

How to Become Mini Cab DRIVER IN LONDON

Practical Guide on Private Hire License.

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Guide on:

- 1. Private Hire Driver License.**
- 2. Mini Cab Driver in London.**
- 3. Public Carriage Office.**
- 4. PCO licenses.**

Taxi Driver, Minicab Driver, Private Hire Driver guide

This guide is for everyone who is considering becoming a Private Hire Driver – Mini Cab/Taxi Driver – or so called Cabbie in London, and by saying London I mean area within Motorway M25.

! IMPORTANT !

Let's first of all be quiet clear what I mean by Private Hire Vehicle/Driver- Mini Cab, as there are two different kinds of 'cabs' in LONDON.

Taxis & Black Cabs.

You've got these 'black cabs' which are formally known as *Hackney Carriage taxis*. Black cabs are highly regulated, number of drivers is limited by local authorities- Councils and it takes 3 years on average to prepare for and pass 'The Knowledge' – the London topography knowledge exam. Let's be honest if you haven't been driving in London for some quiet good time you may forget of becoming a 'black cab' driver.

MiniCabs, Private Hire Drivers

There are all these 'normal' middle class cars: saloon, estate or minivans, 8-seaters-MPVs-Multi Purpose Vehicles. Those licensed ones should have sticker labels on the windscreen and at the rear window with a license note 'License Valid from... to...'. These are *Private Hire Vehicles/Taxis or Mini Cabs*.

In this guide I will be discussing *Private Hire Licences*, not a so called 'black cabs'. From now on I will use terms: *Mini Cabs, Cabbing* in place for formal term- **Private Hire Vehicles/Licenses**.

Minicab- how to get a license.

What you need, is to get a license which is called Private Hire Driver's licence. It is a unique, personal license issued by **PCO- London Public Carriage Office**, and without it none of the mini cab operators/offices will employ you.

Contact the Public Carriage Office either in person at 15 Penton Street London N1 9PU or by phone on **0845 602 7000** and request a Private Hire Driver application pack. When you get one, and it arrives usually within a week or two, fill it up. There will also be part which you will need GP (doctor) to fill up for you.

There are two types of licenses you should focus on.

1. **Private Hire Drivers license valid for 3 years from the date it is granted.**

Cost of obtaining a license:

prices below correct for JAN/2008

£298 Total License fees (money goes to Public Carriage Office)
£30 - £50 Topographical Skills Assessment (Private Assessment Centre)
£60 - £100 Medical examination (GP – doctor)

+ most importantly ~**3 months of waiting** for a license!

There is a bit of money and waiting involved as you can see

2. **Private Hire Vehicle license valid for 1 year only.**

£127 Total License fees (money goes to PCO)
£50+£50 Two MOT checks (every half year) (Private garage)

You don't need to have 2nd one to start driving. The cab company will provide you with insured vehicle. Obviously they will charge you for it (~**£35 a shift**)

How much money can I make?

Considering 50hours+/week **you can make anything from £250 - £400 maybe more**, and that is after you pay the office you work for, after you pay you car and insurance.

You have to remember that you work for yourself; you are not entitled to holiday pay anymore, so to get four weeks of holiday in a year, in eleven months you need to make money others do in twelve.

There is a specific Christmas Bonus though. December is the busiest month in this business so many runs, many tips and at the end of the day much more money.

Minicab offices, who shall I work for?

You have to know there are companies and COMPANIES you can work for. They will all charge you weekly and these charges vary from one to another. In small company so called RENT can be **£70/week** in big one can be **£160/week**. As you may correctly assume, the bigger one will have more runs/jobs smaller certainly less. There is no guarantee on how many jobs you will get from the office, thus it is frustrating to pay £160 and have not much work from the office. Big offices get many new drivers before Christmas (Oct, Nov) which sometimes causes you to get less work as I would say it is a unwritten rule that new driver is fed with good jobs, is given nice jobs from the office to stay with the office. There are some companies which will take commission from what you earn, I know some that take 26% of your income, but they DON'T charge you 'rent'. This way if you haven't done many jobs, not much money, you also don't pay much to the office. It's a fair deal and much better than paying rent without guarantee of number and quality of jobs with 'rent' offices.

Big companies will require newer car. It is rather common you won't be able to work for big company with car older than 5 years. You will find small companies that will allow you to work with 6-7 years old car.

Apart from obtaining a license do I need to have any special skills, knowledge or qualification?

Not really. It will certainly be easier to pass 'topographical knowledge test' if you've lived in London for some time, but if you just arrive and you are an average intelligent men like me with ability to read the map and to write down directions to the destination you won't have a problem.

Criteria on personal Private Hire drivers' license?

In order to get a *Personal Driver's License* you have to check if you fit in the criteria below:

First of all you need to be **over 21 years old**- in theory and by the law. Practically if you under 25 the mini cab insurance (public liability+ car insurance) will cost you a fortune.

Then you really should have **Full UK Driving License (cat B)**, although PCO criteria says it can be other **EEA states license**. So e.g. Hungary, Estonia, Slovakia, Poland, France etc. Problem with this EEA states licenses is the money you will need in order to pay for your insurance later on, so if you are an EEA member state citizen willing to work as a Private Hire Driver in London, keep in mind it's much better to change your national license with DVLA for the Full UK one before you apply to PCO for a Mini Cab license.

Changing license for EEA country citizen is easy.

You have to go to the nearest post office and ask for the D1 form. Fill it up include you current photo, include cheque, or credit/debit card details (it cost ~£45), send it away and after approximately 2 weeks you will receive DVLA UK driving license, which also comes handy when proof of address is needed as there is your address written on it. So you should have UK license or one of EEA state driving licenses.

You also must have **held this license for a period of at least three years!** So if you a newbie driver and you took driving tests in the last three years you will have to wait. Exception for that rule are all UK newly qualified drivers where the two years probationary period imposed in the UK will be included and counted to these three years.

You might have a problem with approving application if you have had any serious court convictions. I'll put it this way if you're a criminal it'll be harder for you to get a license. Everyone have **to undergo CRB check** (Criminal Records Bureau).

Prior to sending application you will be required to **undergo a medical examination**, which is to satisfy **PCO** you are medically fit to drive professionally.

The examination will be performed by your doctor GP. If you haven't one because you've moved in to London recently, you have to find local Medical Practise and register with them. There is a medical form which is to be filled up by your GP and criteria for assessing medical fitness include:

- vision
- psychiatric
- neurological
- cardiovascular
- endocrine system
- musculoskeletal

What is important?

If you have epilepsy, diabetes, poor vision, heart problems you probably won't pass these tests.

Last of all is something called '**Topographical Skills Assessment**', where you will be expected to show how good you are in reading maps. I went through it and found it easy and funny. Lots of my mates who also did it said it was waste of time and money as it costs £30 and more.

Once you send your application back to Public Carriage Office it takes about 3 months to get a Private Hire license and start working as a **Mini Cab Driver in London.**