

Have you ever thought about a career as a driving instructor? Being your own boss, a life on the road (though perhaps not in the Mick Jagger sense), not being tied to a desk, regularly cranking down the window to feel the breeze in your hair... Yep, it can all sound pretty great when you think of the perks.

Becoming and then sustaining a life as an **ADI (Approved Driving Instructor)**, though, is a serious commitment. If you're the right kind of person, it can be a lucrative and fulfilling career. On the other hand, if you're in it for the wrong reasons, you may find that it's tough to get work and not as financially rewarding as some adverts may have you believe.

Not sure if you fit the mould? You're in the right place! We're going to examine the ins and outs of the role, and what's involved in becoming a successful ADI. Buckle up!

## Basic Requirements

To start the application process you must be:

🔩 21 or over

🔩 A qualified driver holding a licence for at least **3 years**

And then begin the checks and exams! Don't be put off. If driving and teaching are your passion, trust us: it will be worth it.

## Skills

To be a driving instructor you must possess and/or develop a wide range of skills. Many of these you may have picked up during previous roles—others can be developed on the job. Things like excellent **driving knowledge** and the **ability to teach** are a given. You must also, however, consider traits like patience, adaptability and sharp reflexes. We won't list all of the desired skills in this section—this isn't a CV! Rest assured, you'll get a clear idea of them as we explore the characteristics of life as an ADI.

## Nature of the work

### Working hours



This is one of the main aspects of being an ADI that is not for everyone: unpredictable and **ever-changing hours**. Because you'll be dealing with multiple students, all with differing availability, your work hours can vary dramatically. This is both in terms of volume and the times of day you'll be expected to work. Not only can this routine (or lack thereof) sometimes put your finances in a precarious position, it can wreak havoc on your social life!

Indeed, be prepared to fit your hours around pupils' schedules, rather than vice versa. Weekends and evenings are very popular times—so be ready to give up yours! Learner drivers require (and often expect) **flexibility**; if you're unwilling to meet their needs, you run the risk that another instructor will.

You might think it makes sense to start off your ADI career on a part-time basis, lessening the pressure a bit as you learn the ropes. If you can afford to do this, great. Working as an ADI on the side is an excellent way to make some extra cash here and

there.

If you're trying to sustain another job at the same time as providing driving lessons, however, it can be a bit of a nightmare. This role demands a flexible schedule; having other commitments (like a separate part-time job) probably won't allow you to fulfil this requirement.

## How much can you expect to earn?



You may see a lot of different numbers flying around when researching how much you can earn as an ADI. This is kind of expected, considering it all depends on things like how much work is available in your area, the amount you're able to charge, and how many hours you're willing to put in.

In some ways, because you're acting as your own boss, the salary is controlled by you. Those that are good at the role and motivated to put the time and effort in can find themselves with a very healthy bank account at the end of each month.

It's important to be realistic, though. According to the government's [National Career Services page](#), ADIs can expect to earn between **£15,000** and **£30,000** a year.



