

# Taxi Driver's Handbook

Advice and guidance on working  
as a licensed London taxi driver

## **Preface**

Congratulations on becoming a licensed London taxi driver.

You have successfully attained the Knowledge, a hard-won professional qualification akin to a degree. Moreover, you are joining a legendary group of men and women whose professionalism and excellence is renowned across the globe.

The Knowledge will help you navigate swiftly and safely through the streets of the capital, but as you start your new career you will find that there is a whole range of other information that you require.

This handbook will help you find your way to everything you need to know. Experienced taxi drivers have contributed their considerable expertise, and I'm sure that their advice will help you in your new role at the beating heart of our great city.



**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London

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## Introduction

This handbook contains advice and guidance to help you do your job as a licensed taxi driver in London.

The content provides advice designed to help you offer the best possible service to the travelling public. It also gives some guidance on what you must do under taxi law, but it is not a complete guide nor does it have any force of law. This book should be read in conjunction with the Abstract of Laws which gives comprehensive details of hackney carriage laws and regulations. The Abstract of Laws is available on the Transport for London (TfL) website: [tfl.gov.uk/tph](http://tfl.gov.uk/tph).

In addition to the information in this book London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH) publishes notices that give up to date information about issues that may affect you. All Notices are posted on the TfL website and many are reproduced in the trade press but if you would like them e-mailed to you directly, please send your e-mail address to [tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk).

Although we may inform drivers of points of particular concern, LTPH does not have expertise in motoring law, taxation or other matters that might be relevant to you. You should keep yourself informed on these other aspects of law and regulation.

Licensed taxis are also known as 'hackney carriages', 'black cabs' and 'cabs'. The term taxi is used throughout this handbook.

All details were correct at the time of printing.

## Doing your job

### What to take with you

Only experience will tell you what you need on a day to day basis but it is suggested that you are always equipped with the following:

- your badge, licence and identifiers (compulsory - see below)
- an A-Z of London plus a map of the rest of the country
- float: a suggested float is a minimum of:  
2 x £10 notes, 4 x £5 notes, 16 x £1 coins, 4 x 50p, 5 x 20p, 5 x 10p
- pen and notebook
- copy of the current fare chart
- air freshener
- brush for cleaning out the taxi
- sick bags
- disposable gloves
- spare bulbs and fuses

Always ensure that your taxi is clean and you are smart. Make sure the current fare chart is fixed in the passenger compartment and any other signs or stickers are in good condition.

If you intend to take part in one of the taxi sharing schemes (see page 9) you should carry the approved taxi sharing card to display in the taxi to show your participation.

### Badge, licence and identifiers

Whenever you are plying for hire or carrying a passenger you must always wear your badge and carry your copy licence. Do not hang your badge on the rear view mirror or keep it in your pocket!

If you own your own taxi you should keep your original licence in a safe place at home. If you hire a taxi, the proprietor must hold your original licence.

Even though your badge number is displayed on your identifiers, if a passenger asks for your badge number you should let them see your badge to write the number down.

You may also be required to produce your badge and licence to gain access to a restricted area eg Canary Wharf. If you don't have these items with you and have a passenger on board, it will be your passenger who is inconvenienced.

You are required to wear your badge if you attend a court in your role as a licensed taxi driver (you should also consider taking your licence to court to prove, if necessary, that you are currently licensed).

Like your badge, your personalised identifiers are either green or yellow and they show your badge number and, for suburban licence holders, details of the exact area for which you are licensed. You should treat the identifiers in the same way as you treat your badge. This includes:

- always displaying them when you are working; and
- removing them from your taxi when you are not using it.

The identifiers should be displayed in the top nearside (kerbside) corner of both the front and rear windows.

Please remember that these identifiers are not, in themselves, proof that you are licensed and are not a substitute for either your badge or licence. If you are asked to provide proof that you are licensed, for example by a police officer, TfL compliance officer, taxi proprietor, etc., you must still produce your licence and show your badge.

## **Appearance**

TfL encourages licensed taxi drivers in London to dress in a manner that reflects favourably upon their profession as self-employed business people in a service industry. You are therefore encouraged to present a clean and smart appearance and keep your taxi clean and tidy when working.

## **Plying for hire**

You can ply for hire by driving along the streets or by waiting on an appointed taxi rank. Strictly speaking you can only be hired when your vehicle is stationary, so when you are travelling along a street with your 'taxi' light on you are available for hire but do not have to stop when hailed by a member of the public. Nevertheless, there is a public expectation that a taxi with its light on will stop if hailed. Failure to do so not only gives the potential passenger cause for complaint but also misses an opportunity to earn money.

If you are not available for hire, ensure your 'taxi' light is turned off to avoid any misunderstandings.

Once you stop when hailed, regardless of whether or not your 'for hire' light is on you are obliged to accept the fare unless there are legal grounds for not doing so.



If your taxi is stationary because of traffic conditions or at traffic lights you are not obliged to accept a hiring unless you have indicated to the prospective passenger that you are willing to be hired.

Do not approach potential customers to ask them if they want a taxi. This could be interpreted as touting which is illegal.

You cannot ply for hire, pick up or set down passengers on motorways.

### **The fare tariff and the meter**

Each year, normally in April, TfL sets a new fare tariff. The tariff chart should be clearly displayed in the rear of your taxi.

You must start the meter at the beginning of every journey. Do not start the meter until the fare has been accepted and at the end of the journey stop the meter when the hiring is complete.

It is illegal to charge more than the metered fare. The meter calculates the maximum fare on the basis of the time of day, distance travelled and time taken.

### **Extras**

Most extras have been incorporated into the fare tariff. The extras you can charge are listed on the fare chart – make sure you know the details. You cannot charge extra for carrying luggage, additional passengers, wheelchair users or guide and other assistance dogs.

Valid extras (as at April 2011) which must be added on the meter at the start of the journey are:

- for journeys made on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day;
- for journeys from Heathrow Airport;
- for journeys booked by telephone.

Although it's not a metered extra, also detailed on the fare chart is a soiling charge, which means you can charge the hirer a fee if the taxi has to be taken out of service for cleaning. However, as this fee is not part of the metered fare, if the passenger fails to pay you will have to pursue them through the Small Claims Court.

