



Steady Start
— DRIVER TRAINING —

FREE CAREER GUIDE

The Steady Start Guide to Becoming a Driving Instructor

A simple guide to ADI Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, trainee licences, costs, timescales and whether the career is right for you.



Learn. **Qualify**. Earn. **Grow** with Steady Start.



For people considering a new career as a professional driving instructor in Great Britain.



Information checked 4 June 2026.
Always confirm official rules and fees on GOV.UK.

START HERE

Is this career right for you?

Becoming a driving instructor can be a brilliant career move, but it is not just about being a good driver. It is about helping people learn safely, communicating clearly, managing risk and building trust with pupils who may be nervous, inexperienced or under pressure. This guide gives you a simple overview of the ADI route, the three qualifying tests, the trainee licence option, costs, likely timescales and the personal qualities that matter.



This career may suit you if...

You are calm, patient, reliable, organised and able to explain things in more than one way. You enjoy helping people, can stay professional under pressure and are willing to keep learning.



Think carefully if...

You dislike feedback, struggle with patience, want guaranteed quick money, or do not want the responsibility of self-employment, pupil safety, admin and ongoing professional standards.

What the role really involves

- Planning and delivering safe, client-centred lessons.
- Spotting and managing risk before it becomes dangerous.
- Coaching pupils to make better decisions, not simply telling them what to do.
- Managing your diary, payments, car, insurance, fuel, marketing and customer service.
- Keeping your skills up to date after you qualify.



Steady Start view

The best instructors are not just confident drivers. They are calm teachers who can help pupils understand, reflect and improve safely.



THE ROUTE

The ADI pathway in simple terms

In Great Britain, the standard route is: check eligibility, apply to start the ADI process, get a trainer, pass ADI Part 1, pass ADI Part 2, optionally get practice teaching through a trainee licence, pass ADI Part 3, then register and start working as an ADI.

- **1**
Check suitability and eligibility
Consider whether the role fits you and check the official eligibility requirements.
- **2**
Apply and get DBS
Start your ADI application and complete the required DBS process.
- **3**
Part 1
Theory and hazard perception.
- **4**
Part 2
Driving ability at a professional standard.
- **5**
Practice teaching
Optional trainee licence route after Part 2 if eligible and properly trained.
- **6**
Part 3
Instructional ability with a real pupil in a client-centred lesson.
- **7**
Register
Apply for your first ADI badge within 12 months of passing Part 3.



Important deadline

Once you pass ADI Part 1, you must pass the remaining parts within **2 years** or you have to start the whole process again.

This is why planning, consistent training and test readiness matter.



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TEST 1

ADI Part 1: theory and hazard perception

Part 1 is the theory stage. It is taken as one test with two parts: multiple-choice questions and hazard perception. You must pass both parts.

What you need to prepare

- Road procedure, traffic signs and The Highway Code.
- Driving test and instructional knowledge.
- Vehicle control, safety, law and professional responsibilities.
- Hazard perception and early risk recognition.

Area	Current requirement
Multiple choice	At least 85 out of 100 overall, and at least 20 out of 25 in each of the 4 question categories.
Hazard perception	At least 57 out of 75.
Fee	DVSA fee currently £81.



Steady Start tip

Do not treat Part 1 as a learner theory test. You are preparing to become the professional in the car, so your knowledge needs to be deeper, sharper and more consistent.



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TEST 2

ADI Part 2: driving ability

Part 2 is the driving ability test. It is not about driving like a confident learner; it is about driving to a high, professional standard while showing safe judgement, strong observation and excellent control. The test looks at your ability to drive safely in different road and traffic conditions and to show your knowledge of The Highway Code through the way you drive.

Common areas that need polishing

- Mirror use, timing and effective observation.
- Positioning on complex roads, roundabouts and junctions.
- Planning, anticipation and speed choice.
- Smoothness, eco-safe driving and control under pressure.
- Manoeuvres, emergency stop and independent driving.

Area	What to know
Fault limit	You pass if you make no more than 6 driving faults and no serious or dangerous faults.
Attempts	If you fail Part 2 three times, you must retake Part 1, and you have to wait 2 years from when you first passed Part 1 before retaking it.
Fee	DVSA fee currently £111.



Steady Start tip

A Part 2 candidate should be able to self-assess. If you cannot explain why your drive was safe, legal, smooth and well-planned, you probably need more development before test.



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TEST 3

ADI Part 3:

instructional ability

Part 3 is where many trainees find the biggest jump. You are no longer proving that you can drive. You are proving that you can teach a real pupil safely, effectively and in a client-centred way. A DVSA examiner watches you give a client-centred driving lesson to one of your pupils for about 45 minutes. The pupil must drive for about 40 minutes of the lesson.

The 3 main competency areas



Lesson planning

Choosing a realistic goal, matching the lesson to the pupil, adapting when needed and keeping the lesson purposeful.



Risk management

Keeping the lesson safe through correct level of instruction, timely help, awareness, control and responsibility sharing.



Teaching and learning strategies

Using questions, feedback, prompts, explanations, reflection and coaching techniques to help the pupil understand and improve — not just follow instructions.

Area	What to know
Marking	The test uses 17 competencies, each scored 0 to 3, grouped under lesson planning, risk management and teaching and learning strategies.
Fee	DVSA fee currently £111.
After passing	You must apply for your first ADI badge within 12 months of passing Part 3.



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OPTIONAL ROUTE

Trainee licence: should you use it?

After passing Part 2, eligible candidates can apply for a trainee driving instructor licence. This can help you gain experience instructing pupils while preparing for Part 3. It lasts for 6 months.

