

EU *ADVANCED* PROJECT: CHECKLIST FOR POST-LICENCE TRAINERS

This checklist is designed for all post-licence driver trainers of Category B vehicles. A number of issues are also relevant to post-licence motorcycle trainers. The document is particularly focussed on track and classroom training, although on-road training also features. Please send your comments and views to cieca@cbr.nl.

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1. Why do we need a checklist?

Over the last 5-10 years, the number of people taking post-licence driver training has steadily increased. For the most part, these trainees are employees sent by their company (referred to as “fleet” driver training). Some individuals choose to take part in training on a purely voluntary basis. In some countries in Europe, novice drivers are obliged or (at least encouraged) to follow so-called 2nd phase post-licence driver training, a few months after passing their driving test. Many EU Member States are now considering the merits of such a system.

Skilled trainers are required for all such training formats. The following document aims to identify exactly what skills trainers need and where improvements can be made. The information below is based on an international study managed by CIECA. For the full report, please see [EU Advanced report](#)

2. Why do we need good driver trainers?

Training of any kind is unlikely to be a success if the trainer does not perform properly. As the post-licence market has evolved, the sector has attracted individuals from a number of different fields, e.g. (pre-licence) driving instructors, policemen, engineers and racing drivers. These people have brought different approaches, skills and experience into the sector. None, however, arrive with the full range of skills necessary to be an effective and discerning post-licence trainer. The key is to adapt these skills and to supplement them with other skills required for post-licence driver training.

Poor training is a problem everywhere, but particularly in driver training. Whereas training in other sectors may simply have no effect on participants, poor driver training may lead to misunderstandings of crucial importance, or to the participant becoming overconfident in his/her abilities. Research has shown that certain target groups may be less safe on the road than they were before training, if the course design is poor or if trainers are not taking the necessary precautions during the training.

3. What is the aim of post-licence training?

Specific aims of training will vary according to the target group. For instance, a travelling salesman may require training on how to recognise and avoid fatigue, lack of concentration and discomfort while driving on long trips. Novice drivers, on the other hand, include high-risk individuals who need training in other areas. That said, the basic aim of every post-licence training should be to make participants safer drivers. Course organisers may, however, disagree on the best way to achieve this aim.

Training can focus on a wide range of skills, knowledge, risk awareness and self-evaluation (the ability of participants to recognise their strengths and weaknesses). The exact blend will depend on the training environment (track training, on-road training and/or seminar room), the target group, the length of the course and decisions made by the training company on the course design. (At the same time, it is important to remember that post-licence training generally only lasts one day, perhaps repeated every now and then, whereas drivers are subject to a huge range of other influences in their lives that will also affect their driving style).

4. Training on “different levels” of driver behaviour

Much of today’s training focuses on vehicle manoeuvring (e.g. braking or cornering exercises in different road conditions) and driving in traffic (hazard perception, safety margins and communication with other road users, etc). In addition, however, training can also take place on “higher levels”. These levels potentially have a greater influence on safety than the lower ones. This includes how journey-specific factors can affect ones driving style and relative road safety – reasons for driving, distractions, being in a

hurry, fatigue, social pressure from passengers or other drivers and planning on unfamiliar routes. It also addresses how a driver's temperament and attitudes to life in general impact on driving. Such training is not intended to be pious or condescending. It simply aims to make participants reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and the consequences this may have when out on the road.

5. How should training be delivered?

ARE YOU TALKING AT YOUR CLIENTS OR ARE YOU LISTENING TO THEIR NEEDS?

Much of today's post-licence training is delivered using conventional techniques such as presentations, instructions and advice. Despite their obvious benefits, such techniques often overlook the key characteristics of post-licence driver training:

- Training is very short (generally only lasting for one day)
- Participants are adults with their own experience, motivations and interests

These two factors lead to the following conclusion: trainers should spend less time telling participants what to do, how to improve, etc, and more time on questioning them in order to make participants want to change. The advantages of this are three-fold. Firstly, the participant is more involved in the training and learning process and more motivated to gain from the training (because he/she is being listened to and invested in). Secondly, the questioning process encourages the participant to adopt an analytical frame of mind. If this approach continues after the training, the participant will keep on learning and evaluating for some time afterwards (the limits of a one day course are thus partially overcome). Thirdly, constant questioning from trainers automatically results in responses from the participants. Such responses allow the trainer to assess the participant's comprehension of – and attitude towards – the training.