### **Refusals**

One of the most common complaints by taxi passengers is that the driver refused to take them to where they wanted to go. The only reasons you can refuse a fare are:

- if the journey is over 12 miles (or over 20 miles if it starts at Heathrow Airport);  
or

- the journey is likely to last for more than one hour; or
- the journey ends outside the Greater London area.

Although you are not compelled to accept a hiring for luggage and/or animals unaccompanied by a passenger or to carry articles or animals likely to cause damage to the taxi or its fittings, you are encouraged to be as accommodating as possible. But don't forget that you must take guide and other assistance dogs (see page 13).

If you do refuse a hiring for one of the above reasons, be polite and explain why. This could help avoid a complaint.

The law does allow you to refuse a journey if you have 'a reasonable excuse' so if you believe you have a justifiable reason to refuse a fare (eg drunkenness, aggression, verbal abuse, luggage likely to cause damage, anything that might soil the taxi) make a note of the circumstances as soon as possible. Again, this may be helpful if there is a complaint.

### **Journeys outside Greater London**

You are not obliged to accept any fare where the destination is outside Greater London. If you do agree to accept such a hiring you should either negotiate the fare with the passenger in advance or, if no fare is agreed, take the hiring on the meter. If you negotiated you must adhere to the agreed fare at the end of the journey.

You are still obliged to set the meter at the beginning of every journey.

If the fare starts in Greater London and the destination is also in Greater London but the route goes out of the capital, the whole journey must be undertaken on the meter and you cannot charge more than the metered fare.

### **Payment for fares**

It's good customer service to be as flexible as possible in accepting payment for fares as not everybody wants to pay cash although you do not legally have to accept cheques, credit/debit cards or foreign currency.

If the taxi you are driving has signs that state that cards are accepted the customer will expect to be able to pay by card and it would not be good customer service to refuse a card payment. If you are unable to accept card payments because, for example, the card reader is out of order, you should advise your passenger at the start of the journey.

You are allowed to charge a surcharge for payments by card but it is good practice to display an approved sign in the taxi informing passengers what the surcharge is.

Whilst you can refuse to accept cards for fares under a specified amount, under no circumstances can you charge a minimum fare for card paying passengers. Remember, it is an offence to charge more than the metered fare.

Although Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not legal tender in England it is good business practice to accept them. They can be exchanged at banks.

You may ask for a reasonable deposit for waiting, but you must account for any such deposit when the passenger pays the metered fare. If you accept a deposit you must not go away, or permit your taxi to be taken away without the hirer's consent, before the end of the period covered by the deposit.

## **Receipts**

All licensed taxis are fitted with a receipt printer and you must issue a receipt if requested.

The printed receipt will include the following information:

- date of issue
- time of issue
- metered fare
- metered extras
- total fare

If a passenger wishes to have tips recorded on the receipt you may write the amount anywhere where there is space. When a printed receipt is not appropriate, such as when multiple receipts are required, you should issue hand-written receipts with the same information.

Always ensure that you have a sufficient supply of receipt printer paper and/or receipt pads.

Don't give passengers blank receipts to complete themselves!

## **Bilking**

Bilking is the term for running off without paying the fare.

If a passenger refuses to pay and an amicable agreement cannot be found then call the police.

If the passenger leaves without paying think twice before attempting to give chase. Your personal safety is more important than a lost fare.

Police advice is that you get as good a description of the person as possible, note the time and location of the incident, and report the matter to police immediately.

Fortunately bilking is rare but regrettably it must be considered a hazard of the job.

Some taxis are installed with CCTV systems that allow pictures of bilkers to be recorded and used in apprehending them. The taxi trade magazines also often feature descriptions of bilkers who have been particularly active.

Detaining passengers against their will in the back of a taxi over an unpaid fare, including locking the passenger in and driving to a police station, is not condoned by police and could get you into trouble.

### **Taxi Sharing Schemes**

Fixed fare taxi sharing schemes are operated at a number of locations and events and are designed to benefit taxi drivers, passengers and the local communities alike. Since 2005 they have been the subject of formal regulations.

Key points of taxi sharing schemes:

- you may choose to take part in the sharing arrangements, and must indicate this by displaying an approved sign in your taxi;
- if a passenger requests an exclusive journey or a journey to a destination not covered by the fixed-fare scheme, normal rules on compellable distance and refusals apply, even if you would prefer to take a shared journey;
- the meter should not be started until the journey actually starts – time waiting for passengers to share must not be charged.

For fixed fare taxi sharing arrangements:

- defined locations are authorised as starting points;
- signage at the starting location will indicate the nature of the fixed fare sharing arrangements. Marshals are usually present to organise sharing;
- destinations are also defined, along with the fares that apply – for shared journeys to other destinations, you must use the sharing conversion table and the meter. If you do not have the table you cannot charge more than the metered fare.

Current fixed fare arrangements are:

- from Paddington and Euston Stations to locations in and around central London;
- between the Wimbledon tennis tournament and Wimbledon and Southfields stations, and to central London;
- from Buckingham Palace at the end of garden parties to central London locations.

If you take part in a fixed fare taxi sharing scheme you should display the approved 'Fixed Fare Shared Taxi' sign. These signs are available from LTPH.

## **Heathrow Airport**

In addition to taxi laws Heathrow Airport has its own bylaws which are very strictly enforced. The bylaws are outlined in the Abstract of Laws. Only licensed All London drivers are allowed to ply for hire at Heathrow Airport.

To ply for hire at Heathrow Airport you must first go through the Heathrow Airport Taxi Feeder Park which controls access to the ranks at the terminals. A detailed explanation of how the system works can be obtained from the Taxi Feeder Park in Newell Road off the North Perimeter Road. It is advisable to read this guide before you use the Feeder Park for the first time. Heathrow Taxis and some of the Knowledge schools will arrange visits to Heathrow where the system for plying for hire at the airport is fully explained. BAA charges a fee for using the Feeder Park.

When you leave the Feeder Park you will be sent to one of the terminals, where the rank agents will allocate a fare to you. You must not start the meter until the taxi is hired.

