

Private Hire Vehicle Drivers

English Language Requirement - Guidance

Why has TfL introduced an English language requirement?

As a private hire vehicle (PHV) driver in London it is important that you can communicate in English with your passengers. For example, you may need to discuss a fare or route with your passengers. There may also be occasions when you need to communicate with your passengers on a safety issue like the use of a seat belt or talk with them in an emergency situation.

It is also important that you can read and understand information provided to you by Transport for London (TfL), such as the conditions of your PHV driver's licence or any notices given to you by our on-street Compliance Officers. You may also need to write to us, for example to let us know about changes in your health or any criminal convictions or perhaps communicate in writing with a passenger who has a hearing impairment.

We have introduced a requirement for every PHV driver to ensure that they have adequate English language skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening as we consider all of these skills are essential for you to carry out your role as a PHV driver in London.

What is the level of English I need to be able to communicate at?

The level of English that you need to have is the equivalent of the standard reached in the early years of secondary school. It means you can understand and deal with most situations likely to occur in the course of your job as a driver. To help you understand what the required level is, attached to this guidance are some examples of the types of questions that you would need to answer if you do need to take a test.

Do I need to take a test?

Not necessarily. You can either take and pass an English language test with one of TfL's approved language test providers; or you can provide us with information about your qualifications that satisfies us that you meet the standard without having to pass the test. More information about the sorts of information that you can provide is set out below.

If you do need to take the test, there is no limit on how many times you can take it, if you don't pass the first time.

When do I need to show I can meet the standard?

You will only have to provide this information, or pass a test, once – either when you apply for your first licence or when you next renew your licence. In both cases, you will have until 16 July 2018 to show that you meet the standard either by taking the test or by providing us with information about your qualifications that satisfies us that you meet the standard.

What is TfL’s secure English language test?

Details of the test providers can be found on the [English language requirement page](#) of our website. The cost of the test ranges from £180 to £200. Our website also lets you know where you can find information about where to find a test centre, how to book the test, and there are links though to some sample questions on test provider websites.

You should consider whether you require any form of training to improve your language skills before taking the test. Preparation could include self-study materials, attending preparation classes and taking mock tests covering all four skill areas: listening, reading, writing and speaking. Please look at the test provider websites where you can find sample questions and answers and some self-study activities.

Here are some examples of tasks you may have to undertake as part of the test:

Reading and writing

- Answer questions on information contained in short pieces of text
- Read a list of statements and decide whether they are true or false
- Read sentences or text that contain gaps and fill in the gaps
- Write a short letter or story (about 100-150 words) on a given topic

Speaking and listening

- Answer questions about familiar topics such as your home, work or interests
- Prepare a topic to talk to the examiner about and then answer questions on the topic
- Listen to an audio recording of someone talking or a conversation and then answer questions on what you have heard
- Start a conversation with the examiner on a given topic

I went to school, college or university in the UK - do I need to take a test?

If you completed your secondary school education in the UK or have any UK secondary school level qualification which has been taught and examined in English, your level of English will be sufficient.

You can prove this by providing us with certificates of your qualifications.

Qualifications that we will accept include:

- UK GCSE grades A* to G
- UK O level grades A to E
- UK CSE grades 1 to 5
- UK AS level/A level
- UK NVQ/BTEC/City and Guilds qualification level 1 or above
- UK HNC/HND
- UK degree or higher (e.g. master's, PhD)

You will need to provide your original certificate(s). We appreciate that if you left school or college a long time ago, you may not be able to find your certificate(s). If you have lost your certificate(s), you can request a replacement or a certified statement of results from the exam board (also known as the awarding organisation). You may need to prove your identity and pay a fee.

If you know the awarding organisation, contact them directly. There are four awarding organisations accredited to offer GCSEs in England and Wales – AQA, OCR, WJEC and Edexcel. You can find [contact details](#) online. There are similar arrangements in place for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There is also information online that tells you who to contact [if your old exam board no longer exists](#).

Check with your school or college if you're not sure which exam board holds your results. Alternatively you could contact an old school friend to ask if they still have their original certificates, which will show the name of the exam board.

If you are unable to contact your old school or college, for example because it has closed, you should contact the local education authority who should be able to help you find the exam board you need to approach to get replacement certificates.

What about if I didn't get any qualifications from a school or college in the UK?

There are some other ways you can demonstrate that you meet the standard without needing to take the test.

Secure English Language Test for immigration/visa purposes

Secure English Language Tests (SELT) are required by the Home Office for many people wishing to settle in the UK. We will accept a SELT certificate in reading, writing, speaking and listening as proof that your level of English is sufficient.

A non-UK qualification which was taught and examined in English

If you were educated in English outside the UK to the equivalent of GCSE level or above, you should provide TfL with your original certificate. For example, if you went to school overseas and sat International GCSEs, this would prove that you have the required level of English. Similarly, if you went to university outside the UK but your degree was taught or researched in English you will have the required level of English.

You will need to provide satisfactory evidence that the qualification was taught and examined in English. A letter from the teaching/examining institution is sufficient for these purposes but any evidence must be translated into English if necessary.

A qualification in English as a second language or as a foreign language

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualifications are designed to assess the English language skills of those who don't have English as a first language.

Different ESOL qualifications can assess different skill areas (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) within the English language. If you have a certificate for a ESOL or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) qualification that proves proficiency in all four skill areas, your level of English may be sufficient. You will be need to provide your original qualification certificate.

You should note though that TfL doesn't approve English language course providers and you'll need to obtain a recognised qualification from a recognised institution to prove that they meet the requirement.

We won't automatically accept all ESOL and EFL qualifications but some examples of certificates that we will consider as proof that you can meet the English language requirements are:

- ESOL Skills for Life (Entry Level 3, Level 1, Level 2)
- Functional Skills qualifications in English (Entry Level 3, Level 1, Level 2)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS): Cambridge English Language Assessment
- Cambridge English: First (FCE)
- Trinity College: Integrated Skills in English (ISE 1)

We will keep this guidance under review and it may be updated from time to time.

Updated: 24 July 2017