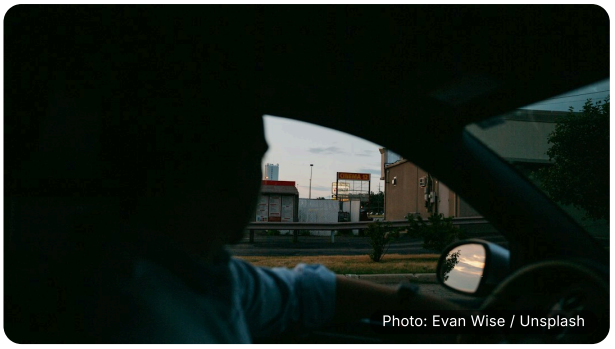
Uber trials self-driving taxis in Manchester

LEVEL B2


Photo: Evan Wise / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever used a ride-hailing app? Which one and where?
2. Would you trust a car that drives itself? Why or why not?
3. What new technology has changed transport in your city?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

autonomous
Able to operate by itself without direct human control.

trial
A test period to see if something works well in the real world.

robotaxi
A self-driving taxi that carries passengers without a human driver.

mapping
Collecting detailed data about streets and road conditions.

safety driver
A trained person in the car who can take control if needed.

passenger
A person who rides in a vehicle but does not drive it.

union
An organisation that represents workers and their interests.

congestion
Too much traffic on the roads, causing slow movement.

III. READING

Uber has begun a trial of autonomous vehicles on the streets of Manchester, a step towards wider robotaxi services in the UK. The first cars use technology from partners Pony and Verne. Uber recently launched Europe's first autonomous taxi service with them in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia.

In Manchester, the tests focus on mapping the city. Each car has a safety driver behind the wheel and no passenger. London began limited passenger rides last month, using Wayve cars with a safety driver under Transport for London's private-hire rules.

The next steps remain unclear, and there has been no official application to launch passenger services in Manchester so far. Uber drivers, unions and some politicians warn of job losses and want support for affected workers.

A London Assembly transport committee report urged the government to devolve control over autonomous taxi services. It also questioned the claimed benefits and raised fears about public transport, congestion, safeguarding and disabled access.

Uber says it expects to offer robotaxi trips in up to 15 cities worldwide by the end of 2026, mainly in the US and the Middle East.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Uber begins self-driving robotaxi trial in...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is Uber running its new autonomous vehicle trial?
2. Which partner companies supply the technology for the first cars?
3. What safety setup is used during the Manchester tests?
4. What did the London Assembly transport committee urge the government to do?
5. By when and in how many cities does Uber expect to offer robotaxi trips?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should cities allow robotaxis while tests still need a safety driver?
2. How can authorities balance innovation and taxi drivers' jobs?
3. What risks worry you most: safety, congestion, or accessibility? Why?
4. Would you try a robotaxi in your city? Under what conditions?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Used to / would

Use used to/would + base verb for past habits or repeated actions that are not true now. With state verbs (be, know, believe), use only used to; with dynamic actions, both forms are fine.

"Before apps, people **would phone** *a taxi firm to book a ride."*

"Most people **used to think** *cars could never drive themselves."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

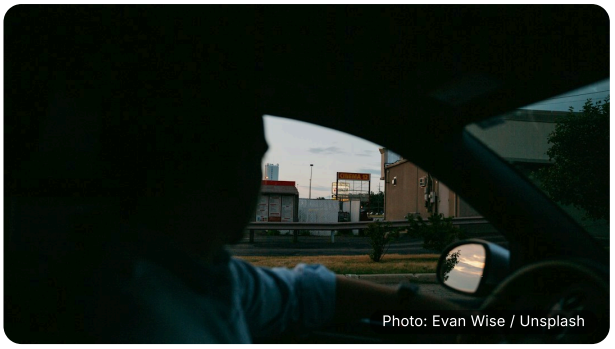
Complete each sentence with used to or would, as the meaning requires.

1. Before satnav, drivers (carry) ___ paper road maps. _____
2. Self-driving cars (be) ___ only science fiction. _____
3. Before card readers, passengers (pay) ___ in cash. _____
4. Early cars (have) ___ no seat belts. _____
5. In the 1990s, taxi firms (use) ___ radios to send drivers out. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Evan Wise / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or concept-check key terms from the text: autonomous, robotaxi, mapping, safety driver, union, congestion, accessibility, devolve. Use quick examples and ask students to paraphrase.
- Run the reading in two passes: first, skim for place, partners and safety setup; second, scan for positions of different stakeholders (Uber, unions, assembly committee). Sensitivity: the topic involves potential job losses; begin discussion in pairs and say students may talk about the news rather than their own jobs.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise each paragraph in one sentence; others highlight facts vs opinions. For extension, ask pairs to list three conditions that would make them feel safe using a robotaxi, then compare lists.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Poll the class first, then pair students from opposite views to find one condition both accept.
2. Board two columns (innovation/jobs). In groups, students propose one policy for each side.
3. Have students choose one risk and give a short example; push for a why/how follow-up.
4. Set a quick checklist (price, route, support line). Pairs agree rules they'd need to ride.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: Teams prepare a 90-second statement for or against allowing robotaxis with a safety driver, then rebut.

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word public notice explaining how the Manchester trial works and why it is limited.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Used to / would

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

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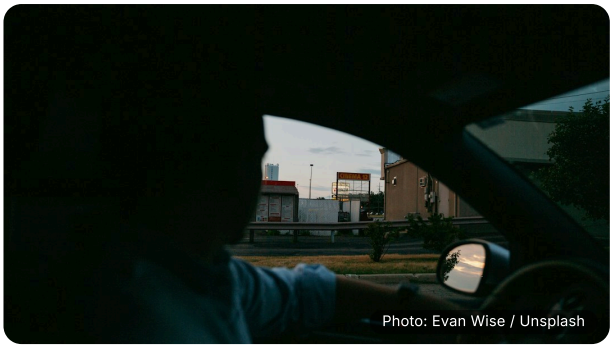


Photo: Evan Wise / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is Uber running its new autonomous vehicle trial?
   In Manchester.
2. Which partner companies supply the technology for the first cars?
   Pony and Verne.
3. What safety setup is used during the Manchester tests?
   A safety driver is in each car and there are no passengers.
4. What did the London Assembly transport committee urge the government to do?
   Devolve control over autonomous taxi services.
5. By when and in how many cities does Uber expect to offer robotaxi trips?
   By the end of 2026, in up to 15 cities.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use used to/would + base verb for past habits or repeated actions that are not true now. With state verbs (be, know, believe), use only used to; with dynamic actions, both forms are fine. (Examples constructed.)

> *"Before apps, people* **would phone** *a taxi firm to book a ride."*
>
> *"Most people* **used to think** *cars could never drive themselves."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with used to or would, as the meaning requires.

1. Before satnav, drivers ___ paper road maps. **used to/would carry**
2. Self-driving cars ___ only science fiction. **used to be**
3. Before card readers, passengers ___ in cash. **used to/would pay**
4. Early cars ___ no seat belts. **used to have**
5. In the 1990s, taxi firms ___ radios to send drivers out. **used to/would use**