6. So what are the basic principles of post-licence driver training (6.1-6.7)

6.1 Discuss and understand the motivations of participants

DO YOU TAKE MEASURES TO FIND OUT THE EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATIONS OF YOUR CLIENTS?

Both participants and the trainer have to be motivated if the training is to be successful. Participants will vary in motivation on arrival at the course. Some may have voluntarily chosen to take part, others may be obliged to by their company. Even if the participants are motivated, in what way are they motivated? What do they expect from the training? Their expectations must coincide with the views and intentions of the trainer if the learning process is going to work. Importantly, it should not be assumed that participants in fleet driver training, for instance, all have the right motivations and attitudes toward the training. Motivation can be maintained during training by respecting the following principles.

6.2 Engage the participants in the design of the course

IS YOUR COURSE ENTIRELY PRE-PLANNED OR DO YOU TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF YOUR CLIENTS?

Participants should be involved in the design of the training, to make sure they are motivated and that the course reflects their needs.

6.3 Encourage participants to be self-directed / trainers should be more coaches than instructors

ARE YOUR PARTICIPANTS ENCOURAGED TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES, OR ARE THEY JUST BYSTANDERS?

Trainers should spend less time telling participants what to do and more time setting tasks, questioning and eliciting. Help the participants to learn for themselves, instead of being told what to learn.

Participants should be constantly questioned during the course in order to motivate them, allow them to express their opinions, discuss their prior experiences (in relation to the training) and analyse their strengths and weaknesses.

People learn best by doing. Make sure they can actively participate in the form of discussions, case studies, practical training, etc.

6.4 Use participants experiences in the learning process

DO YOU REFER TO YOUR PARTICIPANTS' DRIVING EXPERIENCES BOTH AT THE BEGINNING AND DURING THE TRAINING?

The motivations of the participants and the effects of the course will be much greater if the training is linked to, and actively responds to, prior experience (and those during the training itself).

6.5 Create an effective learning environment

DOES YOUR TRAINING INCLUDE ENOUGH VARIETY, BREAKS AND SPECIFIC SESSIONS TO KEEP PARTICIPANTS MOTIVATED AND ALERT?

Variety in content and methods, regular breaks and sessions of different lengths are all fundamental issues. Variety is not only positive for maintaining concentration, but also for appealing to participants with different learning styles. Examples of content include training on different levels of driver behaviour and in different places (track, on-road and class). Methods include discussion, use of questionnaires, video, demonstrations, presentations, practical experience, case studies, etc. Regular breaks are necessary because concentration normally drops significantly after around 50 minutes. Breaking up the days training into sessions, each perhaps with specific goals, is also important.

6.6 Do not overlook the higher levels of driver behaviour

WHAT LEVELS OF DRIVER BEHAVIOUR DOES YOUR TRAINING FOCUS ON?

Higher level training can be highly beneficial if it encourages drivers to think about their personal circumstances when driving, their habits and their attitudes to life in general. Driving safely is not just about driving a car: it involves circumstances, values, attitudes and reflects to a very high degree ones lifestyle. Addressing these issues early on in training can help develop a positive, self-analytical frame of mind amongst participants.

6.7 Take into account the differences between skills training and risk awareness training

ARE YOU TRAINING 'RISK AWARENESS' OR JUST (MANOEUVRING) SKILLS?

The difference between skills training and risk awareness training is particularly visible in track-based courses where much of the focus is on vehicle manoeuvring. Manoeuvring skills training involves exercises to improve braking, swerve around an obstacle or cornering using the right technique. Risk awareness training, on the other hand, stresses the risks related to vehicle manoeuvring: road surface friction in different conditions (wet, dry, icy), braking distances needed to come to a standstill when driving at various speeds and the difficulty of performing fast and safe manoeuvres in emergency situations. The distinction between skills and risk awareness exists in other areas of driver training too. In basic terms, risk awareness needs to balance out skills (and knowledge). In the absence of proper risk awareness, certain drivers may tend to become overly self-assured. This should be avoided.

Skills and risk awareness are generally trained in different ways. This is expressed as the concept versus experience principle. Skills training, for instance improving braking technique follows the concept principle: the technique is taught in theory, demonstrated in practice and copied by the participant. The participant is receiving instructions, based on the viewpoint or philosophy of the trainer, on what to do and how to do it. Risk awareness training takes a different approach, following the experience principle. This assumes that participants have to experience something first for themselves, without interference from the trainer. Once the trainees have had the experience, they then have something tangible to relate to. Without the experience, the concepts may have little meaning. For the learning process to be effective, the learning should be based on personal experience, rather than the experience and views of the trainer.