Many fares from the ranks at the terminals are to local destinations so if you work at Heathrow take the time and trouble to learn the location of hotels and other prominent places in the area. To make short, local fares more attractive, BAA operates a system whereby you do not need to go through the Feeder Park and pay the fee again. You will receive a ticket if you are given a short journey which will allow you to return directly to the terminal rank within one hour of accepting the first fare.

As Heathrow Airport is very close to the edge of Greater London, many taxi journeys are to destinations beyond the boundary. You should therefore be aware of the rules regarding fares for journeys that end outside the Greater London area.

In the interests of offering a reliable service you are encouraged to accept local journeys that go outside London. To help you quote fares to such locations, the taxi trade associations at the airport publish suggested prices to destinations outside London (but please note that these fares are only a guide and they are not set or endorsed by TfL). But remember, if you fail to agree a fare with the passenger in advance you must charge the metered fare.

You should also make yourself aware of the 'Fares Fair' scheme which offers passengers fixed fares to specified locations just beyond the London boundary.

## **Lost property**

It is amazing what people leave in taxis so it is worth asking your passengers to make sure they have not left anything behind when they leave your taxi. You should also check your taxi yourself for lost property after every hiring. Any property found must be taken to any Metropolitan or City of London Police Station as soon as possible

afterwards and definitely within 24 hours. All lost property is then sent to TfL's Lost Property Office which will try and return it to its owner. Lost property can also be taken directly to the Lost Property Office (see page 31 for details).

Where property is returned to the loser, he/she is charged a percentage of the value of the property by the Lost Property Office, which is then passed to the driver as a reward.

Lost property that is not claimed within three months of the last day of the month in which the property reached the Lost Property Office may be returned to the driver. Items that contain personal data such as laptops, PDAs, digital cameras and mobile phones cannot be returned but if the item is in good condition an award is paid to the driver based upon standard property values.

Valuable property is retained for a longer period to give the owner the chance to claim it.

If you are suspicious of an unattended package in your taxi:

- do not ignore it;
- do not touch it;
- attempt to establish ownership - but if this is unsuccessful then:
  - evacuate the immediate area and keep people 150 metres away from the object if possible;
  - switch off the vehicle engine;
  - call the police - but do not use a radio or a mobile telephone within 25 metres of the object; and,
  - remain at the scene to identify yourself and the object to the police.

## **Etiquette**

It is generally accepted that taxi drivers allow other taxi drivers to exit from side roads onto a main road. If another driver allows you to pull out in front of him and you both have your 'for hire' light on, signal or allow that taxi to overtake you at the earliest opportunity. This then allows that taxi driver the opportunity of the first hiring. If it is not practicable to allow the other taxi to overtake and you are hailed, indicate to the prospective passenger that the taxi behind you is the one to be hired.

'Stealing' another driver's fare or sending a passenger to the next taxi in the rank just because you do not fancy the fare (known as 'brooming') are common grievances among taxi drivers. Every taxi driver is working for a share of the same market and the next good fare will not be far away.

## **Private hire bookings**

As a licensed taxi driver you can accept a journey that has been pre-booked through a licensed London private hire vehicle operator. Even though it is a private hire journey you must still set your meter at the beginning of the journey. If the journey is to start and finish within London, the fare charged must either be the pre-quoted private hire fare or the metered fare, whichever is the lower.

## **Customer Service**

If you, as a driver give a passenger poor service, it might have little impact on you but the passenger might decide to never use a taxi again. It is therefore in the interests of the whole trade to give the best possible customer service at all times.

### **Helping your passengers**

Unless you have a certified medical condition which prevents this, please give reasonable assistance to passengers, eg

- help passengers into and out of the taxi
- help load and unload luggage

A lot of taxi passengers in London, especially those taking taxis from Heathrow Airport, are from outside the UK and will not be familiar with fares and the rules governing taxis. They will trust you to take them to their destination by the most direct route and not to overcharge them.

Do not get caught out by traffic restrictions. It is part of a taxi driver's Knowledge to learn when certain roads close (tidal flow), when restrictions are imposed/lifted (no right turns, etc), when you can use the Royal Parks (eg Constitution Hill and The Mall are closed to traffic on Sundays) and what restrictions there may be by doing so.

If you encounter congestion and you feel you that you can give your passengers better service by taking a longer route to avoid a problem, explain what you would like to do and why. Talking to your passengers in a situation like this may avoid a complaint. They may, of course, prefer to sit in traffic and go by the most direct route.

At the beginning of a journey never be afraid to ask your passenger if they have a preferred route. Some passengers undertake the same journey on a regular basis and always like to go the same way.

### **Disabled passengers**

Transport for London is committed to providing an accessible public transport system in which disabled people can enjoy the same opportunities to travel as other members of society. Taxis are a vital link in the accessible transport chain and it is important that disabled people can hire a taxi without incurring any extra cost.

Under the Equality Act 2010 you cannot refuse to carry a disabled passenger without reasonable grounds. The Act also places specific duties on taxi drivers to assist passengers who use wheelchairs and passengers accompanied by assistance dogs.

According to the Act, you must:

- Carry a passenger seated in a wheelchair



- Charge wheelchair users the same fare as non-wheelchair users
- Carry the wheelchair separately if the passenger chooses to sit in a passenger seat
- Take steps to ensure that the passenger is carried safely and in reasonable comfort
- Give the passenger mobility assistance as is reasonably required
- Carry a disabled person's assistance dog and allow it to remain with the passenger
- Not charge any more for carrying an assistance dog

If you are unable to meet any of these duties because of a medical condition you must obtain an exemption certificate from TfL (see below).

Please remember that not all disabled people are obviously impaired (eg those with mental impairments or certain medical conditions) and someone with an assistance dog may not look 'disabled'. If someone says they are disabled and have an assistance dog then the benefit of doubt should be applied when accepting hirings.

Assistance dogs will always be identified with a highly reflective jacket or other identifying part of their harness/lead which will state what the animal is doing (in general terms it might say 'Dogs for the Disabled' or it might be more specific and state 'Hearing Dog', etc) and which organisation has provided its' training.