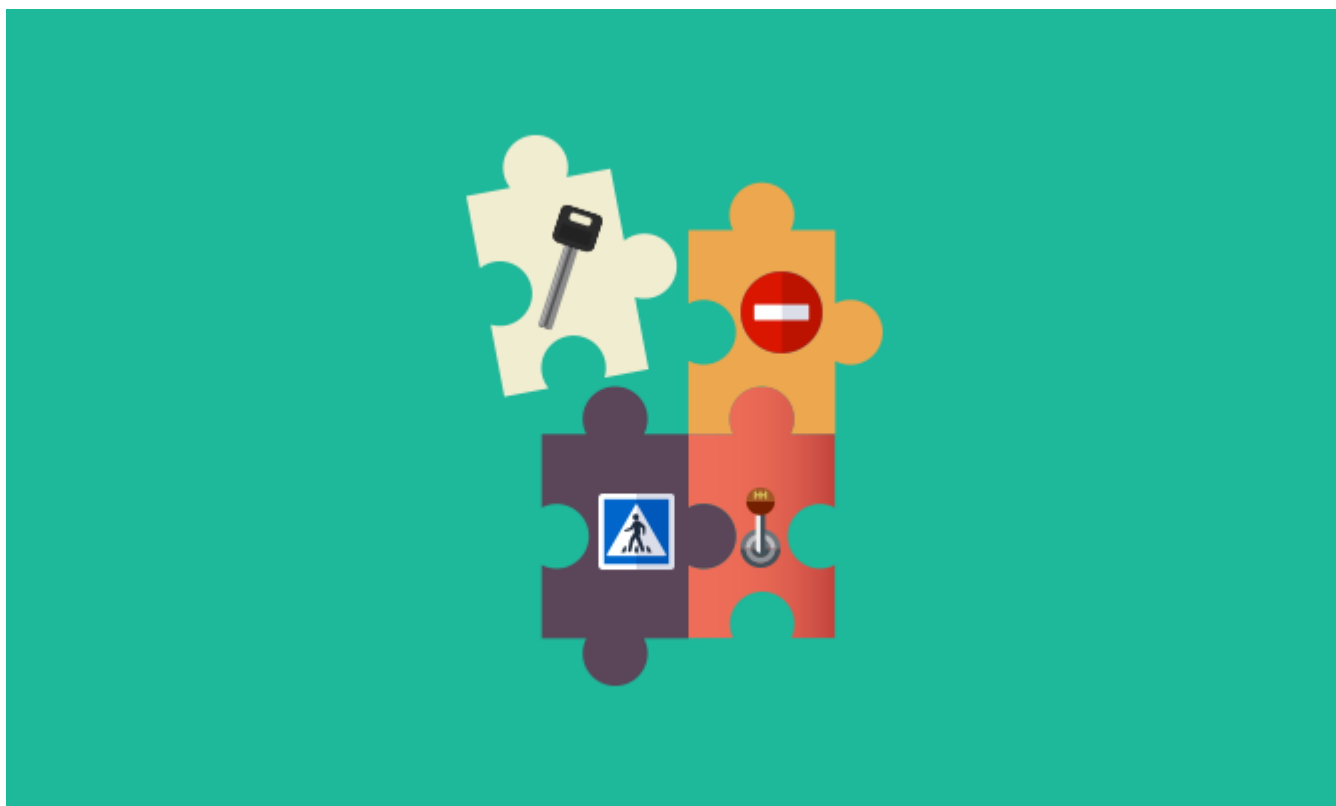
Reaching the top end of that scale is likely to involve building up experience and showing some business savvy. There's two different routes you can go down in terms of how your work is generated—we'll explore them later.

Earnings can also be affected by the economic circumstances of your pupils. For example: you may find it financially beneficial to teach lessons in 3 hour slots, but a student may only be able to pay for 1 hour a week. You can't afford to turn many students down, so you'll have to **adapt** and try to make up for the potential loss of income elsewhere.

## Becoming an ADI: the training process

To become an Approved Driving Instructor requires a lot of initial **investment** (in time and money), which is why it is so important to be sure that being an ADI is right for you. They don't just let anyone out on the road to teach learners, you know! Far from it—you'll have to complete a number of tests and government checks.

### Training



You don't necessarily have to use a trainer to pass the ADI exams, but it certainly helps. If you choose to get that extra tuition, the official channel through which to do

so is **ORDIT** (Official Register of Driving Instructor Training). These training packages can be expensive, but remember—you're preparing for a serious role that will become a full-time career.

It is highly recommended that you use a registered trainer for your lessons. The government website has a [handy search tool](#) to find such trainers in your area. Bear in mind that not all trainers provide tuition on each part of the ADI tests. If you're looking for a complete guide to each exam, you might be best off going for one of the package training deals offered by companies like [BSM](#) or [RED Driving School](#).

## Tests

The test stages are presented in the table below. You can also get full details on the costs of all tests in our guide to [driving test prices](#).

TEST NAME	TYPE OF TEST	LIMITS	COST	PASS RATE
ADI Part 1 <a href="#">Test</a>	Theory Test	Unlimited Attempts	£81	N/A
ADI Part 2 <a href="#">Test</a>	Driving Ability	3 Attempts	£111	54.7%
ADI Part 3 <a href="#">Test</a>	Instructional Ability	3 Attempts	£111	36.7%

As you can see, pass rates are fairly low, so to avoid losing money it's important to really put the work in. This is why many trainee ADIs pay for at least some training.

Tests 1 and 2 are similar to the theory and practical tests taken by learners, but are far more comprehensive and stricter in terms of pass scores. You need to show that you can drive at an **expert level**, after all.