7. Top tips for driver trainers

Effective driver trainers require considerable skills and ability covering a wide range of disciplines (teaching, psychology, engineering, physics, knowledge of road safety, etc). The exact blend depends on what type of training the trainer gives (on-road, track, classroom, etc). These disciplines cover a rather unique range of skills which are difficult to find in one individual.

However, all trainers need basic teaching skills, namely those of planning, implementation and evaluation. Trainers should be able to differentiate between participants and to use a wide range of teaching methods to achieve course goals. Basic teaching skills tend to focus on presenting, giving instructions and feedback (trainer-centred). More advanced – and more effective – teaching involves the use of coaching methods (learner-centred).

The following passages look into more detail into trainer-related issues in the 3 main training environments: track, road and classroom. They go beyond the principles already outlined in section 6.

7.1 Track trainers

Track training allows the participants to “learn by doing” and to experience the limits of the car, environment and the driver. It can be a very intense learning experience because the exercises awaken the senses of the trainees. If the exercises are designed and implemented properly, such training can be very effective. If not, however, the whole experience can be highly counterproductive. Track trainers should respect the following principles when delivering a course:

Practical exercises are only part of the training, not the whole thing

DO YOU FOLLOW UP YOUR PRACTICAL EXERCISES WITH FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION?

All exercises, whether skills or risk awareness-based should be followed by discussion and feedback. The trainer can then check what the participants have learned, correct misunderstandings and strike a balance between skills-learning and risk awareness-learning. Courses tend to regard the practical exercises as complete learning products in themselves. Exercises must, however, be followed by proper analysis for the real messages of the exercise to be reinforced and the undesirable alternative messages to be dispelled. The intense experience of the practical exercise needs to be “harnessed” and contextualised by the post-training feedback.

Studies have shown that trainers often presume that the participants are learning one thing, while in fact they are learning something else. This can only be sorted out through discussion and feedback.

Emphasise risk awareness more than manoeuvring skills

ARE YOU AN OLD-SCHOOL SKILLS-BASED TRAINER OR A NEW-SCHOOL RISK AWARENESS TRAINER?

Exercises to improve skills must be counterbalanced with focus on risk awareness. For instance, if emergency braking techniques are being trained, the exercises must include practice or discussion to highlight the risks related to braking e.g. the effects of conditions, speeds and reactions on braking distances, the difficulty of performing effective braking when taken by surprise and the need to respect safety margins as a result. Skills exercises should be designed so that participants do not become completely comfortable with a given manoeuvre. Efforts should be made to make them realise all the mitigating factors in reality which may prevent them from effectively carrying out such manoeuvres (surprise, distraction, fatigue, lack of space, lack of time, poor reactions, poor road conditions, etc).

Track-based exercises can also be devised to show the effects of human risk factors (distraction, time pressure, etc), in addition to the factors related to the vehicle and road (see the [Risk Awareness Database](#), levels 3 and 4).

Avoid training technical emergency manoeuvring

DO YOU STILL TEACH SKID CONTROL TRAINING TO YOUR PARTICIPANTS?

Leave out highly technical, emergency reaction training (such as regaining control of a skidding car). Insufficient practice time and the potential for counterproductive effects are likely to make such exercises pointless. Trainers with years of technical handling experience should not assume that everyday road users can master such manoeuvres in a one-day course and, crucially, be able to execute in a split-second at some random stage in the future. For instance, whilst emergency braking training is recommended, high speed braking and avoidance is not, unless extreme conditions mean that this type of manoeuvre is readily needed in everyday driving (e.g. Scandinavian winter).

Track-based exercises must be true to life

DO YOUR EXERCISES REFLECT REALISTIC AND TYPICAL SITUATIONS IN PRACTICE?

Exercises should be varied, and set up so that participants can relate to real life scenarios with all the normal constraints which apply (lack of space to manoeuvre, lack of time to react, etc). Trainers should constantly encourage participants to relate their track experiences with real on-road scenarios. This should not only make the training more meaningful, but should also make the participants realise how situations can vary greatly in reality.

In general, trainers should take specific countermeasures, including the above, to avoid the phenomenon of overconfidence.

Avoid technical jargon and overemphasis of driving physics

DO YOU LIKE TALKING ABOUT DRIVING PHYSICS? DO YOUR CLIENTS?

