

Vehicle insurance and the first Uber/ Lyft nod.

When you first make the decision to drive rideshare there are many things you must do first. You have to check on the Uber and Lyft website to make certain that the car that you are going to drive rideshare in is approved for that platform in your area.

I drive a Toyota Prius and I checked the Uber and Lyft websites both first. I learned that I was driving an approved vehicle, so I was a go!

After you know that your vehicle is okay for your chosen platform, what you want to do next is cancel or otherwise change your existing personal automobile insurance policy, and purchase a similar commercial policy in its place.

Whatever insurance policy you are going to drive Rideshare with needs to cover the driver/owner of that vehicle in the event of an accident while you're on the Uber or Lyft platform. With an Uber or Lyft passenger in your vehicle.

I got struck by another vehicle and my uninsured motorist claim was denied by Progressive Auto Insurance because I had a personal automobile insurance policy, and not a commercial policy.

Even though I was clearly not at fault, the incident happened while I had passengers in my car, and my auto insurance policy was a personal one.

I thought I was covered because I had a "rideshare rider" on my personal auto insurance policy. This was explained to me by an attorney at the insurance company.

What that "rideshare insurance rider" did was cover me as the driver while I was driving personally or waiting for a trip on the Uber or Lyft platform, and after I accepted a request until that passenger got into my vehicle.

This is referred to as "period 1" by these insurance companies. Then, when that passenger gets into my vehicle the Uber or Lyft auto insurance policy takes over, and it is way different and pretty much doesn't cover the driver.

I had a third policy, though, it was called Uber driver only insurance, because the Uber and Lyft auto insurance policies don't really cover the driver like the passengers are covered. The at fault driver had horrible insurance!

I was forced to make a claim against that driver only policy, and I was used to Progressive and GEICO insurance companies. They tell you upfront if you are covered or not. Once they make that determination, they advise you, if you're covered or not. Then they pay for everything up to the limits of that policy.

Not the same with this driver-only policy. They make you fill out forms and submit all kinds of documentation, and then if there is some other type of claim, which I did not know there were separate claims, you even need to resubmit documents for that.

The only thing that I like about it is the convenience of them taking their premiums out of every mile that you drive. It was advertised to me at that time that it was costing me about .04 cents per mile from my earnings.

I calculated that they were doing that for around 15 months before I had to make a claim against that policy.

Then what they did was this, there were several smaller bills under 5K that they paid, and they sent me a contract, and before I signed and returned that contract,

I went to the Emergency Room and got a CT scan done on my head. I read their contract and once I signed it, it turned off all the coverage and made me personally liable for any outstanding bills and if there were any injuries that I got from that accident they were not covering them, in exchange for like \$3500.00.

So I was feeling something in my head I thought, I wanted to make sure everything was okay before I signed anything.

I read that contract again and decided not to sign it. Of course verbal and no return of a signed agreement wasn't enough, they wanted me to email a rejection notice to some address. So I did, then I received a bill from that emergency room visit, I didn't know why I gave them the driver only claim number at the emergency room.

I spoke to my claims' adjuster at the driver only insurance company, and he told me to scan the bill in, and he will look at it.

So I did, and I sent it to him, this is what they did, they settled all of the other small bills, and they left me stuck with this bill for over 36'000.00!

There was an amnesty company that would have helped me with the bill, but the driver-only place took almost 2 months to tell me they were not paying the bill from a covered accident.

So when I contacted the amnesty place back, the same day that the driver only company told me they were refusing to pay a covered emergency room visit, the amnesty place said I took too long to contact them about this bill.

The reason why is that I thought that bill was covered, but I was wrong. So I got stuck with a HUGE emergency room bill that was supposed to be fully covered.

I copied the bill and sent Uber, who I was driving for when this accident occurred, a letter via snail mail, explaining what happened, and to please settle this bill. They ignored me.

Lesson learned: do not select the driver-only coverage, they will subtract the money from every mile, but when it comes time for coverage, they pick and choose what they want to pay, and they can do that if they want.

They are way different from these major auto insurance companies, and that advertising that is done in these apps, perhaps in some very vague way, is true but it was not true at all for me. I would advise strengthening your current insurance policy, but do not opt for the driver-only insurance. I am not sure who Lyft uses, but I assure you, it is not Lyft covering you.

Here is a link to a video from my dashcam of that accident.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/aChqKx8de9E?si=i2s5lzCuf82qW1Ukq>

Vehicle Equipment

After you decide on your vehicle insurance, you need to make sure you have the correct equipment inside your vehicle. I recorded a video on that, but at a minimum, you will need a dash camera that records outside the vehicle and inside the vehicle, too.

It also needs to record behind your vehicle, and audio from inside your vehicle, in case a passenger says you said or did something that was not true. I registered my dash camera with Uber because they send a message to every trip that you accept, which is huge.

When you register it with them, that advises each prospective passenger that you have a camera recording at all times for your safety, and if they go through with this ride, they are consenting to be recorded. Also, I use universal phone chargers. I like the colored ones because when the passenger tells me what kind of phone they have,

I can just tell them which color to use and that always works very well. I always make sure to have a phone charger that fits every type of phone in my vehicle, connected and ready to charge a phone, any phone, the passengers love that.