Who can apply?

- ✓ You have passed ADI Part 1 within the last 2 years.
- ✓ You have passed ADI Part 2.
- ✓ You have completed at least 40 hours of training in giving driving instruction with a qualified ADI.
- ✓ At least 10 of those 40 hours were done in a car.
- ✓ The training is recorded on the ADI 21T declaration form and is within the required timeframe.
- ✓ You are eligible to take ADI Part 3.



Benefits

You can gain real pupil experience, build confidence, develop lesson management skills and prepare for Part 3 in realistic conditions.



Risks

You are representing a school before fully qualifying. Poor standards, weak supervision or rushing onto a licence can damage pupils, results and reputation.



Steady Start policy suggestion

Trainee licence sponsorship should only be offered to suitable candidates who have reached a safe standard, completed the required training and agree to Steady Start quality standards, supervision, lesson records and franchise conditions.



Costs and timescales

The official DVSA fees are only one part of the total cost. Training fees vary because every candidate starts from a different level and providers set their own prices. There is also no single timescale that fits everyone.

Item	Current official fee / note
ADI Part 1 test	£81
ADI Part 2 test	£111
ADI Part 3 test	£111
Total official test fees	£303, not including retakes.
Trainee instructor licence	£140 if you use the trainee licence route.
First ADI certificate / badge	£300 after passing all 3 qualifying tests.
Renewal / re-registration	£300 every 4 years.
Training fees	Set by training providers and depend on hours, stage, support level and whether you need Part 1, Part 2, Part 3 or full pathway training.

£ Other costs to consider

- DBS/application requirements.
- Study resources and professional development materials.
- Vehicle costs, fuel, servicing, tyres and insurance.
- Marketing, diary systems, card payment costs and business admin.
- Franchise fees if you choose to work under a school brand.



What usually affects the timescale



Application and DBS

Processing times vary. DBS checks can take several weeks and demand affects waiting times.

1

Part 1

Availability at test centres changes and study time depends on your starting knowledge.

2

Part 2

Your ability to plan lessons, get practice and find test availability will affect how quickly you're ready.

3

Part 3

Building confidence, experience and consistent teaching practice supports steady progress.



Trainee licence

Apply once eligible. Processing times vary and may affect when you can start charging.



Two deadlines to remember



After Part 1, you have **2 years** to pass Parts 2 and 3.



After Part 3, you must apply for your first ADI badge within **12 months**.



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Support and self-check

A good training pathway should be structured but personal. Some candidates need more help with theory. Others need to rebuild driving habits. Many need the biggest support with Part 3 teaching ability.



1 Suggested Steady Start pathway

1. Free guide and initial enquiry.
2. Career chat to understand your goals, stage and suitability.
3. Starter assessment to identify your best training route.
4. Part 1 support: study plan, check-ins and test preparation.
5. Part 2 driver development: professional driving, mock tests and action plans.
6. Part 3 instructor training: lesson planning, risk management, teaching skills, feedback and reflective development.
7. Optional trainee licence/franchise pathway for suitable candidates.
8. Ongoing development after qualification.



What you should expect from your trainer

Honest feedback, clear targets, realistic mock assessments, professional standards and support that helps you understand why things matter.



What your trainer should expect from you

Preparation, punctuality, reflection, safe attitude, regular practice, professionalism and willingness to be coached.



2 Quick suitability checklist

- ☐ I can stay calm when someone makes a mistake.
- ☐ I am comfortable giving clear, honest feedback.
- ☐ I am willing to be assessed and coached myself.
- ☐ I can manage my diary and communicate professionally.
- ☐ I understand self-employment has costs, admin and responsibility.
- ☐ I am prepared to study and practise consistently.
- ☐ I want to teach safely, not just earn quickly.
- ☐ I can adapt my communication style to different pupils.
- ☐ I am reliable, punctual and organised.
- ☐ I would be proud to represent a professional driving school brand.



8–10 ticks:

this could be a strong route to explore.

5–7 ticks:

you may need more information and honest reflection.

Under 5 ticks:

the role may not fit what you want right now.



GET STARTED

Your next step

If you are seriously considering becoming a driving instructor, the best next step is not to buy the biggest course straight away. Start by understanding the route, checking suitability and getting a realistic plan.



Recommended next step

Message Steady Start and ask for an instructor career chat. We will look at where you are now, what stage you would need to start from, the likely route and whether the Steady Start training/franchise pathway is suitable.

Questions to ask before choosing any training provider

- How will you assess my starting point?
- How is the training structured for Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3?
- How will you prepare me for the 17 Part 3 competencies?
- Will I receive written feedback and action plans?
- What are the full costs, including retakes and trainee licence support?
- What standards must I meet before being sponsored on a trainee licence?
- What support is available after qualification?



Ready to explore the route? Visit www.steadystart.co.uk or message Steady Start with the word **INSTRUCTOR**.

Sources and accuracy note

This guide is for general information only and is not legal advice. It is written for Great Britain; Northern Ireland has a different process. Official rules, forms, fees and test availability can change, so candidates should always check GOV.UK before applying or booking tests.

- ✓ GOV.UK — Apply to become a driving instructor / Become a car driving instructor: step by step.
- ✓ GOV.UK — Approved driving instructor (ADI) fees.
- ✓ GOV.UK — ADI Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 test guidance.
- ✓ GOV.UK — Get a trainee driving instructor licence and ADI 21T training declaration.
- ✓ GOV.UK — Approved driving instructor (ADI) register guide.