Many courses visited during the project focus heavily on the technical aspects of driving. Trainers clearly possess an enormous wealth of knowledge on vehicle dynamics, driving techniques, etc, and should be able to answer detailed questions if necessary. Any enthusiastic professional may, however, have a tendency to relay more knowledge and information than is actually necessary. In particular, many courses appear to go into unnecessary levels of detail as far as the technicalities of vehicle dynamics and driving physics are concerned. Many participants may have difficulty understanding such technical issues, or issues in such a high degree of detail, so trainers must be careful to present the basics in an easy-to-understand format. Within a one-day course, the amount of information communicated to participants should therefore be limited to a basic minimum and should be repeated, according to standard pedagogical principles, to ensure that these messages are understood and will be maintained over time.

7.2 On road trainers

On-road training is useful for:

- hazard perception training and anticipatory driving (interaction with other road users)¹
- driver observation (participants watching another participant drive)
- the level of individual attention given to participants by the trainer (provided the trainer is an adequate coach)
- raising awareness of the variety of different road and traffic situations in real-life, (also once exercises on the track have taken place)

But road-training can be a useless experience, if the instructor is bent on imposing a system with blind disregard for the needs and motivations of the participant.

Coaching, coaching and coaching

DO YOU USE COACHING TECHNIQUES OR DO YOU TELL YOUR CLIENTS TO DO WHAT YOU THINK IS BEST?

The most important aspect of on-driver training is the need to coach your client(s). The standard 1:1 trainee-trainer ratio allows for a very intense learning environment, provided the approach is right. Trainers will have no impact on the trainee's approach to driving and driving style if they do not take a participant-centred approach. Too many trainers are eager to impose their own perception of safe driving on their clients. They observe "errors", note them down on their forms and tell the driver how to correct

¹ this includes environmentally friendly driving techniques (for drivers, as opposed to riders) which also emphasise anticipation

the problem. This not an effective approach to achieve lasting training effects. Rather, the focus should always be on the clients' needs. What sort of driving needs does the trainee have, when does he/she use the car and why? What experiences has the driver had (good, bad, dangerous...)? What are his/her perceived strengths and weaknesses? What problems does the drive often have when driving? Why? How does this reflect his character, attitude, profession, driving skills, etc? Constant, targeted questioning should encourage the driver to think about his strong and weak points and how important it is to change any pressing problems.

Course providers and trainers should be aware that being an exemplary driver is not sufficient to be a good, post-licence trainer. Trainers require a range of teaching skills to « help the participant help themselves ». Being told what to do will have no lasting effect on the majority of participants (unless they are incredibly motivated). Participants must be convinced that it is in their personal interest to adopt a different driving style. Remember: “a person convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still”.

Don't sweat the small stuff

DO YOU TEND TO FOCUS ON SMALL THINGS THAT REALLY DO NOT MATTER THAT MUCH IN THE LARGER SCHEME OF THINGS?

Linked to the above, the trainer should try to avoid overfocusing on minor errors. Clearly, some small driving faults can be dangerous if committed consistently, but commenting on these errors repeatedly can have counterproductive effects. Firstly, it alienates the trainee, who is likely to take the attitude “I have always held the steering wheel like this, and that's the way it is going to stay”. Secondly, it detracts from far more important aspects of safe driving. One day, or half a day, is a very short time to achieve lasting change, so training should be focussed on what really counts.

The fact that many post-licence on-road trainers were previously pre-licence instructors means that they may have a tendency to focus on areas which are considered important for the driving test, but less significant for ongoing driver development.

Regular breaks

HOW LONG DO YOUR CLIENTS HAVE TO WAIT BEFORE THEIR NEXT BREAK/CHANGE OF FOCUS?

On-road trainers should consider breaking up the day's training (or half-day training) into more easily recalled and varied sessions (in order to provide a more stimulating learning environment and more focus on the participant's higher level needs). Discussion sessions, at the roadside or in a café for instance, should address personal strengths and weaknesses (through specially made questionnaires, for instance) and discussions of how that has already - and might - affect their safety on the road (and what strategy to employ to reduce the associated risks).

Constant practical training is a tiring experience which may upset the learning process. The fact that the trainer is questioning and informing during the training, whilst the trainee is driving, may also affect how much retention there is during the day. Breaks, involving recaps on what has been said, seen or done, are advisable.

Higher levels of behaviour

DOES YOUR TRAINING ONLY FOCUS ON MASTERING TRAFFIC SITUATIONS?

