



**BLOOMSBURY INTERNATIONAL**

# British Culture - Black cab (Taxi)

How to hail a cab like a local and  
six interesting facts about black cabs



## How to hail a black cab (taxi) in London!

If you've been to London, you will have seen many black taxis driving around the streets. These taxis are a true symbol of London (almost as iconic as a London bus!) but how did they originate and how do you hail one?

London taxis (often called 'black cabs') have a very long history. They started out as horse-drawn carriages called 'hackney carriages' and the earliest record of these date back to 1662! When motorised cars became popular, the design of the taxis changed many times and it was only after 1945 that the black cab design we all know and love today became common. These days, black cabs don't have to be black – many cabs are created in different colours and are often covered in advertising!



Cab drivers in London (often known as 'cabbies') have to pass a test called 'The Knowledge' before they can drive a cab. This is an extremely difficult test as they need to memorise every street in London within six miles from Charing Cross! This means they have to learn 320 routes, 25,000 streets and 20,000 landmarks! The average time to study and pass the exam is 3 years!

## How to hail a cab like a local

1. If you see a cab with a light on top displaying the word 'TAXI', this means they are available for hire. When they are hired, the light is switched off.
2. If you want to hail a cab, you just have to stick out your arm when the taxi is approaching and it will stop next to you. Make sure you are standing in a sensible place on the street (avoid bus stops and pedestrian crossings!).

DO NOT shout 'TAXI!' at a moving black cab. This is technically against the law and they will not stop for you!

3. When the cab stops next to you, go to the front window and explain to the driver where you want to go. Remember, London cabbies know every street and landmark in London, so if you are going to a hotel or theatre, you just need to tell them the name, not the actual address! Cabbies will always work out the quickest route, even taking into account the traffic!
4. After you have told the driver where you want to go, you can get in the back. Black cabs can carry five passengers (3 on the back seat and 2 on the fold-down seats opposite).
5. **TALK TO THE DRIVER!** Black cab drivers drive around the streets every day and meet a wide variety of people so they really know a lot about London! Most cabbies love chatting so

don't be afraid to ask for advice about which [sites to visit](#), places to avoid, London history or even their political views! It's also a great way to practise your English speaking!

6. When you arrive at your destination, the driver will tell you how much you need to pay. This is calculated automatically by a meter in the cab and is based on the time of day, distance travelled and time taken. You can find more information about cab fares by [clicking here](#).

Black cabs can be quite expensive so you can use minicabs as a cheaper alternative as they tell you the price before they start driving (if they don't tell you, remember to ask!). Minicabs have to be booked in advance from a licensed minicab office (do not hail one in the street – it is illegal and can be dangerous!).

Although London transport and minicabs are cheaper, I would definitely recommend hailing a black cab at least once during your time in London as it is a great experience and you're sure to learn something from your driver!



For more information about life in London and the UK, [click here](#)!

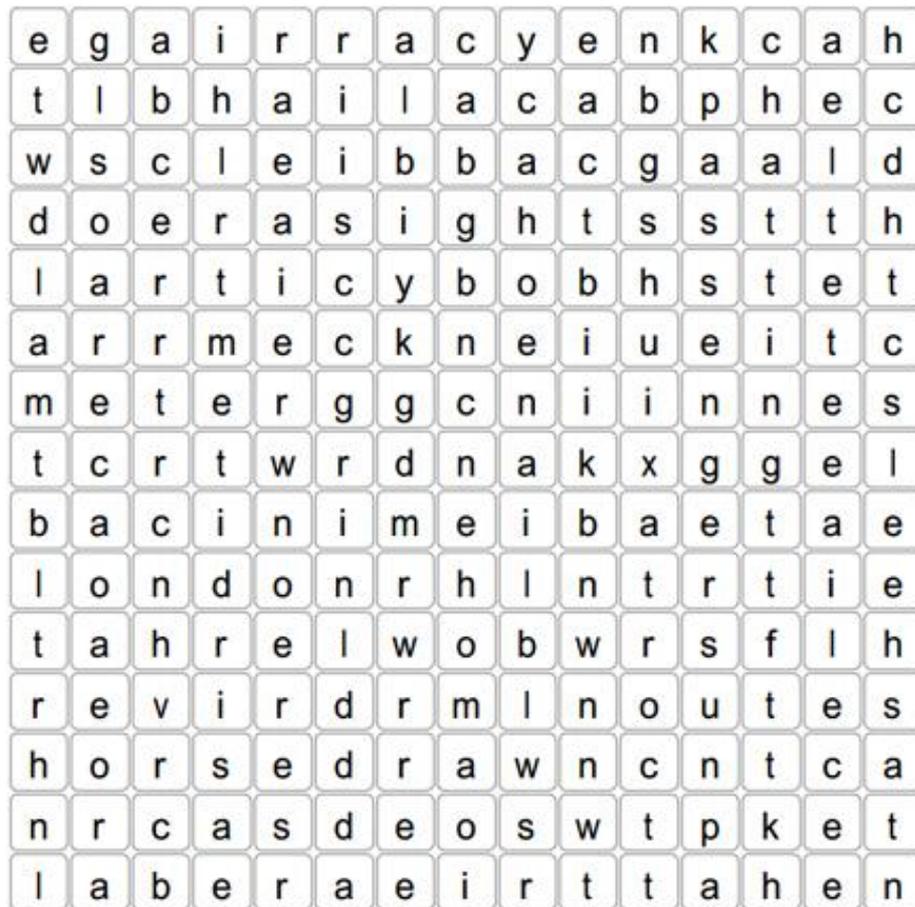
## Six interesting facts about black cabs

1. Most cabs in London are owned by the drivers and are run as independent businesses.
2. London's taxi industry is often ranked number 1 in the world.
3. There are currently around 21,000 black cabs in London.
4. Many black cabs have a turning circle of only 25 ft (8m). This means they can turn around in small spaces and go round very tight corners.
5. The name 'taxi' comes from the 'taximeter' – the tool used to calculate fares.
6. A cab must be tall enough to accommodate someone wearing a bowler hat!



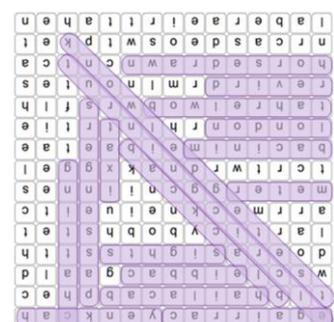
# Have fun with English!

## Black cab wordsearch



## Words to find

- black cab
- bowler hat
- cabbie
- chatting
- driver
- hackney carriage
- hail a cab
- horse drawn
- knowledge test
- London
- meter
- minicab
- passengers
- sights
- taxi
- turning circle



Answers: