoing support will they provide to ensure your Franchise business is a success?
- What happens if they don't provide enough pupils for you to earn what you need to?
- Will this all be in writing? (Some, not all will say anything to get you to sign but not be willing to put it in writing)
- Can I take the contract home to read it?

The Job

If you're not 100% happy with the answers to any of these questions, trust your gut and NEVER be pressured into signing anything! Remember, a franchise is still YOUR BUSINESS and a good franchise should be a win/win for both you and the Franchise provider. I promised to give you a truthful and unbiased guide to being a Driving Instructor so here's something you really need to know! The Driver Training Profession always has, is now and probably always will be subject to seasonal peaks and troughs so it's important to allow for this and during the peak periods make sure you do enough work to be able to put something aside to help support yourself during the periods when there's less demand.

When you're on your way to your very first pupil, you'll probably experience a wide range of emotions (I know I did) including excitement, nerves, and the fear that you'll make a mistake.



The Job

With every lesson you give, you should reflect on how it went afterwards and keeping a log of these reflections is a habit you should adopt and use throughout your entire career as we, just like the pupil never stop learning.

One thing I'd like to highlight is this:

Having a successful Driving School business isn't just about having enough pupils to fill your diary although this is obviously essential as a Driving School with no pupils won't last very long!



Some Driving Schools charge very low lesson prices and offer new pupils very cheap introductory offers. This is great for the Driving School as they can fill Instructor's diaries and take on more and more Franchisees but not so good for their Franchisees as it's them that end up subsidising these offers. It's no good having a full diary of pupils who just want to take advantage of these offers as the vast majority of them will leave you when their cheap lessons are over and look for another Driving School offering a very low priced introductory offer. (These pupils are known as "Deal Hoppers")

You need to ensure a consistent supply of quality pupils willing to pay a quality lesson price for a quality service.

A good quality Franchise provider is one who can provide this service for you but remember, it's YOUR business so you should also try to source as many pupils as possible yourself.

The Income

Although there will always be geographical differences in lesson prices, based on my research and experience, the AVERAGE lesson price is £31 to £35 per hour*, you can expect to achieve a Gross Income in excess of £63,000 for a 36 hour week.

*Correct at time of writing



The Clients

You will come to know your pupils very well and hopefully you will both have an enjoyable time on the journey for them to get their driving licence. There will undoubtedly be highs and lows, laughter and occasionally some tears.

Remember, everyone is different, that's what makes the job so enjoyable but it is a double edged sword. You will eventually come across a pupil who you just don't click with, it's nobody's fault but the fact is it's impossible to get on well with every pupil and the chemistry and atmosphere in the car has to be right otherwise it's more difficult for learning to take place and the journey will be decidedly less enjoyable for both pupil and instructor. In this instance you should use all the tools in your toolbox as a professional Driver Trainer and do your upmost to help your pupil. (They may be nervous and just need time to get used to you and the learning environment.)

If, after several lessons you realise that the pupil would probably benefit from changing instructors, you should very tactfully have that conversation with them and wish them well on their journey to getting their licence knowing that you've done the correct thing and been the consummate professional.



The Next Step



If you've not been Self Employed before, you may find the business side of the job challenging but if you've chosen the right company to train and become a Franchisee with, they should provide all the necessary business support you need. I would advise all instructors to join a local or National Instructors association, they're a great source of information and the meetings are a great chance to network and meet like minded colleagues in what can sometimes feel like an isolated profession. Obviously this job isn't for everyone and I can only give you my opinion based on my own experience but this sums it up for me. Once you have your business running smoothly, earning a good income and have the work/life balance you and your family desire, I can say that, based on my 20 years of experience that you'll come to love the job and the freedom that comes with it.

I wish you all the best with making your decision.