As with track training, on-road training focuses more on manoeuvring and traffic situations than with higher levels of driver behaviour (attitudes, habits, the context of driving, etc). Addressing these issues is advisable, due to the influence these behavioural levels have on the lower ones. A simple questionnaire, for instance, can be used to make people reflect on their attitudes, habits and driving use. This can then be built upon in a discussion with the trainer. Participants are also placed in a more analytical frame of mind which aids the learning process and makes the training more meaningful.

7.3 “Classroom” trainers

Classroom sessions have enormous potential as part of post-licence driver training. Its potential, as yet, remains largely unexploited. The problem with classroom sessions is that, if they fail to engage the participants and keep them busy, they can be boring and irrelevant. Here are some tips to improve your classroom activities.

Make the classroom environment meaningful and participant-centred (not trainer-centred)

COULD YOU USE THESE METHODS BELOW IN YOUR CLASS TRAINING?
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Classroom training can come in 3 different formats:

1. *presentations*: general road safety information, statistics, typical accident scenarios, etc
2. *theory*: introductions to skills-based training before carrying out the practical exercise.
3. *feedback and discussion*, covering a wide range of topics (exchange of experiences, feedback on a practical exercise, active learning methods for higher levels of behaviour including case studies, role plays and self-analysis questionnaires).

All 3 forms can, of course, function simultaneously in the same session. Whereas (1) and (2) are well established in driver training, feedback and discussion is not common. However, this format should not be neglected.

Presentations are designed to provide facts so that participants can gain in knowledge. If, however, participants do not find the information interesting or meaningful, it will have little effect on their approach to driving. Theory is designed to prepare participants for a subsequent exercise. Again, though, this order of events presupposes that the participants find the exercise relevant and corresponding to their needs. Participants have to be motivated to gain from such sessions.

Feedback and discussion sessions are a more participant-centred way of conducting training. It starts with the assumption that training should relate to participants' needs and experiences.

3 main types of group discussion can be distinguished:

- "open discussions", based on an exchange of driving experiences, what we like / don't like about driving, what would be my typical accident if I ever had one?, etc.
- "feedback discussions" which take place after practical training (particularly track exercises) and are designed to consolidate on the message transmitted during practice (and check for misunderstandings)
- "focussed group sessions", centred on pre-prepared case studies or role play where the participants can actively analyse a situation or scenario, try to work out what happened, what were all the factors involved, etc..

All 3 types of group discussion are highly self-analytical, atmospheric and constructive because they are all relevant to real situations or the participants' views, feelings and attitudes. Focussed group sessions normally work better once the participants have got to know each other a little.

Clearly, the trainer will need abilities beyond those of simple presentation skills. He/she must be able to deal with group dynamics and be trained in questioning and coaching (or 'moderation' as it is referred to in German).

Use a variety of teaching methods

HOW MANY OF THESE METHODS DO YOU USE? IS IT ENOUGH?

Variety is the spice of life. It also maintains the interest of the participants and appeals to participants with different learning styles. Classroom activities can involve:

- Presentations
- Theory
- Exchange of experiences
- Videos (+discussion!)
- Role plays
- Case study analyses
- Problem-solving exercises
- Self-analysis questionnaires
- Written tests
- The use of props and visual aids: flipcharts, sticky labels, photos, tyres, etc.

Such methods are useful to make sure participants are active in 'doing, listening and speaking'.

Make sure the final feedback session is focussed, upbeat and unrushed

DOES YOUR TRAINING END IN A RUSH AS YOU TRY TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME?

The final session of the training is an important and often neglected part of training. Memory retention is good during beginnings and ends (and rather hazy in the middle). A final feedback session represents an ideal time to:

- Encourage the participants to think again about the main course messages (which may be individual or course-oriented)
- Check what the participant has retained
- Raise issues that remain unclear
- Question the participant on what they found useful or interesting (these are areas where the training is mostly likely to have an effect)
- Set goals for driving in the future

Above all, it is important to leave ample time for this session. It may be the most important phase in the day in terms of long-term learning effects and memory retention. To encourage a climate of ongoing learning and change after the training, it may be better to encourage a social atmosphere after the training, rather than stopping it abruptly (e.g. chatting, sandwiches and drinks). If the trainer(s) remain around at the end, instead of quickly disappearing, this enhances the feeling amongst participants that they are being invested in.

Do you wish to comment on this checklist? Please send us your comments to cieca@cbr.nl