

Differences Between a Trainee Driving Instructor and a Fully Qualified Instructor

This page outlines the key distinctions between a **Trainee Driving Instructor (PDI)** and a **Fully Qualified Driving Instructor (ADI)** in the UK. It is designed to give learners, parents, and stakeholders a clear understanding of what each status means in practice.

Overview

Driving instructors in the UK progress through a structured qualification process overseen by the DVSA. Before becoming fully qualified, instructors operate as **Potential Driving Instructors (PDI)** on a trainee licence. Only about one-third of trainees successfully become fully qualified. Once they pass all required tests, they become **Approved Driving Instructors (ADI)**.## Overview

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Qualification Status

Status	Trainee Driving Instructor (PDI)	Fully Qualified Instructor (ADI)
DVSA Recognition	Holds a trainee licence (pink badge)	Holds a full DVSA qualification (green badge)
Training Stage	Has passed Parts 1 & 2; still completing Part 3	Has passed all three DVSA qualifying tests

Licence Duration	Valid for 6 months	Renewable every 4 years
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Training and Experience

Trainee Driving Instructor (PDI)

- Has completed significant training but is still developing teaching skills.
- Must be receiving ongoing supervision from a DVSA-registered trainer.
- May be gaining real-world experience to prepare for the Part 3 instructional ability test.

Fully Qualified Instructor (ADI)

- Has demonstrated full competence in instructional techniques.
 - Has completed all DVSA assessments, including instructional ability.
 - Expected to maintain and update skills through periodic standards checks.
-

Teaching Standards and Oversight

Area	PDI	ADI
Standards Check	Not required until fully qualified	Required periodically by DVSA
Supervision	Must be supervised or follow a structured training programme	Works independently
Teaching Quality Assurance	Monitored through trainer oversight	Monitored through DVSA standards checks

Badges and Identification

- **PDI:** Displays a **pink triangular badge** in the windscreen.
- **ADI:** Displays a **green octagonal badge**.

These badges help learners understand the instructor's qualification level.

Teaching Capability

What PDIs Can Do

- Deliver paid driving lessons legally under a trainee licence.
- Provide structured instruction while continuing their own development.
- Offer high-quality lessons, often with close support from their trainer.

What ADIs Can Do

- Teach independently without supervision.
- Provide advanced tuition, refresher lessons, motorway lessons, and more.
- Offer a fully qualified level of expertise backed by DVSA assessment.

Professional Expectations

Expectation	PDI	ADI
Professional Conduct	Must follow DVSA code of practice	Must follow DVSA code of practice
CPD (Continuing Professional Development)	Encouraged	Strongly expected
Public Perception	Seen as developing professionals	Seen as fully established instructors

Summary

A **PDI** is a developing instructor gaining practical experience while completing their qualification. A **fully qualified ADI** has demonstrated full competence and operates independently. Both can offer valuable instruction, but their level of qualification and oversight differs.

Key Takeaways

- PDIs are competent trainees working under supervision.
- ADIs are fully qualified professionals assessed by the DVSA.
- Both play an important role in helping learners become safe, confident drivers.

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