

Spoken English Assessment Test Procedure

1. It is a requirement that ALL new applicants for both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver licenses can demonstrate an adequate and reasonable level of spoken English.
2. The purposes of this requirement are:
 - Ensure that members of the public are safeguarded by ensuring licensed drivers can competently communicate and give and understand most instructions.
 - Ensure that applicants are safeguarded by ensuring licensed drivers can competently communicate and give and understand most instructions.
 - Ensure impartiality and fairness in determining applications.
 - Accommodate all eligible applications.
3. The criteria for all new applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver licences are:
 - (a) Applicants for whom English is not their first language may be asked to provide evidence of having gained a qualification that was taught and assessed in English.
 - (b) Applicants who have some difficulty understanding spoken advice on the telephone or face to face and who have similar issues expressing themselves in English will be asked to provide a certificate showing the successful completion of a course of study or qualification in any subject or skill that was taught and assessed in English. (Examples are but not limited to, GCSE's, 'O Levels' GCE, NVQ, BTEC, RFQ, City and Guilds or similar, Degree, HND, HNC etc or a qualification equivalent to any previously listed issued by a recognised examining body in an English speaking country other than the UK). The weight given to the subject and grade achieved will be assessed on a case by case basis.
 - (c) Applicants who cannot demonstrate an adequate or reasonable level of spoken English and/or a suitable qualification will be required to undertake an independent assessment of their spoken English.
 - (d) Applicants who are clearly fluent English speakers will require no further assessment and may proceed with their application in full.

TAKING THE TEST

4. The spoken English assessment test is a pre-application requirement undertaken at the applicant's own expense at a cost of £40 (payable before the test is taken) and must be successfully completed before proceeding with the full application procedure.
5. Tests will be undertaken at the Taxi Offices, Building 4a, Derriford Business Park.
6. If the applicant has a mobile telephone it must be switched off to avoid any interruptions.
7. Applicants will be informed that the tests are recorded by the test provider and any attempt to cheat, for example by using their mobile telephone to attempt to get a fluent English speaker to complete the test will be detected by the system and the applicant will be automatically failed and will not be permitted to undertake another test or proceed with their application.
8. Test dates will depend on demand and room booking availability.
9. On the day of the test, the applicant will be escorted to the designated room by a

Licensing officer. The Licensing Officer will dial the number to the test provider and pass the telephone to the applicant and leave the room.

10. The English test assessment consists of a 15 minute exercise, taken by telephone during which applicants will be tested on various aspects of their speaking and listening ability.

11. The assessment is provided by a specialist education and testing company and consists of:

- Repeating back sentences that are read to the applicant over the phone.
- Answering simple questions asked over the phone.
- Constructing sentences from fragments read to the applicant over the phone (sentences divided into 3 or 4 parts)
- Answering open questions asked over the phone (speaking for up to 30 seconds per question).

12. The test is entirely automated, and questions will be asked by a variety of voices.

13. All of the questions will relate to normal life and the applicant's day-to-day activities; there are no trick questions.

14. The applicant will also be graded separately on sentence usage, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation, all of which contribute to the overall score.

15. At the end of the test the Licensing Officer will contact the test provider via the website, access the applicant's result, a report will be produced (a copy of which will be provided to the applicant) with a score indicating their overall ability.

16. The test scoring will be set at CEFR Level B2 (CEFR= Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

17. For licensing purposes, the Council will require applicants to score at least **56** out of **80**. This indicates a good overall ability in use of the English language, where applicants will be able to speak fluently on a range of everyday topics and be able to give and understand most instructions.

18. When passed, the pass certificate will be downloaded direct from the test provider's website the same day and provided to the applicant.

19. Failure to pass the minimum CEFR level B2 (56 out of 80) will require a further test to be taken.

20. There is no right of appeal where the applicant has failed to attain the minimum pass level of 56.

21. Unsuccessful applicants should be given an information sheet with the contacts of local colleges and courses where they may undertake further study to improve their spoken English. All training will be done at the applicant's own expense.

22. No person may re-sit the test within 28 days of taking a previous test.

23. Returning applicants may demonstrate a reasonable standard of spoken English either through the production of a certificate demonstrating the successful completion of an accredited spoken English qualification at point 3 above, or by successfully completing the spoken English assessment test detailed above.

24. Applicants choosing to re-take the spoken English assessment test will have to pay the required fee.