Some drivers have all kinds of things that they hand out to passengers; I don't give them anything other than a very safe ride. I provide a clean car, phone chargers for every seat (A total of 4 connected phone chargers, so when multiple people need to charge their phones, they are there for them, and passengers really love that.

I also had an AT&T hot spot in the car for them, when I pick up passengers from the airport, they knock out a couple emails on the way to their hotel from the airport and then when they get to their hotel, they put their luggage away real quick, and then they can go out for the rest of the night, passengers love internet in a rideshare vehicle and I love it too.

Other drivers do not have that in their cars, usually, so that helped with tips and ratings too which is what we as drivers both need and want very much.. So you do not need to hand out water and candy to get good ratings. I also had in my car a Google Home Assistant and I used it all the time to learn from, I used it to learn how to spell things and all kinds of stupid stuff, I used it a lot and I still have it, I got it from eBay I think for like \$60.00 after tax and shipping; it worked with the hotspot I had in my car.

When I heard that it was someone's birthday, I would ask their name, then I would say "Hey Google, sing me the happy birthday song for their name!" That was good for a tip every time. I paid for that Google Assistant one time, and I paid around \$60.00 per month for the hotspot. Then, because it is for the car, I wrote it off on my taxes, and it is not liquid at all. but the passengers loved it!

You will soon see that the entire rideshare game is about money, so you want to try to keep all costs as low as possible, and it is very hard to balance money and quality trips. That is what rideshare driving is. It is finding that balance through learning like you're doing right now.

Another thing I learned right before I started driving for Uber was that the Uber GPS is horrible. I haven't heard anything about the Lyft GPS. I use Waze GPS for everything. It is free and works very well; you just have to designate it in the Uber application. I heard good things about the google maps GPS tool also.

Driving passengers

A few things about driving passengers that I can think of offhand, The first thing is that if it is raining out, make certain that you pick up the passenger so that they don't have to step in or over a puddle if possible to get in your car. I forgot about that when I first started driving,

Another thing is that when you are turning and there are 2 lanes that you could be in, use the GPS application to figure out which lane to be in and get in that lane as soon as it is possible. I heard that Google Maps application does this very well.

Also, if a passenger talks to you about anything, make certain that you talk back to them. A passenger will rate the ride a single star no matter how perfect the trip was if you ignore them. We drivers try to keep those single star ratings down to a minimum.

This has been done to me, and I rate every driver 5 stars and I tip them all too, except for him, I did not tip him, because he ignored me, and I spoke to him several times, to make sure he heard me, the Uber application will send out feedback messages about a customer that wanted more or less talking in the car, and then the driver will just start refusing to speak to all passengers, DO NOT DO THAT EVER!

Stick with the basic rules that Uber and Lyft both say to never talk about, but do tell them that. The big 3, I never talk about them with passengers, and I would blame it on Uber or Lyft, other than that always talk back to the passengers who talk to you first.

I would tell a passenger straight up "Uber or Lyft will not allow me to talk about that subject during a trip, and as long as they keep sending the money to me, I will continue to follow their rules" and that worked every single time.

The big 3 are POLITICS, RELIGION, and SEX. I would stay far away from those subjects, and that kept me out of trouble a lot of times. Just do not do it. You just never know who your passenger is, and if you say one thing, that they do not like, next thing you know, you get a 1-star rating, and they hurt a lot. I try to keep them down to a minimum, that is for sure.

Surges

Surges are a great way to boost a driver's pay. A surge can be seen in the Driver app as an area that is darkened in color. The darker the color, the higher the surge. The most surges that I have ever seen were during spring break 2021.

Everyone was in lockdown during spring break 2020. During spring break 2021 everyone it seemed like came to Florida. That week was always a strong driving week, but that one in particular was very good! I ended up earning about \$1400.00 that week.

That is good for rideshare driving in Florida. I tend to chase the surges and during the week of spring break, I try to accept small trips so I can get back to the high surge areas on St. Pete beach and downtown St. Petersburg, Florida.

When you accept any trip, what that is doing is removing your ability to pick and choose until the end of that ride, So when you accept a trip, remember that you are losing the ability to earn during that trip, so you need to make every single trip count!

I used to take long trips and then when I would drop a passenger off, I would just go offline and drive right back to where I started from, either it was Downtown Saint Petersburg, Florida or Saint Pete Beach Florida,

I believe that when you stick around an area and drive, that does two major things and I try to avoid them as much as possible, 1) Driving in an unfamiliar area causes car accidents and the small amount of money you may earn by staying and driving is nothing in comparison to not being able to drive because you are injured, or your car is out of commission. 2) The wear and tear on your car from all of that stopping and going is huge, we want to stay out of the mechanic shop as much as possible, because labor is expensive, and in the rideshare game, you make your money by saving on things, and labor is a huge expense.

Vehicle Maintenance

Vehicle Maintenance: This is a big one. Make certain you absorb this because it is extremely important. We as drivers avoid the mechanic shop as much as possible. Changing the fluids in the car as much as possible is how we do that. Regular maintenance is absolutely necessary when you drive rideshare.