Please be aware these animals are 'working' and should not be treated like other pets. If you wish to greet a working dog it is best to ask permission of its handler and comply with their wishes about whether it is appropriate to do so.

You can only refuse a person accompanied by an assistance dog if you have an exemption certificate issued by LTPH. Drivers can only seek exemptions on medical grounds. If you have a medical condition, such as severe asthma, which is aggravated by contact with dogs, or if you are allergic or have an acute phobia to dogs, it may be possible for you to obtain an exemption. Applications should be made to using the appropriate form which can be obtained from LTPH. If you are granted an exemption you will be given a sign that must be displayed whenever you are plying for hire.

There are many different types of wheelchairs/powerchairs and it is recommended, if possible, to become familiar with loading and unloading the more common types you are likely to encounter. If you are hired by someone using a chair that is unfamiliar to you always ask the occupant the best way to proceed (including how best to assist them with loading), as it is likely that they will be familiar with their own chair and able to direct you as necessary.

It is always recommended that a wheelchair user is carried in the approved position and is secured when travelling (rearward facing, straps attached to wheelchair, seat belt around occupant).

Disabled people who cannot use the standard restraint system can be carried, however, they should be notified of the dangers in travelling this way and that they do so at their own risk.

In addition, LTPH does not recommend accepting a hiring by people wishing to travel in their own mobility scooter within the taxi. Scooters are not wheelchairs and as such these forms of personal transport are not safety tested in the same way nor are they designed for transporting anyone as an occupant in another vehicle.

They may be carried if the occupant of the scooter agrees to sit in the standard passenger seat whilst being transported but it is important that the scooter itself is restrained, this is to avoid injury to the passenger or damage to their scooter or your vehicle.

These dos and don'ts will help you deliver the best service to disabled passengers:.

- DO know how your wheelchair ramps work, how to safely load a wheelchair and secure it in the correct position (facing to the rear) using the wheelchair restraints and passenger belts
- DO make sure that the wheelchair ramps are available and in good working order at all times – if they are not your taxi is unfit
- DO make yourself aware of all the other features in your taxi that help disabled people eg swivel seat, auxiliary step, hearing loop, and let your passengers know about them
- DO ask the disabled person if they need any help, but wait for your offer to be accepted before doing anything; listen to any requests and try to remember that everyone is different and what suits one passenger may not be good for another
- DO talk directly to the disabled person rather than the person with them
- DO let visually impaired passengers know if there are delays in the journey and also let them know when they are near their destination
- DO count out the change for visually impaired passengers
- DO have a pen and paper handy to write things down for passengers with hearing impairments
- DON'T deliberately drive past a disabled person hailing your taxi
- DON'T start the meter until a wheelchair passenger is safely in the taxi

- DON'T make assumptions about a disability, or assume that it's insignificant because it's not visible

## **Health and Safety**

### **Seat belts**

You do not have to wear your seat belt when you are carrying a paying passenger, plying for hire, or answering a call for hire; but remember seat belts save lives and minimise injuries. You must wear your seat belt if you are delivering a letter or parcel or if your light is out and you do not have a passenger on board eg going home, running empty on a motorway, etc.

It is the responsibility of passengers to wear seat belts if they are available.

When you accept a hiring, allow passengers time to fasten their seatbelts before starting the journey.

In view of safety considerations, the Department for Transport recommends that a passenger should not be allowed to carry an infant in their lap whilst in a taxi. Babies and children under three must travel in a child restraint where provided or available in a taxi.

Where child restraints are not available, children under three may travel in the back of a taxi unrestricted. Children aged three years and above must however use an adult seatbelt where provided.

Remember, the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts fitted in the passenger compartment.

### **Smoking in taxis**

Along with all other modes of public transport, smoking is prohibited in taxis. This means that smoking is not allowed by anyone in a taxi at any time. This includes you, the driver, even when the taxi is not being used for hire and reward.

To comply with the legislation all taxis must display approved 'No Smoking' signs.

As the driver you have a responsibility to make sure passengers do not smoke in your taxi. In the event that a passenger refuses to comply with the no-smoking law you can take reasonable steps to enforce the law.

The following practical steps to deal with such situations are based on Department for Health advice:

- point to the no-smoking signs and ask the person to stop smoking;
- inform them that you would be committing an offence if you allowed them to smoke, and they are breaking the law by smoking in a smoke free premises or vehicle, and you could both be fined.

If the customer refuses to stop smoking:

- you should consider not serving or providing a service to a person who is breaking the smoke free law. This includes refusing to accept a hiring if the sole reason is that the customer refuses to stop smoking.
- keep a record of where and when the incident took place, the name of the person involved (if possible) and the outcome.

If physical violence is threatened by a person smoking, you should notify or seek assistance from the police.

## **Security**

When plying for hire keep your doors locked at all times and only unlock the rear doors when you are satisfied of the passenger's sobriety and destination.

At vulnerable times request that the passenger pays through the hatch before getting out of the taxi as this is safer than paying from outside at the window. Alternatively, ask the passenger to pay through the nearside window as this is further away from you.

The Department for Transport has published guidance for taxi drivers to help them stay safe. The guidance aims to help drivers take appropriate precautions to prevent violence, advising them of what they should do in the event of a threat or violent incident. You can find the guidance on the DfT website (see page 31).

## **Cleaner air for London**

It is essential that we do all we can to improve air quality in London and reduce harmful emissions. By following the steps below you can help us reduce vehicle emissions, improve air quality and at the same time reduce your fuel consumption, thereby saving money:

- if you are going to be parked and stationary for more than one minute then turn off your engine – this will reduce your fuel consumption and cut emissions
- switch off your engine when waiting at ranks as this helps reduce pollution levels both outside and inside your taxi
- keep your tyres inflated and check the pressure regularly, under-inflated tyres create more rolling resistance and so use more fuel
- remember air-con and electrics all contribute to your fuel consumption
- maintain smooth and progressive braking and acceleration to save fuel and wear and tear on your vehicle

Remember the steps you take benefit you, your family, other drivers and your passengers too.

### **Cycle Safety**

With the number of cyclists taking to the road increasing it is important to make sure that you look out for them and follow the tips below to help keep yourself, your passengers and other road users safe and on the move:

- leave space at junctions for cyclists - don't cross stop lines or infringe on cycle Advanced Stop Lines, which are designed to help cyclists position themselves safely at junctions
- stay alert and look out for cyclists, particularly on your near side and when stopping or pulling out into traffic
- wait for the right moment to pass cyclists and give them plenty of space when overtaking
- look out for cyclists when opening doors and advise passengers to take care when leaving your vehicle
- ask your passengers to leave your taxi on the nearside to reduce the risk of them opening the door into the path of an oncoming cyclist
- remain alert in stationary traffic - pedestrians and cyclists may weave through queues of traffic
- when turning or stopping, always indicate well before the manoeuvre junction and make sure

### **Working Hours**

As a self employed taxi driver you can choose the hours you work and there are no rules that limit the number of hours that you can work in a day or a week. However, remember to take regular breaks from driving and regular days off. Driving when you are tired greatly increases the risk of accidents.

## **Taxi Ranks and Shelters**

### **Taxi Ranks**

There are approximately 500 taxi ranks on the roads in London, with many others on private land (eg stations, hotel forecourts). The purpose of taxi ranks is to provide the public with a set location where they can hire a licensed taxi. Because of this they can also be a good source of work for taxi drivers. The rank is the only situation where a taxi may ply for hire while stationary.

Ranks are situated in locations where the public most need taxis, eg major shopping areas, transport interchanges. The majority of all the ranks in London are in central London. Some ranks are identifiable by a taxi pole and/or shelter. A full list of the highway ranks can be found in the LTPH booklet 'Taxi Cab Ranks'.

The following is a summary of the regulations that govern taxi ranks;

- if you are the first or second taxi on a rank you must be with your taxi, with the taxi light illuminated ready to be hired immediately;
- you must not be on a rank at any time, unless you are willing to be hired; ranks or standings are not parking places for taxis;
- when the taxis ahead of you on the rank are hired, you should move forward; do not leave any spaces on the rank;
- taxis should be parked directionally according to conditions of the rank;
- broken down taxis should be removed from the rank as soon as possible;
- unless there is a legitimate reason for refusal (see section on refusals) you must accept the hiring.

### **Marshalled taxi ranks**

There are a number of late night marshalled taxi ranks in London where taxi marshals organise passenger and taxi queues, deal with any queries and help improve safety and security at the rank for both passengers and drivers. When using a marshalled taxi rank you should follow the instructions of the marshal and remember that the normal taxi rank rules apply.

A full list of late night marshalled taxi ranks and the times of operation is available on the TfL website at [tfl.gov.uk](http://tfl.gov.uk).

### **Taxi Shelters**

Taxi shelters are small green wooden buildings that provide hot food and drinks exclusively for taxi drivers. Adjacent to each shelter is a refreshment rank and you are allowed to park on these ranks for 45 minutes while you have a meal in the shelter.

You must not use these ranks at any other times as this may deprive other drivers of a space on the rank and the shelter-keeper will lose trade.

Taxi shelters and refreshment ranks are located at:

- Chelsea
- Embankment Place
- Grosvenor Gardens (North)
- Hanover Square
- Kensington Park Road
- Kensington Road (Broadwalk)
- Lupus Street
- Pont Street
- Russell Square
- Temple Place
- Thurloe Place
- Warwick Avenue
- Wellington Place

### **Metered taxi parking bays**

Taxi meter bays are already installed in the following locations in the City of Westminster and LTPH is continuing to work with the local authority to identify other suitable locations.

- Bolsover Street
- Ebury Bridge Road
- Horseferry Road
- Paddington Street
- Palace Street
- Regency Street
- Warwick Row

You are advised to make use of these facilities when wishing to have a break or use the public conveniences. When using the taxi meter bays you should ensure that they comply with any restrictions regarding times of operation.



## Picking up and setting down, Red Routes and bus lanes

This section gives general guidance on highway facilities. It is not intended to replace the need for you to be aware of your responsibilities under the Highway Code.

### Stopping to pick up or set down passengers

You are able to stop to pick up or set down passengers in many areas, even where waiting, parking or loading restrictions apply. This covers only the period while the passenger is boarding or alighting.

#### *How long can I stop?*

There is no set time limit, and you can stop for as long as necessary for the passenger to get in or out. For instance, if ramps need to be used to allow a wheelchair user into the vehicle, and time must be taken to ensure that the wheelchair is in the right position and the passenger is secured safely, this is allowed and all appropriate care should be taken. If there are waiting or parking restrictions, you cannot stop for longer than necessary for the passenger to board or alight.

#### *What if the passenger needs help?*

Strictly speaking, where waiting or parking restrictions apply you are not allowed to leave the vehicle to assist a passenger to or from a building. However, some authorities recognise that this is an important part of the job for taxi drivers, and will make suitable allowances as long as they can see that such activity is taking place. You should minimise any time you are away from the vehicle and, if possible, record details of the passenger to assist you if a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) is issued. Alternatively, try and stop in a nearby side street where waiting is allowed.

#### *Where and when can I stop?*

Taxi drivers can stop to pick up or set down passengers on most places on Red Routes and on most other roads. Boarding and alighting is allowed on single and double yellow lines, in places where loading is prohibited (shown by markings on the kerb), in parking bays and in bus lanes. You should not stop where you would cause an obstruction or a safety hazard, including on the zig-zag lines by pedestrian crossings or on school crossings.

**Bus lanes** You can pick up or set down in a bus lane even if you are not normally allowed to drive in it. If this is the case you should enter and leave the bus lane in the most direct and safe way. Do not set a passenger down in the middle of the road, even if you are stopped in traffic - you must always get close to the kerb.

**Bus stops** You can stop to pick up or set down passengers at many London bus stops but avoid doing so if possible.

**Red Routes** See below

*What if I have to wait?*

Similarly, you are not allowed to wait (for instance if you are early for a booking or the passenger is late) on yellow or red lines. You are contravening the traffic order and you may receive a PCN. Highway authorities will not accept the case where a passenger asks a driver to stop and wait while they visit a shop or use an ATM. This is generally seen as little different from a private motorist parking while they do the same. While LTPH recognises the difficult position you may find yourself in, for instance if the passenger has not enough money to pay the fare, we are unable to assist if you receive a PCN in these circumstances.

