

Transport *for* London



PUBLIC CARRIAGE OFFICE

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**BECOMING A LICENSED TAXI DRIVER  
IN LONDON**

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A guide for applicants



## "THE KNOWLEDGE"

Q : I've heard of "The Knowledge" but what exactly is it?

A : Quite simply it's a thorough knowledge of London, including the location of streets, squares, clubs, hospitals, hotels, theatres, government and public buildings, railway stations, police stations, courts, diplomatic buildings, important places of worship, cemeteries, crematoria, parks and open spaces, sports and leisure centres, benevolent institutions, societies and associations, places of learning, restaurants and historic buildings; in fact everything you need to know to be able to take passengers to their destinations by the most direct routes.

Q : Do I have to learn the whole of London?

A : No, you have a choice. You may choose to study for the "All London" licence. This requires you to have a detail knowledge of the 25,000 streets within a six mile radius of Charing Cross with a more general knowledge of the major arterial routes throughout the rest of London.

If you wish to work as a taxi driver in central London or at Heathrow Airport you need an "All London" licence.

Alternatively, you may choose to study for a suburban licence. Outside of the six mile radius, London is divided into nine sectors whose areas are based on the outer London boroughs. You can select one of these and will be required to have detailed knowledge of your chosen sector along with a more general knowledge of central London. You may add additional sectors once licensed.

Q : Does the Public Carriage Office train me?

A : No. The Public Carriage Office merely tests your knowledge of London to confirm you have reached the required standard.

Q : So how do I go about learning?

A : Well, it is really up to you. If you meet the necessary character and fitness criteria you will be invited to attend the Public Carriage Office with a group of other applicants to be given an introductory talk by a Knowledge of London Examiner.

At this talk, if you are an "All London" applicant, you will be given a booklet (the "Guide to Learning the Knowledge of London") of 320 routes or runs. If you are a suburban applicant you will be given a suburban driver booklet containing "runs" and cab ranks for the 9 sectors. These provide the basic framework for learning "The Knowledge".

The Examiner will give advice designed to assist you to reach the required "Knowledge" standard as quickly as possible, including

- what the Public Carriage Office expects from you in regard to your personal conduct
- what is involved in learning "The Knowledge"
- how to learn the routes or "runs"
- how to use maps
- information about "Knowledge" schools.

**REMEMBER YOU CANNOT LEARN "THE KNOWLEDGE" FROM A BOOK. YOU MUST GO OUT AND TRAVEL AROUND LONDON TO ACQUIRE THE DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED.**

**FOR THIS YOU WILL REQUIRE A MOPED OR MOTORCYCLE BECAUSE OF THE MILEAGE YOU WILL NEED TO COVER.**

Q : Is it sufficient to know only the "runs"?

A : No. You must also know all the places and buildings of interest within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius of the start and finish points of each run.

Q : How long will it take to study "The Knowledge"?

A : This depends on you and how much time and effort you are prepared to devote to the task. For the "All London" licence it should take between 12-24 months from your initial talk, if you go out regularly (3-4 times a week, for a minimum of 4 hours on each occasion). You are likely to have to travel in the region of 20,000 miles during this time.

For the suburban licence the overall time scale is considerably shorter, perhaps 6-12 months, but the commitment in time and effort during the learning process is no less.

Q : How am I tested on "The Knowledge"?

A : If you are studying for the "All London" licence you will have to sit and pass a simple, written topographical test. Having done so, over a period of time, you will attend a number of 15 minute interviews, answering questions on how to get from one location to another by the most direct route.

Your interviews will be conducted by Knowledge of London Examiners who will have passed the "All London Knowledge". Applicants for suburban licences are not required to sit a written test.

You can apply to sit your written test or, for suburban applicants, your first appointment when you consider you have acquired the necessary knowledge. However, REMEMBER, for "All London" applicants, this must be done within 2 years of your initial talk or for suburban applicants within 12 months. If you do not apply within these times you will be required to start again and submit a fresh application.

Q : Is there a proper way to answer questions?

A : Yes, there is a standard manner to response to a question. The correct way to answer is to

1. identify the location of the pick-up point and the destination
2. begin the route by saying "leave on the left/right". This identifies the direction to be travelled from the start point, i.e. the starting point is on your left/ right as you set off
3. detail the route naming every street travelled along, identifying direction of travel, and any traffic schemes e.g. one-way systems in operation on the route
4. on arrival at the destination, give the passenger setting down position by saying "set down on the left/right", depending on the direction from which you approached.

Buildings or side turnings on the route are not required.

The following gives an example of a correct response.

Question: The Public Carriage Office to the British Museum.

Answer: The Public Carriage Office, Penton Street to the British Museum, Great Russell Street.

Leave on the right Penton Street, forward Amwell Street, right Margery Street, forward Guildford Street, left Russell Square, comply with one-way and leave by Montague Street, right Great Russell Street, set down on the right.

As you approach the end of your knowledge studies you will be required to pass a **DRIVING TEST**.....

### DRIVING TEST

Q : I already hold a DVLA licence, why do I need another test?

A : You will be carrying passengers for hire and reward in a purpose built vehicle which has different driving characteristics from a standard car.

The licensing Authority needs to be assured as to your competence to drive the vehicle safely in a congested city environment and your ability to use the facilities provided to assist the disabled i.e. wheelchair facilities and swivel seat.

Q : Who conducts the test?

A : A member of the Public Carriage Office staff trained to take tests.

Q : If I am physically handicapped can I still become a taxi driver?

A : Yes, providing you are able to pass the driving test, if necessary using a cab which has been modified to approved standards to cater for your particular disability.

Q : Do I have to pay for the test?

A : Yes, you will be charged the cost of a normal Department Of Transport test.

Before applying there are other **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**.....