You have got to understand that there is going to be at least double the amount of oil changes, and you probably should do those oil changes in ½ the amount of time and not miles that it says in your owners manual.

For example: if your owners manual says to change the oil in your vehicle every 6000 miles and you're used to doing oil changes every 6 months, when you drive rideshare you should do them now every 3 months. That 3 months should start the day that you get approved to drive for Uber or Lyft.

Go to my website www.ridesharedriver.blog and select the maintenance tab, you can see everything I have ever done to my car during rideshare driving. I documented it all. I changed the oil in that car every two weeks. Every other Friday, I would change the oil in that car no matter what.

I would change the transmission fluid in the car every 125,000 miles or so. It is my hope that it was over kill, but I do not know for certain. I still have the car right now, and I depend a lot on it still.

I do not drive rideshare with it though, there is a problem with the ABS system in the car and when that problem is there it turns off the ABS system for all the wheels on the car, I do not have the money for the complete root cause repair right now.

It also makes the brake pedal really hard. I just refuse to drive passengers around when there is a brake problem like that. Even though the passengers cannot tell. Regular maintenance on a rideshare vehicle is very important.

Because these passengers will hear a noise (even from another vehicle) and rate the trip low based on that noise. Regular Maintenance also keeps costs down. Also, a rideshare vehicle is driven a lot more than a non rideshare vehicle. So regular maintenance is a very good thing all the way around, constantly.

The pickup

When you go online in the Uber or Lyft applications, you will hopefully start to get request after request sent to your mobile device. This is where the importance of deciding what kind of rides you're going to select before you actually start to drive rideshare comes into play, for example, I like to accept large, long trips.

Trips over at least \$20.00 US. I know now, that trips over that amount are interstate mostly trips, and those trips pay the most and have far less wear and tear on your vehicle and are way more safe than a series of smaller trips.

When those requests come to your phone, you can decide on them straight away. When you decline trips, it does go against your acceptance rate which is an Uber pro only metric.

I have never cared at all about Uber pro metrics. There are definitely some benefits in the Uber pro program that are awesome. Uber uses them to entice drivers to accept more trips. Lyft has the rewards program which is similar to the Uber pro program but it has a cash benefit where Uber pro does not. I have mostly been an Uber driver so that is mostly what I focus on.

Uber pro and Lyft reward program

The Uber Pro and Lyft reward program are ways that Uber and Lyft entice drivers to accept more trips. It works very well too. There are a lot of very good offers in both programs that improve trip acceptance rates.

They both work pretty much the same. The more trips that a driver accepts and completes, the higher that driver's tier rating is for The Uber Pro or Lyft Rewards program and the benefits increase in quality as a driver increases their tier.

Make no mistake about it though, both Uber pro and Lyft rewards are both ways for Uber and Lyft to grow their businesses by getting more trips completed by drivers and they are both very effective.

The Uber Pro program resets its tiers every 3 months and the Lyft rewards program resets its tiers every month. I have never even thought about accepting trips based on either of these programs. The only metric that actually matters to keep you on either platform is your actual driver rating number. Which is included in these programs but is secondary to your acceptance and cancellation ratings.

During each trip

Most passengers just want to get to their destination. They are mostly quiet and do not talk during their trip. Sometimes they do though. It is very important to always talk with them no matter what the apps say.

You will usually have a very good conversation with them, and they can help you with stuff. Needless to say, you always want to be vigilant in looking out the windshield during every conversation. Just talk into the windshield a little louder than if they were right in front of you.

I personally never look at them unless they are in the seat next to me, the “shotgun” seat. Even then I rarely ever look directly at them, sometimes I do though when I am at a light during a discussion with them.

The drop off.

The drop off is probably the most important part of the trip. This is the part of the trip that the requester is most likely going to remember, and rate the entire trip on. If you look at either the Lyft or Uber application, they both have the first name of the requester in it.

If the passenger and the requester are known by the driver to be the same person (sometimes they are not) then use the requester’s name as you’re dropping them off. I read somewhere once that nothing is so sweet to another human, as the sound of their own name. Use their name to get better ratings and more tips.

Conclusion

As you can see there is not a lot to actually driving rideshare. Most of driving rideshare is done in preparation of driving rideshare. I personally use rideshare as a passenger, all the time, especially now.

I used it a lot before I started driving rideshare, and when I became a full time driver too I thought, there is a lot more to this than I realized.

The entire process is based on customer service which I have been doing for most of my life over the phone. Driving rideshare for either of these companies is extremely convenient for all involved parties.

That is what makes them such great products. I think personally now after driving rideshare that the risk to reward ratio is very bad for the driver, but much better for the passenger, and the best for these rideshare companies, both of the big ones Uber and Lyft.

I do not discount in any way the hard jobs at both companies, I really think that the risk of the actual rideshare driver is far worse though. I do think that getting a job somewhere where you do not have to depend on your vehicle in any way, is a far better solution. Driving rideshare does negate the entire interview process though, which I hated, so I chose to be a full time rideshare driver, and paid the price of much lower wages and much higher risk.