

Driving Instructor

Business Opportunity Profile

BOP044 · October 2025

Introduction

Driving instructors are registered professionals who teach learners how to drive safely and pass their driving test. Most instructors start up their own driving school business, while some operate as a franchisee of a national driving school.

This profile provides information about starting up as a driving instructor. It describes the registration process and the key trading and legal issues.

Registering as an approved driving instructor

Anyone who provides driving lessons on a commercial basis must be registered as an approved driving instructor (ADI) with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (England, Wales and Scotland) or the Driver & Vehicle Agency (Northern Ireland).

To register as an ADI, driving instructors must:

- Be aged 21 or over and have held a full manual car driver licence (category B) or a full automatic car driver licence (category B auto) for at least three years.
- Have an enhanced criminal record check.

A driving instructor must also pass three qualifying tests, which are:

- **Part 1.** This is a classroom-based test of the instructor's road knowledge and perception of hazards.
- **Part 2.** This is a practical test of the instructor's driving ability.
- **Part 3.** This is a practical test of the instructor's ability to teach.

Go to www.gov.uk/become-car-driving-instructor for more information about ADI registration in England, Wales and Scotland.

Go to www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-become-approved-driving-instructor-adi for more information about registering as an ADI in Northern Ireland.

Instructors who have passed Parts 1 and 2 of the qualifying tests can register as a trainee driving instructor. This allows an instructor to provide driving lessons before they take Part 3 of the qualifying

test. Go to www.gov.uk/trainee-driving-instructor-licence-the-rules for more information about trainee licences.

Once registered, driving instructors must complete one ADI standards check every four years. Go to www.gov.uk/adi-standards-check for more information about the standards check.

Training

Suitable courses for anyone starting up as a driving instructor include:

- Courses and webinars provided by the Driving Instructors Association covering topics such as driver safety, vehicle safety checks, instructional techniques, lone working and safeguarding. Courses cost between £35 and £170. Go to www.diaacademy.co.uk/training-and-courses for more information.
- Franchisee training, which is a free online course provided by the British Franchise Association. The course covers what franchising is and how to become a franchisee. Go to www.thebfa.org/start-up-training for more information.
- Free videos and webinars provided by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), which cover topics such as self-assessment and VAT. Go to www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-webinars-email-alerts-and-videos for more information.

Key market issues and trends

Current market issues affecting start-up and established driving instructors include the following:

- Each year, around 690,000 theory tests and 450,000 driving tests are taken in the UK. The pass rate for theory tests is around 46%, while the pass rate for practical tests is 49% (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/driver-and-rider-testing-and-instructor-statistics-april-to-september-2024).
- In 2024, around 69% of driving instructors were independent and around 29% were a franchisee of a local or national driving school. The majority of driving instructors work between 25 and 34 hours per week and use a manual car to provide lessons (www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-as-a-driving-instructor-survey-2024-results/working-as-a-driving-instructor-survey-2024-results).
- In 2024, the wait time for a practical driving test was between 13 and 21 weeks. Around 40% of instructors claimed that waiting times and availability was the main challenge affecting their business. Around 82% of instructors had received requests from learners who they had not taught asking to be taken to a test (www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-as-a-driving-instructor-survey-2024-results/working-as-a-driving-instructor-survey-2024-results).
- In 2025, TSB reported a 211% year-on-year increase in cases where customers lost money to scams involving fraudulent offers of driving lessons and driving tests. As part of the scams, learners are tricked into paying up-front for lessons they never receive or for 'fast-tracked' test slots. Fraudulent websites are also posing as the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and trick learners into paying

for test slots that don't exist (www.driving.org/learner-driver-scams-more-than-double-as-test-backlog-fuels-fraud).

Trading, commercial and legal issues

Start-up and established driving instructors face the following trading, commercial and legal issues:

Professional bodies

Membership of a professional body can provide a wide range of individual and business benefits. Relevant bodies include:

- The Driving Instructors Association (www.driving.org), which represents driving and motorcycle instructors in the UK. Membership benefits include a listing in the 'Find a Driving Instructor' directory, professional indemnity and public liability insurance cover and specialist legal advice. The annual membership fee starts from £99, plus a one-off joining fee of £25.
- The Motor Schools Association of Great Britain (<https://msagb.com>), which represents driving and motorcycle instructors and schools in England, Wales and Scotland. Membership benefits include professional indemnity and public liability insurance, along with legal and technical advice. The annual membership fee is £75.
- The Approved Driving Instructors National Joint Council (www.adinjc.org.uk), which represents individual instructors across the UK. Benefits of individual membership include legal and technical advice, along with access to member resources. There are two membership levels: Lite and Premium. Lite is free, while Premium costs £54 annually or £4.50 per month.
- The Association of Disability Driving Instructors (www.disabilitydrivinginstructors.com), which represents driving instructors who provide specialist instruction for learners with physical disabilities and special educational needs. Full annual 'enhanced entry' membership costs £50 and includes a listing in the association's 'Find an Instructor' directory.

Driving school franchises

Some start-up instructors become a franchisee of a national driving school. Driving schools generally provide instructors with ADI training and vehicle leasing options.

Examples of leading franchises include:

- RED Driving School (www.reddrivingschool.com/driving-instructor-training/red-franchise).
- Bill Plant Driving School (www.billplant.co.uk/driving-school-franchise).
- BSM (www.bsm.co.uk/become-a-franchisee).
- AA Driving School (www.theaa.com/driving-school/driving-instructor-franchise).
- Pass N Go Driving School (<https://passngo.net/instructorfranchise>).

