

10 things to Know About Being an UBER DRIVER

1. Why drive Uber: I was paid 2x-3x more than working as an administrative assistant at a daycare. Plus, I enjoyed being out of an office environment and working whenever I chose. I love driving anyway but typically chose busy hours when I was more likely to receive non-stop requests and not waste gas and mileage. Plus, I like chatting with new people and hearing about their lives/interests. Anyone can do it with valid documentation.
2. Who are Uber drivers: We are independent contractors who must sign an agreement to use their phone app as they consider themselves a technology company rather than a transportation source. Typically, drivers use their own vehicles and are responsible for all expenses including gas, repairs, and insurance with commercial use special. As an alternative you can rent from their car rental partners, Hertz or Avis, starting at \$260/week that includes insurance, maintenance, unlimited miles and vehicle warranty.
3. Download Uber App: Download the app, give permission to allow access of your location whenever app is "on". Start uploading required documents: driver's license, proof of insurance, car registration, profile picture, and banking information to receive weekly, or daily, direct deposit payments, and then submit for their review. Background checks are done and repeated annually for everyone's safety. Or if you prefer in-person help, schedule an online appointment at a Greenlight Hub (Uber office) during business hours.
4. Getting car ready: Once all the checks are approved, Uber will mail the appropriate window stickers to comply with city requirements based on where you drive. In Chicagoland, the Uber Sticker was round in 2014 and then for some reason changed to rectangular in 2018. This should be located inside the windshield on passenger side on lower right corner for easy identification to the rider. In addition, if driver goes to O'Hare or Midway Airport, the 6x6 square airport TNP sticker must be in rear window on passenger side in lower right since Chicago Police are very strict about these labels as well as the city emblem that is placed on the dashboard below the Uber sticker. Fines can be in the hundreds for missing tradedress. (Tradedress is Uber's signage.) The city emblem is automatically sent to active drivers. And finally, Uber requires an annual vehicle inspection at a Greenlight Hub or a company-approved mechanic.

5. Start driving on the app: Once the driver accepts the ding or flash notification for a rider request, Uber's GPS directs you to the rider's location. If you wait for the rider more than 4 minutes, a late fee is added. If the rider is a no-show, there is a flat \$5.00 charge, for which driver gets \$4.00. If the drive to get rider is more than 9 minutes, there is another fee. And once the rider is in car, driver starts the ride and regular rates for base rate, distance and time are incurred based on your car type and size. When you drive makes a difference, too. As a woman, my hours were typically early rush hours from 4 am – 10 am on weekdays and 10 am-3 pm on weekends. In total I have given over 16,000 rides in my 6+ years driving about 30 hours per week. The younger men are the ones brave enough to do late nights when surge rates increase the pay dramatically because demand is higher. Although, I did do 2 NYE all-nighters, which at certain hours paid up to 9x the normal rates!

6. Personal Ratings: Both drivers and riders are rated with between 1 and 5 stars for their personal experience in the vehicle. Unlike how most personal reviews are done in a corporate setting, there is no criteria to measure a person's performance. So as the driver, I'd ask myself did the person(s) greet me courteously or respond to my greeting, or did he/she/they purposely ignore me? Did they kick my seat or leave garbage? Did they wreak of cigarettes/marijuana/alcohol? Or worst case, were they so inebriated they vomited, hung out the window screaming, took over my radio, or wanted me to have sex with them? Thankfully, 98% of the time my riders got 5 stars from me. A Pro Tip for drivers to get higher ratings would be to keep car spotlessly clean, provide mints, bottled water, tissues, a phone charging cord (Android or iOS, and return left behind items--particularly phones! (Uber also pays a driver \$15 when the driver submits a notification in the app of an item left behind and then returns it.)

7. Uber Pro Rewards: Uber has a quarterly rewards program based on number of rides completed, rider reviews, and acceptance/cancellation rates. Based on which of the 4 rewards categories, this program offers perks like 24/7 roadside assistance, discounts on maintenance, QuickBooks, gas, HSA, Rosetta Stone, car purchases and free tuition at Arizona State University (ASU). The minimum requirements for any of the Pro rewards is based on the last 500 rides where riders have given the driver a 4.85 average star rating, drivers have >85% acceptance rate and <4% cancellation rate. Cancellation rate is when driver accepts a ride then decides to cancel. This program resets every three months back to zero. The Rider's app will show the driver's rating: Blue, Gold, Platinum or Diamond. Lucky passengers get the Diamond driver who has lots of experience!

8. Pay rates based on car type & condition: The model and year of your vehicle will determine the Uber category and pay. I have a 2016 Mitsubishi Outlander Sport SUV that seats 5 people and puts me in the UberX slot. If my car was 2-3 years younger with less wear and tear, I might still be in the UberComfort category, which pays me at a higher rate as does the 7-passenger vans called UberXL. There is also the luxury vehicle class called UberBlack, Mercedes, Lincoln Town Car, or similar, that pays even higher rates. And although you request an UberX, for instance, you may receive an Uber Black if no UberX is available near you and you pay their price! Since the pandemic, Chicago does not offer UberPool for the lowest rates, but most drivers dislike pool rides as there are too many complaints and lower pay.

9. Car Accidents: With so much driving, in all likelihood an accident will occur at least once. The objective is to get riders safely to their destination but uncontrollable stuff can happen. Uber has multiple levels of car insurance depending on whether your app is just turned on, or if you are on your way to pick up a rider, or actually have riders onboard. In any case, using their insurance (which is Allstate in Illinois) has a \$1000 deductible.

10. Safety tips:
 - a. Riders: I tell riders to always confirm they are getting into the correct vehicle. The app will show the rider the name, face, license plate and how many minutes it will be until driver arrives. I've had people just jump into my car because I have an Uber sticker when I'm not even working. One time, two men across the street from each other were waiting for rides and when cars arrived, they each got into wrong vehicle. Drivers are NOT provided pictures of riders due to privacy laws, so all we can do is ask them their first name and destination to confirm. Young women who are alone need to be most vigilant for their safety during late nights.
 - b. Drivers: Community Guidelines are to treat everyone with respect and not discriminate based on looks. However, when a rider exhibits behavior that causes the driver to feel threatened, an acceptable option is to pull over and ask rider to get out. The driver then immediately contacts the Help line in the app to report the issue.