Part 3 involves an examiner marking how you conduct a driving lesson. You'll be teaching a student in the car (either an actual learner or another instructor) while the examiner observes. The three main areas they focus on are **lesson planning**, **risk management** and **teaching and learning strategies**. Prior to this final test, you really should build up a significant number of hours training with a qualified ADI.

Rules to be aware of:

鏢 After passing part 1, you must book the part 3 test within **2 years**. If you don't qualify by then, you'll have to restart the entire process.

鏢 Using up all of your attempts on part 2 or 3 also means you'll have to restart the whole process again.

鏢 You cannot restart the entire process until **2 years** have passed since you completed part 1.

鏢 Once you've passed part 2 and completed 40 hours of training with a qualified ADI, you are able to apply for a trainee driving instructor licence. This handy document allows trainee ADIs to provide driving lessons for **6 months**—meaning you can build up valuable experience before passing part 3. This licence is sometimes referred to as the pink badge.

## Costs

Not only will you have to study and practice hard for these tests, you'll also have to part with a pretty penny to take them in the first place! Plus, you'll likely need to pay for training if you want to be in the best possible position to pass. While this can seem very expensive, remember: you're investing in what can be a lifelong career here.

The money flowing out of your account doesn't slow down after you've qualified, either! Once you've completed all 3 parts, you'll have to pay a fee of **£300** to join the official ADI register. This is also known as the ADI **green badge** and it is what permits you to charge money for providing driving lessons. It will need to be renewed every **4 years**.

## Checks



As you'll be in a position of trust and spending a lot of time alone with people, a full **criminal record** check is required before you can be an ADI. Certain crimes on your record (like assault, for example) may result in the rejection of your application by the ADI registrar.

To be successful, you must be what the government deems a '**fit and proper**' person. Now, your personal interpretation of what makes a 'fit and proper' person may not match the government's standards. They do tend to be sticklers for the rules!

Each case is judged on an individual basis, so it's not like we can provide an ethical checklist to which you must adhere. Basically, you need to be a moral and upstanding citizen. Once you've qualified as an ADI, these [standard checks](#) will continue to be carried out every **4 years**—so be sure to [maintain that 'fit and proper' status!](#) Don't forget that you'll also need to carry on with [on-the-job training](#) while you're working, too—there's always room for improvement, after all!

## You're a qualified ADI: weighing up the costs

Congratulations, you're a newly qualified ADI! So, how does the money pan out once you're officially registered and out on the road with learners? Well, as with many businesses, it's largely a case of overheads versus income.

## Overheads



The main overhead costs you'll need to keep in mind are fuel, insurance, tax, advertising, and repairs. Once all of the bigger things are taken care of (i.e. you've settled on an **annual budget** for each), you need to consider smaller things like stationery and general car maintenance like cleaning services, and even which [car scents](#) to choose!

Of course, there's also the actual car itself. You may be considering using the car you currently own, which is probably fine, but you will need to pay for it to be fitted with **dual controls**. We recommend only sticking with your personal car if it's a model that students will actually want to learn in—fairly modern, easy to drive, and suitable for beginners. An old banger won't be any good, and neither will a Ferrari.

A new-ish model may set you back a bit initially, but it's an important **career investment**. Modern vehicles that come at a heftier price will nonetheless have more longevity and can often be cheaper to run. Plus, you're going to be spending a hell of a lot of time in this vehicle—it's in your own interest that it's at least comfortable!

## Income



Making up for your overheads will be the money you're taking in from students. It's pretty obvious, but this is going to depend on how much work you pick up and what you are able to charge for a lesson.

This is where you need to employ your business credentials. Establish the boundaries of the area you're realistically able to cover, research your direct competition and set an hourly rate. Now, if other local ADIs or driving schools have more experience than you, it's not necessarily a good idea to match their price points.



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Then again, think about whether you have any **unique selling points** that they don't: automatic car (this could be a [pro or a con](#)), willingness to work late hours, ability to speak multiple languages... etc. You may be able to inch closer to the figure your competition is charging if your advertising is good enough.

To give you an idea of the range we're talking, the National Career Services suggest charging between **£15** and **£30** an hour. The final figure will largely depend on your location and level of experience. For example, driving instructors in London can get away with charging higher figures than the national average.

Undercutting the prices of the competition is a risky business. The economic climate for this kind of career works in cycles. If you end up pushing others to lower their prices, everyone will lose out in the end. Try to be both shrewd and fair.

# Are you a people person?

## Customer service

Aside from teaching people to drive, a large element of an ADI's job is customer service. Yes, be prepared (enthusiastic, even!) to deal with the public on a regular basis. Some people thrive on this, others, well... don't. Spending one-on-one time in an enclosed space with a relative stranger for a few hours can be quite intense. If you're averse to small talk and get easily annoyed, this job isn't for you!

Providing your pupils with an enjoyable learning experience is vital for your continued success as an instructor. We may live in the age of the internet, but **word of mouth** can still be the most powerful form of advertising. People (usually) trust the opinion of their friends and family—a positive recommendation of your skills as a driving instructor from one learner could see a new network of clients start to emerge in your local area.

Speaking of the internet, online reviews are the modern equivalent of word of mouth. Establish **social media presence** so that people have a place to big up your services online. This is also a great way to get your name out there in the first place.

## Position of trust



Your position as someone's driving instructor is not to be taken lightly. People come to you for **fortuition**, **guidance** and **support**. We all know that driving can be dangerous even when experienced people are behind the wheel. As a result, when learners find themselves in charge of a vehicle for the first time they'll likely be [nervous](#) and a little overwhelmed. Your job is to make them feel that you believe in their abilities and can protect them from harm, should something go wrong.

At the same time, you need to be keeping track of everything going on outside of the car. As an instructor, you are likely to notice things that a pupil won't—they're not fully trained yet, after all. Sitting in a car seat all day can get rather monotonous, but you need to be alert at all times. This is why **observation** and **focus** are key components of the ADI tool kit.

## Welfare of pupils

To make matters worse, other drivers can often act carelessly around learners. As soon as certain people see those [L-plates](#), they become annoyed and assume that the person controlling the car will hold up their journey. You may experience surrounding cars tailgating, overtaking your car at high speeds, and even sounding their horns. This is all rather nerve-wracking for a student, but it's also a good lesson in the realities of UK roads! Find a balance between preparing them for these scenarios without adding

to their anxieties.

You may find yourself teaching a pupil with some kind of medical issue (declared or undeclared) that requires you to be extra **understanding** or **sympathetic**. The best advice we could give is to make sure you are treating each pupil as an individual—listening and responding to [each learner's particular needs](#).

## Dealing with problem pupils

Working with members of the public for a living inevitably means that from time to time you'll encounter a bad egg. As the job requires you to work in very close proximity to your pupils, it's a good idea to develop strategies for dealing with different issues.

