



# Hail fellow

## A cabbie's guide to catching a cab

Getting a cab should be a breeze; what could be easier? Stick your hand out (properly, don't do it half-heartedly, be a man about it) and a cab stops for you. Tell him where you want to go and he takes you there. Then you pay him for the privilege and everyone's happy. But in my experience, many punters make things more difficult than they need to be. Here's my handy guide to taking a taxi.

### DO

**Think about where you are standing.** There's no need to wander into the road when you think I haven't noticed your hand in the air. The last recorded case of a cab driver missing a fare he wanted to pick up was in 1932. Oh, and cabs weigh more than 2.5 tonnes – they only stop when the driver uses the brakes.

**Tell me exactly where you want to go.** Not just the general area or 'off the Finchley Road'. Be specific. It's amazing how coy some people are about where they live – it's like getting blood out of a stone.

**Stop your mobile phone conversation long enough to verbalise your destination.** I'm not very good at hand signals, apart from the universal sign for tosser. It also means that for the rest of the journey I have to try and guess whether you are speaking to me or your mobile.



### Say please and thank you.

So few people do it.

Astonishing.

### Use your initiative.

'Can I have a light on in the back?' or 'How about some heating, cabbie?' are

questions that cabbies constantly hear. Look to

the side of you and there are some clearly marked buttons that operate the light and heating. Clever, huh?



A (where he is) to B (where you are standing)

without causing traffic bedlam. I'm sure that the same people who want me to perform a three-point turn across three lanes of traffic are exactly the same types who beep their horns and give me abuse for performing said manoeuvre when they're driving.

### Forget that lampposts only keep you upright while you are leaning against them.

Great for giving the impression that you are sober, but within two seconds of separation, it will end in tears.

**Try to hide your pissed mate or partner** down that handy alley and think the cabbie is just going to let you carry them into his cab. Be upfront: he'll still refuse your mate, but it saves everyone 20 minutes of argument.

**Call me 'mate' or 'guv'nor' or 'geezer' or 'driver' (especially 'driver') or variations on that theme.** I'm friendly, but I'm not your mate.

**Ask me halfway through your journey 'Why are we going this way?'** I always welcome input for planning a journey; it takes the pressure off my brain, but let's do the planning at the start of the journey, not the end.



### DON'T

#### Try and hail a cab near chevrons or a zebra crossing.

These are the only places black cabs can't pick punters up from. Try and give a millisecond's thought to how you think the cab you are hailing is going to get from

Overall, then, my advice boils down to one thing: please engage brain before sticking arm out. And a bit of pleasant banter goes a long, long way.

## Cab confessional Richard Cudlip's backseat big nobs

### Sol Campbell

'No tip, no talk.'



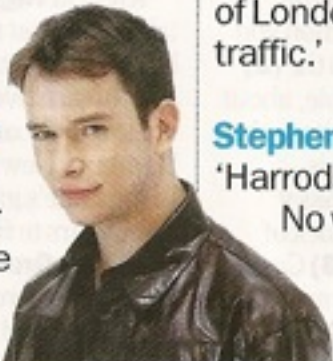
**Rowan Atkinson**  
'Not the most talkative fella.'

### Alan Mullally

'I played for England, you know!' You did indeed, Alan, but only 19 times.'

### Steven Berkoff

'Bloody good bloke, but never tell him you drive a 4x4.'



### Pamela Stephenson

'Very understanding of London's appalling traffic.'

### Stephen Gately

'Harrods to Selfridges. No wonder Boyzone had to re-form.'



### Nicholas Parsons

'Miserable old duffer.'

### Anthony Head

'That's Tony Head to 'is mates.'



'I think it's Tanya Donnelly, who was in Belly.' 'Did you see the Man Utd result? Ha ha ha...' 'Who is Kate Middleton?'