TfL allows taxis to stop and wait for passengers using ATMs on red routes during Tariff 3 (22:00 to 06:00). This does not allow waiting at ATMs on other roads, or stopping where you might cause a hazard or an obstruction.

*What do I do if a passenger wants me to stop somewhere I cannot?*

Drivers should be familiar with the area that they work in and may be able to advise passengers of places where they can stop and wait if necessary. This involves explaining politely that you cannot stop in certain places and suggesting alternative shops, ATMs, etc. as appropriate. If the passenger needs to visit a particular building and you cannot wait outside, try and find ways of giving each other mutual assurance so that you know you will not lose your fare but the passenger is confident that you will return for them.

### **Red Routes - The TfL Road Network**

These are the main trunk roads in London and are marked with red no-stopping lines by the kerb and with signs. Most vehicles are prohibited from stopping on Red Routes during the time that the Red Route controls are in operation. If there are double red lines, the controls apply around the clock. A single red line means that the restrictions apply part of the time. Typically Red Route restrictions operate from 07:00 to 19:00 each day.

Licensed London taxis and private hire vehicles, along with buses and vehicles used by Blue Badge holders (disabled drivers and passengers), have exemptions from this prohibition allowing them to stop to pick up or set down passengers. No other vehicle can set down or pick up on a red line or Red Route Clearway during the hours of operation of the restrictions, and taxis are not allowed to wait or park.

There are some stretches of road with particularly busy bus stops or other problems where the exemptions for taxis do not apply. You cannot stop in these places:

- Wilton Road alongside Victoria Station;
- Euston Road eastbound in front of Kings Cross Station;
- Bishopsgate northbound between the junctions with Liverpool Street and Middlesex Street.

These stretches are marked with a broad red line by the kerb, in place of the normal single or double red lines.

Some stretches of Red Routes are marked for parking. Parking bays can be identified by a 'P' symbol on the accompanying signs. The signs will also inform you when parking is allowed, how long vehicles can be parked and on how soon a vehicle can stop again in the same stretch of road. It is important to pay attention to the signs and particularly the time limits and restrictions shown on them. Taxis pick up or set down passengers and can park or wait in a parking bay as long as they obey these limits.

In some locations there are special bays marked for pick up or set down. These have a maximum time limit of two minutes and are only for picking up or setting down passengers.

Some taxi ranks are marked on Red Routes. As with other ranks, these are for taxis plying for hire: taxis should not be left unattended and no other vehicles should wait in these ranks.

### **Bus Lanes**

There are over 800 bus lanes in London and licensed taxis can use most of them. However, there are a few exceptions and you should read the signs so that you know which ones you can use and when they are in force.

You can only use bus lanes when plying for hire or carrying a passenger. You are also allowed to pick up and set down in a bus lane (see above), but you cannot use them when you are not working.

### **Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)**

PCNs can be issued by parking attendants, traffic wardens and Transport Police Community Support Officers (TPCSOs) or can be sent to the registered keeper of the vehicle as a result of camera observation. You may get a PCN even if you do not see an attendant, and the PCN does not have to be attached to your vehicle to be valid.

Typically, there is a discount for prompt payment of a Penalty Charge, and the timescale for this discount is extended if you contest the PCN within the time period. If you are not the registered keeper of the vehicle you use, you might want to discuss arrangements for making sure the keeper passes on any PCNs promptly so that you have time to contest any PCNs that have been issued in error.

*What do I do if I get a PCN which I believe is unjustified?*

All traffic authorities acknowledge that mistakes can sometimes be made, and have mechanisms to allow Notices to be challenged. Some authorities publish information on their web sites describing the stages and processes to appeal against a Notice, and details are always provided with the PCN.

The details of how to make a challenge will be provided on the Notice, and you should follow the procedure outlined. It will help if you can provide any evidence you have to support your case, such as details of the passenger, a copy of any log that shows the journey in question, or photographs of the location if you believe the signage is incorrect. If you are a member of one of the trade associations or unions, they may be able to advise you on how to express your challenge.

If the authority does not accept your challenge, they will advise you of your right to appeal to the independent Parking and Traffic Appeals Service. You will not have to pay to appeal, and you can go to the hearing if you want to. Again, providing copies of all appropriate evidence will help your case. The adjudicator's decision is final and binding on both the driver and the authority, and the adjudicator can award costs if either party acted unreasonably.

### **Congestion Charging**

All London licensed taxis are exempt from the Congestion Charge. Once your vehicle is licensed its registration number is entered onto the Congestion Charge exemption register. If you receive a PCN that you think has been issued in error, in the first instance you should follow the instruction on the PCN. Only once you have secured your right of appeal should you contact LTPH.

## **Administrative requirements and responsibilities**

### **On-line customer accounts**

In late 2013, TfL will introduce on-line customer accounts for licensed taxi drivers and taxi owners. Your new customer account will open up a host of on-line functions to you, such as renewing your licence and changing your address. You will be able to log in and ensure that all your details are correct and update any information, where applicable. Should you have any issues with your customer account which you cannot resolve, you can contact us on 0845 602 7000.

### **Renewal of your licence**

Your taxi driver's licence is valid for three years. Approximately 16 weeks before your licence is due to expire LTPH will send you a re-licensing application pack. This will contain all the forms and information you need to be licensed for a further three years. It will also show in your customer account that your renewal is due.

It is imperative that you submit your application in good time so that it can be processed before your existing licence expires.

Through your customer account you will be able to complete your renewal application on-line, which, when compared to submitting a renewal by post, will be:

- Quicker - The form takes less time to fill in and there are no postal delays
- Easier - You are provided with on-screen help that takes you through the process step by step
- Convenient - You can track its progress through the application process.
- Safe and secure - Your account is only accessible via your personalised account details

You will receive instant confirmation that your application has been received. All you will need is to ensure that you have all the information needed to support your renewal application available at the time of completing your application.