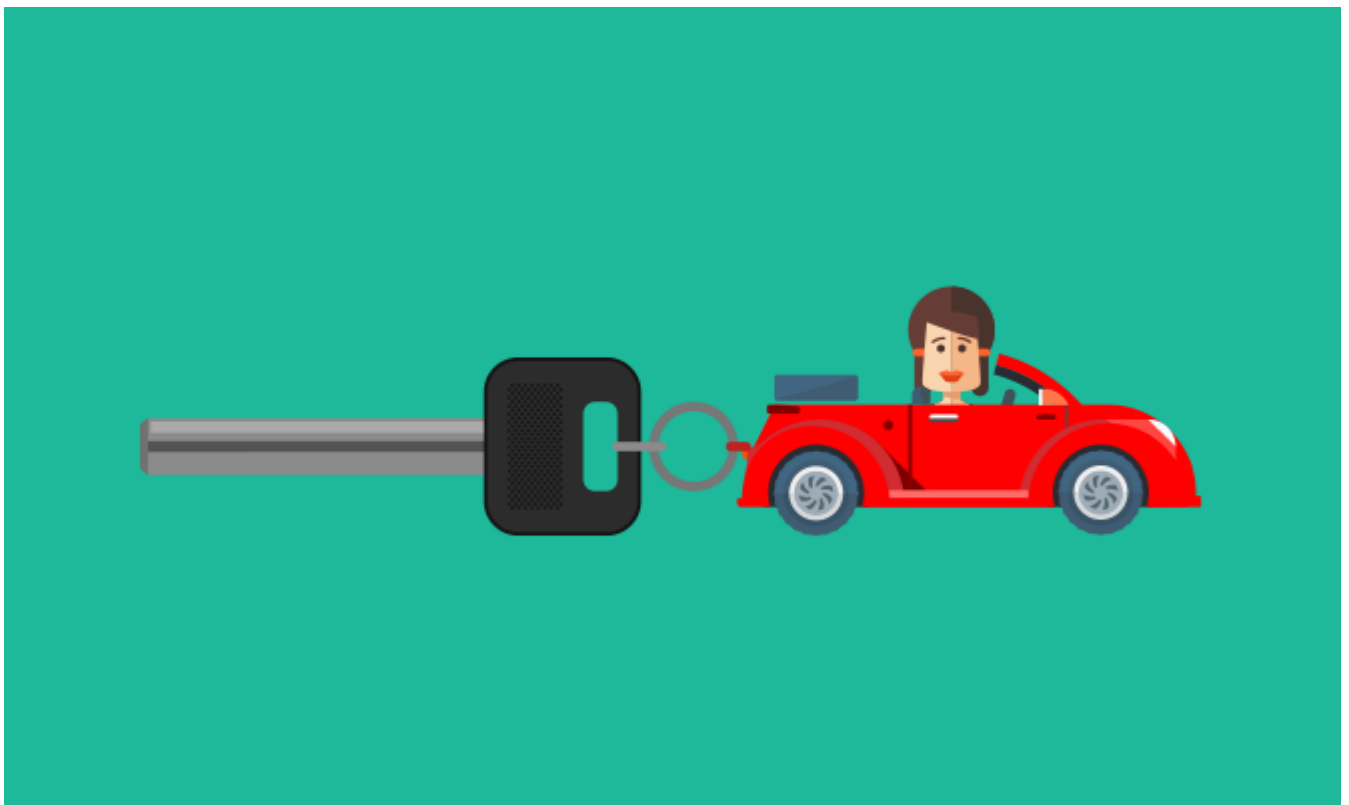
The most common problems instructors face are non-threatening but annoying: students who are **consistently late** or **cancel lessons** at the last minute. Not only is this kind of thing frustrating, it's also bad for your business. When pupils cancel with very little notice, you've lost the money for that lesson and probably don't have time to give the slot to another person. It's important, therefore, to nip this behaviour in the bud as soon as possible.



A good way to avoid or discourage this behaviour is to quickly get an idea of what each pupil is like in terms of lifestyle and attitude. For example, if it becomes clear that one of your students likes to party hard at the weekend, don't let them book lessons on the mornings after they've been out. Learn what people are like and adapt your approach so that the driving schedule suits both of your needs.

Building a relationship of **mutual respect** between you and your pupils is very important. You should be open and understanding with them, but they also need to respect your position as the instructor and someone who is trying to make a living. If anyone's behaviour becomes unmanageable or even threatening, it is probably better for you in the long run to cut all ties with that student. At the end of the day, your safety and well-being is just as important as the pupil's.

## Independent vs Franchise



Remember when we mentioned earlier that ADIs have two routes to go down in terms of how they generate business? Well, one of the first big decisions you'll need to make is whether you want to be **independent** or go with a **franchise**.

If you're just starting out, going it alone is a big risk. Filling your diary with lessons is the most important (and often hardest) part of launching your career. You'll need to



pay for advertising and work out where you fit in terms of the driving instructors already serving the area you want to cover. A franchise can do this part for you, which really takes the pressure off and should give you a good foothold in the industry.

What puts a lot of ADIs off the idea of going with a franchise is that they often require a **franchise fee**. The rate will vary depending on whether you use your own car for lessons, or a vehicle provided by the company. A small number of driving schools (like [PassMeFast](#)) don't require any franchise fee at all, so be sure to do a lot of research on the different options in your area before committing.

Now, being with a franchise doesn't necessarily guarantee work, but it certainly gives you access to a large database of students whose radar you wouldn't otherwise be on. Especially at the beginning of your career, it makes sense to go down the franchise route.

It's also good to keep in mind that just because you start out with a franchise, it doesn't mean you can't be an independent instructor in the future. Indeed, many ADIs experience both scenarios over the course of their careers. Try out both and see which is more beneficial to your situation.

## Extra things to consider before becoming an ADI

### Health and wellbeing

Sure, sitting in a car for most of your day can have some downsides in terms of health. You won't be getting much exercise and your back might get achey occasionally. Then again, this is true of a lot of office jobs. At least you have the option of frequent fresh air if you wind the window down occasionally! Just make sure you take plenty of opportunities to stretch your legs between jobs, and you should be OK.

On the upside, the role can be beneficial to your mental and emotional well-being. The work you do as a driving instructor is important—you're helping people achieve their goals and gain some independence. Watching your learners go from beginners to qualified drivers brings a great sense of **pride**. You'll also learn a lot about people and probably build up a great collection of [funny stories](#) to tell down the pub!

You'll also struggle to get lonely. If you manage to generate a reasonable amount of work, the job of an ADI involves a lot of **socialising**. In a typical day you'll be

catching-up and interacting with numerous people. One of the best things about this job is that you get to know people from all walks of life. It's amazing what you learn about people just from chatting away in the car. Who knows, you may even make some lifelong friends!

## Schedule



We've already touched on the scheduling issues associated with being an ADI, but it is one of the biggest things you'll need to get used to should you take this career path. Be prepared for a work routine that varies from month to month, and even day to day. Throughout the working year you'll inevitably experience busy periods followed by what feels like a bit of a pupil drought. Work is **never guaranteed**, so you need to be able to roll with the punches.

Then again, you are essentially your own boss. Your schedule may be unpredictable at times, but it's still picked by you. Even ADIs who go with a franchise usually get to decide which jobs to take and which to reject. This puts a lot of power in your hands. Unless it's a particularly busy period (which is great news for your bank balance!) you can pick your own holidays and take the time off without having to convince your boss.

When it comes to how much work you should commit yourself to, be realistic. If you're lucky enough to have an abundance of work available to you, don't jam-pack your schedule. Sure, it's tempting to say yes when all you can see are those pound signs, but don't overstretch yourself. No one can work that intensely for very long without burning out.

Chances are, if you're overworked, the quality of your lessons will suffer. Insufficient teaching or a lack of energy will eventually have a negative impact on your business. Find the **balance** that works for you, your bank account, and your students. This will take time, of course, but it is important for the health of you and your career.

## What are your motivations?



Ask yourself why you want to be an ADI in the first place. If you're just in it for the money, or you think it'll be an easy life of relaxing in a car all day occasionally correcting people on their bay parking, we'd pick a different career. Being an ADI requires a lot of skill and even completing the qualification process is a feat in itself!

Then again, if you're **passionate about driving** and helping people get to grips with new things, it's a wonderful career to consider. Those in it for the right reasons are

often the ones who are able to pass the examinations, anyway. As long as you can hack the responsibility that comes with organising your own work, being an ADI is incredibly rewarding and freeing.

## Should you become an ADI?

So, we've covered a fairly exhaustive list of everything you need to consider before embarking on the journey to become an Approved Driving Instructor. Here's a summary of the main pros and cons:



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- ✓ Control your own schedule
- ✓ Be your own boss
- ✓ Opportunity to make a significant amount of money
- ✓ A job on the go, rather than stuck behind a desk
- ✓ Socialise with people on a daily basis
- ✓ Take pride in the fact that you are helping people to learn new skills



- ✗ Unpredictable schedule and income
- ✗ Expected to work unsociable hours
- ✗ You may encounter people that put you in stressful situations

- ✗ You have a lot of responsibility to protect your pupils, the public, and yourself
- ✗ Sedentary nature of work can be bad for your health

Even though it can be a tough road getting there, lots of people are well-suited to this job. Why? Well, because when you think about it, being an ADI involves so many transferable skills: patience, organisation, focus... etc. Yep, people from a wide range of backgrounds make the change to the ADI life. And they love it!

If you thrive under pressure and have the business and organisational skills to make it work, the role of an ADI can be incredibly rewarding. It truly is a job like no other, and our fleet of grade A and B instructors are a testament to how profitable and enjoyable the job can be. If you'd like to see a personal perspective on the role, check out our *Meet an ADI* series, where right now you can get to know [Frank](#), [Ann](#) and [Ged](#)!

## Your future

Once you've been an ADI for a few years, there are opportunities for **career progression**, should you be interested. Many people find that once they build up a diary full of learners and are able to charge a good amount of money for their services, life is pretty sweet. For those who still crave advancement, we have good news. Experienced driving instructors can go on to run their own driving schools or even become driving examiners. Indeed, if this driving malarkey is really your calling, the industry is your oyster!