Codes of practice

The ADI code of practice is a voluntary code for driving instructors in England, Wales and Scotland. An equivalent code for instructors in Northern Ireland is set out in Driver & Vehicle Agency guidance on becoming an ADI.

Both codes include requirements for instructors to:

- Behave in a professional manner towards learners.
- Avoid physical contact with learners, except in an emergency or in the normal course of greeting.
- Provide learners with their terms of business on or before the first lesson.
- During the first lesson, check the learner's eligibility to drive and ensure that they can read a number plate at the statutory distance.
- Safeguard money paid in advance for lessons.
- Advise learners when to book their theory and practical driving tests.

Go to www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-instructor-code-of-practice to view the ADI code of practice.

The code for Northern Ireland is available at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/your-guide-becoming-approved-driving-instructor.

Pass Plus instructor

Some driving instructors in England, Wales and Scotland provide the Pass Plus training course, which is for drivers who have recently passed their test, to help improve their skills and drive more safely.

To provide the Pass Plus course, instructors must be registered with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency as a Pass Plus instructor. Go to www.gov.uk/pass-plus-approved-driving-instructor-services for more information.

Dual-control cars

Although it is not a legal requirement, the majority of driving instructors provide lessons in a car fitted with dual controls.

A start-up instructor can lease a dual-control car from around £350 per month. Lease contracts are typically for between 12 and 24 months.

Alternatively, new dual-control cars are available from around £13,000 to £27,400, depending on vehicle make and model. Second-hand dual-control cars are available from around £5,000 to £12,000.

For examples of suppliers of new, used and leased dual-control cars, go to:

- CA Cars (www.cacars.co.uk).
- Surepass Car Hire (<https://surepasscarhire.co.uk>).
- Arnold Clark (www.arnoldclarkrental.com/dual-control-hire).
- Mazda (www.mazda.co.uk/offers/driving-school).

The majority of driving instructors also have branded roof and door signs that display the 'L' symbol and include the instructor's trading name and contact details. Specialist suppliers include Driving School Supplies (www.d-ss.co.uk) and Grade Six Supplies (www.gradesixsupplies.com).

Terms of business and pricing

The ADI code of practice and the code for Northern Ireland require driving instructors to provide learners, or people booking lessons, with a copy of their terms of business, either on or before their first lesson.

Terms of business should include:

- The driving instructor's name, address and contact details.
- The price and duration of lessons.
- The price and conditions for use of a driving school car for the practical driving test.
- The terms which apply to cancellation of lessons by either party.
- The terms under which a refund of lesson fees may be made.
- The procedure for making a complaint.

Go to www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-instructor-code-of-practice/approved-driving-instructor-adi-code-of-practice#business-dealings for more information.

In 2025, the average price of a driving lesson was between £25 and £45 per hour. According to the RAC, on average, learners require around 45 hours of professional instruction before passing their test, resulting in a total cost of up to £2,025.

VAT

Driving lessons are standard-rated for VAT and instructors must register for VAT once their turnover reaches the mandatory threshold. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/rates-of-vat-on-different-goods-and-services for more information about VAT rates.

It may be possible for a driving instructor to reclaim VAT on the price paid for their car if they are registered for VAT and intend to use the vehicle primarily for providing driving lessons. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-on-motoring-expenses-notice-70064 for more information.

Consumer and business protection legislation

Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, driving lessons and cars used for lessons must be as described, fit for purpose and of an appropriate standard.

The Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008 make it an offence for driving instructors to make misleading claims about their qualifications, experience and pass rates. Driving instructors must also not make unfair comparisons with other driving instructors or driving schools.

Insurance

Driving instructors require several types of business insurance cover, including:

- Public liability insurance, which covers an instructor against claims for compensation from anyone injured or adversely affected as a result of their activities.
- Any driver insurance, which legally enables learners to drive the instructor's car.
- Negligent tuition insurance, which provides cover against a claim brought by a learner injured due to the instructor's negligence.
- Legal expenses insurance, which provides cover for defending disputes with learners, driver authorities, professional bodies, franchisors, HMRC and suppliers.
- Income protection insurance, which will pay an income, usually for a set period of time, if an instructor is unable to work as a result of sickness or injury.
- Vehicle recovery and replacement insurance, to provide cover if the instructor's car breaks down, is damaged or stolen.

Specialist insurance for driving instructors is available from insurers and brokers such as Towergate Insurance (www.towergateinsurance.co.uk/commercial-vehicle/driving-instructor-insurance) and Insurance Cover Plus (www.instructorcoverplus.co.uk).

Legislation

This section provides an at-a-glance list of the key legislation that driving instructors must comply with.

- The Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008 make it an offence for driving instructors to make unfair comparisons with other driving instructors or driving schools.
- To comply with the requirements of the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 (CCRs), driving instructors' terms and conditions of booking must provide specific pre-contract information, such as their pricing, payment and cancellation terms.
- Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, driving lessons and cars used for lessons must be as described, fit for purpose and of an appropriate standard.

- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, driving instructors have a duty of care to protect the health and safety of anyone who may be affected by their work activities, including learners, other road users and pedestrians.
- The Road Traffic Act 1988 applies in England, Wales and Scotland and requires anyone providing driving instruction on a commercial basis to be registered as an approved driving instructor (ADI), or a trainee (potential) driving instructor (PDI), with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).
- The Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 requires driving instructors working in Northern Ireland to be registered with the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) as an ADI or trainee driving instructor.

Related factsheets

MBP478 Motorcycle Training School

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