

About a London Taxi Driver

F: The law on taxis is very interesting and I know in London it's different from other places and rules are quite strict, aren't they?

M: Any London cab driver does a thing called the Knowledge, which is an examination really, It's called the Knowledge and it's a basic test of 468 runs -- what they call runs — from a blue book.

F: And the idea is that anybody can get into a taxi, anywhere in London and give the driver a destination and he's got to know the way there.

M: That's the basis of the Knowledge, finding anywhere from point A to B in that six-mile radius in London.

F: Is it difficult to learn the Knowledge?

M: Average ... it took me nineteen months. Now it's taking guys three years because they want to become a taxi driver. I mean, you've got to have a medical, you're checked out by the police, you do the Knowledge, but after you've done the basic Knowledge there're still more exams to do. It can take anywhere now from two to three years. And then you do a driving test at the end.

F: I get the impression they're very strict about taxis. Quite apart from the Knowledge, there's the license. Do you have to have a license every year?

M: The license is renewed every three years, but for your cab, whether you rent it or you own it, has to have a yearly overhaul which is a very strict passing test and there are some real stringent tests it's got to pass.

F: Is it really worth it all?

M: Yeah, I think it's worth it, I enjoy being a taxi driver and, not only that, it does keep the standard very high, which is what we want in London.

F: Do you feel proud to be Londoner? Were you born in London?

M: No, I was actually born in Bristol but I came up to London when I was twelve. I'm forty-five now.

F: Do you think yourself as Bristolian or a Londoner?

M: A few people think I'm still a country boy because I've still got that accent in me. I haven't really got a typical London Cockney accent but I see myself as a Londoner definitely now because

I've been up here a lot longer.

F: What do you do in your spare time?

M: Well, I'm into body building, That takes up quite a good deal of my spare time basically.

F: How much time?

M: I might do a system of three days' training with a day off, followed by another three days' training and a day off.

F: Where do you go to train?

M: I train at Ultra Sport Gym. That's up in Norwood.

F: Forgive my ignorance, but are we talking about some of Mr Universe here, with you standing up in front of an audience and playing music and putting oil on your body and all that sort of thing? Is that the kind of body building you do?

M: Well, when you get seriously into the sports, you are literally building your body — all areas of your body — so on a Monday, for example, you might just train your chest with triceps and on the Tuesday you might, I don't know, your back and legs. You split your body up.

F: Is it just weights or do you have a lot of gadgets?

M: We've got machines up there, but it's not a high gloss, you know, sort of fitness centre that you see some other gyms have got. It's a lot free weights.

F: Do you have somebody supervising your training?

M: No, I train with two other regular partners.

Questions:

1. Any London cab driver does a test called the Knowledge. What kind of test is the Knowledge?
2. How long did it take the man being interviewed to learn the Knowledge?
3. You have to do several things before driving a taxi in London. Which of the following is NOT one of these things?
4. How often is the driving license renewed in London?
5. Which of the following statements is TRUE according to the interview?
6. Where was the man born?
7. What does the man spend a good deal of his spare time doing?
8. What can we learn about the man from the interview?

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