Remember that the onus is on you to submit your application, so if you do not receive the re-licensing pack within 28 days prior to the expiry of your licence you should contact LTPH as a matter of urgency.

If you do not submit a re-licensing application before your existing licence expires you may have to wait before you are re-licensed. This means you will not legally be able to work and your insurance is likely to be invalidated. You are therefore recommended to submit your renewal application at least 6 weeks before your licence expires.

## **Medical conditions**

Licensed taxi drivers are required to undergo a medical examination at the ages of 50, 56, 62, 65 and annually thereafter. You will be reminded when a medical examination is due and sent the necessary form. Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure that the appropriate form is submitted to LTPH and failure to do so could jeopardise your licence.

If between medical examinations you develop a medical condition that may affect your ability to meet the DVLA Group 2 medical standards, you should notify LTPH immediately by completing form TPH/210. This is available via your on-line customer account or on request from LTPH.

It is difficult to cover all possibilities but this will include:

- heart conditions
- diabetes
- epilepsy
- psychiatric illness
- eyesight
- high blood pressure
- neurological conditions (including strokes)
- prescription of medication that may affect your ability to drive
- any condition which requires to be reported to the DVLA.

You will then be advised what to do next. A medical condition will not necessarily stop you continuing as a licensed driver.

The DVLA Group 2 medical standards can be found on the DVLA website (see page 31 for details).

## **Lost badge, licence or identifiers**

If your taxi driver's badge, licence or identifiers are lost or stolen, or damaged to the extent that they are no longer usable, you must report it to LTPH immediately (without one of these items you may not legally ply for hire). If they are lost in the street or stolen you should also report it to the police.

LTPH will issue you with appropriate replacements but if the item is subsequently found you must hand it in to LTPH. Do not forget that your badge and licence are the property of TfL.

A form (MHC/213) for reporting the loss of your badge, licence or identifiers is available through your customer account or on request from LTPH. Replacements will then be sent to you by Recorded Delivery.

Replacement identifiers will be issued automatically if you are issued with a replacement badge.

### **Change of address**

If you change your home address you must notify LTPH within 7 days.

A form can be obtained through your customer account. Complete the form and send it to LTPH with your taxi driver's licence (both the original and copy). If you do not have access to your customer account, send your licences in with a covering letter. Alternatively, provided you are able to confirm your identity a change of address can be carried out over the phone by calling 0845 602 700.

Both copies of your licence will be reissued and sent to you as quickly as possible.

If you move close to the renewal date of your licence, please be aware that your renewal pack may be sent to your old address.

If you own a licensed taxi you must complete the reverse of the taxi licence and return it to LTPH to enable a replacement licence to be issued.

It is also a legal requirement to notify DVLA of any change of address and have a new driving licence issued with your new address. Details of how to do this are on the back of your driving licence.

### **Convictions and cautions**

If you are charged, convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence you must notify LTPH immediately. This includes fixed penalty notices for road traffic offences that result in penalty points on your driving licence.

A form (MHC/213) can be obtained through your customer account or on request from LTPH. Complete the form and return it to LTPH. Alternatively, write a letter providing details of the offence, the date it occurred, the court or police station that you attended and any other details that you may wish to add.

Failure to tell LTPH of a conviction or caution could jeopardise your licence.

### **Other fixed penalties, parking contraventions, and PCNs**

You do not need to notify LTPH of other fixed penalty notices and parking tickets that do not result in penalty points on your driving licence.

## **Finance**

As a self employed person you will need to make a tax return at the end of every financial year. Most taxi drivers require the assistance of an accountant. Many accountants who specialise in dealing with taxi drivers' accounts advertise in the trade papers and some will offer a free first consultation. Alternatively, if you join one of the trade organisations, they may be able to recommend firms of accountants.

You should keep all the receipts for expenditure that relates to your work (the first being the receipt for your new licence) and attach them to the weekly record book your accountant will provide.



## **Owning and renting taxis**

### **Owning your own taxi**

Buying your own taxi is a big investment and commitment, therefore LTPH advises newly licensed drivers to wait a minimum of 6 months before purchasing a taxi and to rent a taxi instead. After this period of time you will know how many hours a week you need to work to cover your costs and make what you consider is a reasonable income.

### **Licensing your taxi**

When your taxi has been licensed you will be issued with a paper licence and plates for fixing to the vehicle. The following paragraphs summarise some of your responsibilities and give practical advice but more information can be found on the taxi licensing pages of the TfL website.

Taxis licences last for one year and each year the vehicle has to undergo a licensing inspection. These inspections are carried out by NSL Ltd on behalf of LTPH at six inspection centres around London.

### **Special inspections**

During the period of the licence your taxi may be required to undergo a special inspection. A special inspection could be required for a number of reasons either at your request or at the request of LTPH. The reasons for these inspections can be:

- traffic accident
- compliance (on-street stop note)
- passenger complaint; and
- replacement licence and/or plate because of:
  - accident damage
  - change of vehicle registration number
  - Epsom & Ewell dual licence
  - lost/stolen plates

Should any of the inspection types listed above be required, you should contact the NSL call centre and specify the type of inspection required.

### **Expired licence/plates**

If you are the licensee, it is your responsibility to ensure that expired licence/plates are returned to either LTPH or any of the NSL inspection centres no later than three days after the expiry date of the licence/plates.

## **Lost/stolen licence or plate**

If in the event that the taxi licence or plates are stolen, you must immediately:

- report the incident to the police;
- obtain a crime reference number; and
- report the incident to LTPH for further advice.

## **Change of ownership**

If, during the currency of a licence, you buy or sell a licensed taxi, within 14 days from the date of transfer you must complete the reverse side of the taxi licence.

If you are the new owner and you want the licence to be transferred to your name, you must also complete sections A, B and C of the licence before it is returned to LTPH. LTPH will then re-issue a replacement licence in your name.

## **Taximeters**

It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that the taximeter and associated operating devices (including the printer) are not removed without the authority of LTPH. The taximeter and associated components must remain sealed during the life of the taxi licence. In the event of a fault occurring that causes a seal to be broken or removed, a new seal must be replaced by a LTPH approved taximeter installer within 24 hours of the fault occurring, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

## **Allowing another driver to use your taxi**

A licensed taxi can only be used as a licensed taxi by a licensed London taxi driver. If you allow another licensed driver to ply for hire in your taxi you must retain the driver's original taxi driver's licence. You must be able to produce the licence for inspection when requested by an authorised officer.