If this article has inspired you to start training for your ADI licence tomorrow, you may be wondering if it's a good time to join the ranks. Our verdict is: absolutely! Think about it—there'll always be people who need to learn to drive. That's one of the great things about this job—each year brings a new crop of teenagers who are legally allowed to start driving. The work is there; you just have to find a way to make the most of it. Start by filling in the [application](#) and see what the future could hold for you!

## Becoming a Driving Instructor: FAQs





## ① Do you have to have dual controls fitted in your car to become a driving instructor?

This one is not as crystal clear as you might think. The government's checklist for an ADI's car does not specify that they *must* be fitted with dual controls. As we know, many people learn to drive with family and friends, who are very unlikely to have such specifications in their personal cars. So, it's not exactly a mandatory requirement that pupils learn in cars with dual controls.

The only time it is stated that dual controls are a legal requirement, is when trainee instructors take their ADI tests in a hire car. This suggests that it is **not actually compulsory** for dual controls to be fitted in an ADI's car.

However, it is **highly recommended** that you do make such adjustments to your car if you are an ADI. It ensues the safety of you, your students and the general public. It's also important to consider that franchises are unlikely to accept your car if it does not have dual controls.

## ② What kind of insurance do I need if I'm a driving instructor?

Sadly, your standard insurance policy just won't cut it. It's vital for your reputation and professional standing that you get the correct cover for your vehicle. Driving instructors should be prepared to fork out a bit more for insurance that covers **business use for teaching and tests**. Insurance policies designed for ADIs cover things like an examiner driving your car, modified vehicles, and hire & reward (which covers the money you collect during lesson).

You can find competitive insurance prices using insurance comparison sites. It's also a good idea to ask around your local area for advice. Perhaps even find out which insurance companies your competitors use. To get a better idea, check out our handy [guide to driving instructor insurance](#).

### ③ Is the theory test for potential ADIs the same as the theory test that regular learners take?

No: the ADI test is longer and requires a higher score to pass. They are both made up of two sections: multiple choice questions and the hazard perception test. The multiple choice section for regular learners involves answering 50 questions in 57 minutes. In contrast, the multiple choice section for ADIs involves answering 100 questions in 1 hour and 30 minutes. The pass mark for learners is **43/50**. The pass mark for ADIs, meanwhile, is **85/100**.

When it comes to the hazard perception test, both learners and ADIs have 14 video clips to watch. However, ADIs must get a higher score to pass. Learners need only get **44/75**. ADIs are required to get at least **57/75** to move on to the ADI Part 2 test.

### ④ How much do training courses to become an ADI cost?

This can vary significantly depending on the company you choose to go with. There's also a variety of options to consider, such as package deals, one-off payments or a pay-as-you-go financial arrangement.

In general, courses (particularly packages) can range from a **few hundred** to a **few thousand pounds**. Yes, this is expensive considering you also have to pay to take the tests themselves. However, a training course could be the difference in you passing the test first time or having to re-take (and so repay for) everything.

Make sure you research the company you want to train with before committing to anything. Don't be pulled in by low prices—you want a quality instructor with a solid

reputation. After all, your future career depends on it.

### ⑤ How long does it take to become a driving instructor?

This is another one that varies depending on how quickly you learn and how much time and money you are able to invest in the training period. Assuming you've already had a clean licence for at least 3 years, you're looking at anything from **6 months to over a year**. If you've only just passed your driving test, it could be as many as 5 years before you are qualified.

### ⑥ I'm now a qualified ADI—how do I join the PassMeFast fleet?

Glad you asked! If you are looking to go down the franchise route, PassMeFast is a stellar choice. We don't charge franchise fees and we do offer competitive rates. You'll also get access to our busy job board, which is updated daily. As an ever-expanding company, we're always looking to add to our fleet of grade A and B instructors.

We specialise in an intensive approach to driving, so you can expect to teach in courses, rather than individual lessons. Our current fleet includes male and [female driving instructors](#) from a range of backgrounds. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in joining, check out our [Become an Instructor](#) page for all the details and register your interest. Alternatively, you can call PassMeFast on **0333 123 4949** and speak to a member of our team. We look forward to hearing from you!