## **Replacement of licence plate**

In the event that the taxi licence plates get damaged, you must contact the NSL call centre for an appointment as soon as possible to enable the issue of a replacement licence plate.

## **Change of vehicle registration number**

If you change the vehicle registration number of your taxi, as soon as the new number has been assigned you must contact the NSL call centre on 0845 378 2345 to make an appointment to take your taxi to one of the inspection centres. When you take your taxi to the appointment you will also need to take with you the following documents:

- the completed declaration on the reverse of the existing licence;
- appropriate evidence from DVLA that confirms the transfer has been effected;

- an insurance certificate bearing the new registration number;
- a new tax disc affixed to the taxi bearing the new registration number;
- the registration plate bearing the new number affixed to the taxi;
- a taximeter installation certificate amended to show the new number; and
- wheelchair ramps stamped with the new registration number (where applicable).

You will then be issued with a replacement licence and plates.

### **Advertisements**

Approval from TfL for any advertisement or sign displayed in or on a taxi is not needed unless the advertisement involves an electronic system or features any language other than English. If you would like to use your taxi to advertise a product or service, make sure you read the advertising guidelines on the taxi licensing pages of the TfL website.

### **Renewal of the licence**

NSL will send you a reminder approximately 10 weeks prior to the expiry of the existing licence. Depending on your preferred method of communication, this will either be by letter or through your customer account.

If your vehicle has already been registered with NSL, you can book your annual inspection online at [www.confirm.uk.com](http://www.confirm.uk.com). You will need to have your registration and credit card details to hand as it will be required to secure your appointment. Upon successful login you will be able to Confirm/Cancel/Rearrange your annual licensing and re-test inspections. Annual licensing appointments will only be confirmed with a successful payment.

If your vehicle has not previously been registered with NSL you should contact the booking line number on 0845 378 2345

In those cases where the vehicle is presented within 30 days of the expiry of the current licence and passes the inspection first time, the replacement licence will start from the date of expiry of the old licence.

NB: If you fail to keep an inspection appointment, the taxi will be removed from the Congestion Charge register when the licence expires and you will be responsible for the daily charge thereafter.

### **Accident damage**

You must notify LTPH of any accident damage that materially affects the safety, comfort or appearance of your taxi. The vehicle may need to be re-examined before it

can be allowed to continue to be used for public hire. If you require further advice you should contact LTPH.

### **Renting a taxi**

It is important that you meet the terms of your hire contract with the owner of your vehicle. If you default on the rental payments it is likely that the owner of the taxi will pursue the debt through the civil courts.

If you fail to return the vehicle to the owner for maintenance this gives cause for concern in respect of the safety of the travelling public. Such action could result in your fitness to be licensed being reviewed.

## Complaints System

In order to ensure that taxi passengers are offered a consistently high quality of service, it is essential that TfL has a facility to investigate incidents where it is alleged that this aim is not met. To achieve this, TfL has a team dedicated to dealing with customer complaints.

If a member of the public makes a complaint about the service you have provided, LTPH will provide you with details of the complaint and invite your comments. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint this could be either in writing or by inviting you to attend a fact finding interview with an employee of LTPH. Once you have had the opportunity to respond to the complaint and we have made any other necessary enquiries we will advise you of the result of the investigation.

As TfL can take complaints against a driver into consideration in determining a driver's continued fitness to hold a licence, LTPH will keep a record of any complaints made about you. Attracting minor, occasional complaints should not be any cause for concern but should you attract a number of complaints or a pattern of poor behaviour is evident, and all other opportunities for improving your behaviour have been exhausted, TfL may consider suspending or revoking your licence.

## Useful Contacts

### London Taxi and Private Hire

Palestra  
197 Blackfriars Road  
London  
SE1 8NJ  
0845 602 7000  
tfl.gov.uk/tph

### TfL Lost Property Office

200 Baker Street  
London  
NW1 5RZ  
0845 330 9882  
tfl.gov.uk

### TfL Congestion Charge Unit

PO Box 4782  
Worthing  
BN11 9PS  
0845 900 1234  
(Representations against PCNs cannot  
be made by phone)  
www.cclondon.com

### NSL Ltd

Call Centre:  
0845 378 2345

On line bookings:  
tph.tfl.gov.uk

Inspection Centres:

#### Canning Town

1 North Crescent  
Canning Town  
London  
E16 4TL

#### Coulsden

Unit B5 Redlands  
Ulswater Crescent  
Coulsdon  
CR5 2HT

#### Crayford

Unit Q1, Acorn Industrial Park  
Crayford  
Kent  
DA1 4AL

#### Enfield

Unit 2, Watermill Business Centre  
Edison Road  
Enfield  
Middlesex  
EN3 7XF

#### Heston

20A Airlinks Industrial Estate  
Spitfire Way  
Heston  
Hounslow  
Middlesex  
TW5 9NR

#### Staples Corner

Unit 2, Aquarius Business Park  
Priestley Way  
London  
NW2 7AN

**Department for Transport**

[www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

**Disclosure and Barring Service**

PO Box 110

Liverpool

L69 3EF

0870 90 90 811

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs)

**DVLA**

Drivers Customer Services (DCS)

Correspondence Team

DVLA

Swansea

SA6 7JL

03007906801

[www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk)

**Equality and Human Rights  
Commission**

3 More London Riverside

Tooley Street

London

SE1 2RG

0845 604 6610

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

**HM Revenue and Customs**

[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

**Police**

Emergencies only – 999

Non emergencies – 101

**Metropolitan Police Service**

[www.met.police.uk](http://www.met.police.uk)

**City of London Police**

[www.cityoflondon.police.uk](http://www.cityoflondon.police.uk)

**British Transport Police**

[www.btp.police.uk](http://www.btp.police.uk)

**Crimestoppers**

0800 555 111

**Anti-terrorist hotline**

0800 789 321

