

Guide to car sharing

Everything you need to know but are too scared to ask!



Share the car, share the co₂sts!

Car sharing is when two or more people arrange to travel in one car together rather than in two separate cars.

It doesn't matter whether it's with friends, relatives, colleagues or employees from different organizations, if you're not alone in the car you are car sharing.



We all work different hours here so car sharing would be difficult.

"I have had a very positive experience using car share. I travel 65 miles to work 3 days a week and can generally share at least one day a week. It has saved me money and wear and tear on my car, and the sharer is good company and very flexible. A great idea."

Janice, West Swindon

Why should I car share?

As a driver, you can halve your petrol costs by car sharing every day. You can help reduce traffic congestion and pollution, and free up your parking space for somebody who may need to travel further. You will also be reducing the wear and tear on your car, and the mileage that can depreciate a car's value. Sharing the driving can also help to relieve the stress of driving to work, and it can be an enjoyable social activity, enabling you to network with new people who live or work near you.

How would I find someone to share with?

Your organisation may have its own car sharing scheme, so check your intranet or with your HR department. If not, there is a free scheme for people who live or work in Swindon called Carshare Swindon. It's an online matching system, which aims to fill the empty car seats of those who travel in and out of Swindon Borough. It is web based and once you register, you then enter the details of a journey (this could be your commute journey, or an occasional leisure journey). The software will then search through all of the other registered users to try and find a suitable match based on the preferences you have given.

Visit www.carshareswindon.com for details.

But what if no-one lives near me?

There are now well over 2000 people registered on the car share database in the Swindon area, so it's very likely there WILL be someone who lives near you. The database also recognises people signed up to the sister sites in our surrounding area so borders and boundaries are not an issue.

But if there isn't anyone close to your home, then why not pick up someone on your way in? Without going out of your way, there are probably many colleagues who live a stone's throw of where you'll be passing, so it doesn't make sense for them to be sat in their car in the same traffic jam as you.

Is CarshareSwindon.com easy to use?

Simply go to the website at www.carshareswindon.com and click Join. It's free. Once you have registered and activated your account,

you need to be proactive about searching for a match.

The software will produce a list of potential people looking for lifts or offering empty seats and you can either e-mail them or telephone them, depending on the preferences they have set.

It may take a few attempts to find the right match, so be patient and remember to keep visiting the site and searching for new matches as new people are joining all the time.

In fact the opposite is true, flexitime makes it much easier to car share! Both you and your car share partner can negotiate around start and finish times to suit your working and home life. You don't have to commit to sharing every day! There is often one day a week when you know that you are heading straight for base, and coming home afterwards. Also car sharing doesn't have to be both ways – just running someone to work, or back again may be helpful.



"I now take my daughter and a car full of her friends on the school run each day to Faringdon enroute to the office which is just 3 minutes further down the road. So I am happy to be driving along with a full car and taking other parents' cars off the road."

Carolyn, South Marston

Do I have to own a car?

No, people who don't drive or don't have access to a car can also join the scheme. When you register with Carshare Swindon, you can specify that you want to receive lifts only and this means that you can be given a lift and help the driver out with their petrol costs.

If you do have a car you can opt to operate a reciprocal arrangement (you drive one time, your partner drives the next), or one of you drives all the time with the other offering a contribution to the petrol costs.

Do I have to share with somebody at the same work site as me?

Not with the Carshare Swindon website; the online database uses GIS mapping, which means that it searches for registered people within a specified geographical area.

You have the advanced option to select the gender and smoking preferences of the match and to search up to 20km from the start and destination points.

Will car sharing affect my insurance?

As a driver you must be insured and it is advisable to inform your insurance company that you are registered with the scheme. This should incur NO additional costs. Most insurance policies will cover you to carry passengers on your journey to work, as long as you don't charge your passengers more than the running costs of the vehicle.

"I started to share with a lady who lived nearby in Swindon and worked just round the corner from me in Newbury. We've been lift sharing ever since - she normally drives and I give her petrol money. We now lift share several times a week and I only ever have to drive to work occasionally due to slight differences in our working hours. Not only this but we have a good laugh on the journey and she fast became a good friend."

Kathryn, North Swindon:

What about offering a contribution towards petrol costs?

This can be agreed when you are first making arrangements with your car share partner. The easiest way may be to share on a reciprocal basis – you drive one week and your partner drives the next. However, if you are picking somebody up en route / being picked up en route and it's not possible to share equally, then you could suggest the equivalent bus fare, or half of whatever your petrol costs would have been. There are no rules, but make sure everybody's happy with the arrangement.

What about my personal safety?

If you are using the online car share database, it is designed with security in mind and it will not reveal any of your details to other registered

people except those you have chosen as your preferred method of contact (e.g.: phone number or e-mail).

Once you have been matched and organized to share, you can agree a convenient pick up point -we encourage people to meet somewhere open and public, such as a bus stop or outside a shop. This means that your partner doesn't have to know exactly where you live and also saves the driver having to go out of their way to pick you up.

Make sure you take some identification for the first meeting and know what colour and model of car to expect. If you want to share with the same sex only, then you can indicate this when you search for a match. Some people meet up informally beforehand (ie over a coffee) to chat through some ground rules. It's also sensible to tell someone who you are sharing with.



What other things should I consider when I have found a car share partner?

When embarking on car sharing for the first time, don't forget to:

Establish the time, the pick up point and the place to meet for the return journey. Make sure you know what colour and make of car to expect.

- Establish some ground rules, such as smoking, music volume, eating, drinking and temperature in the car. (Do not feel you have to carry on a conversation with car sharers – many people like peace and quiet in the mornings). These things are better discussed in advance to have a better chance of success.
- Agree on acceptable waiting times and be as punctual as possible. If possible, swap mobile telephone numbers, it may help to ring if you are running late or stuck in traffic.
- Establish a chain of communications. Make sure you know the car sharer's contact number in case you are ill or have to change your plans, and agree how and when is best to contact them.
- Don't feel you have to jump right in the deep end to begin with. You can agree to share just one day a week to start off and see how it works out.
- Keep your car in good condition and clean inside. A dirty or unreliable car can spoil the car share relationship.

If you feel unhappy or unsafe at any time with your car share partner, then explain to them that you no longer wish to share.

People get frustrated when there aren't enough parking spaces; drivers get frustrated by the amount of congestion, we all hate the rising costs of fuel ... but if everybody shared their car, they would be part of the solution not the problem.

We would have more empty car parking spaces in the car park, journey times would be sped up with less congestion on the roads, and petrol costs can be shared. There are 10 million empty seats in the UK every day being wasted.

It makes so much sense, but it's up to you!

Log on to www.carshareswindon.com to see who is registered near you!

TOP TIPS

Have you also thought about penciling in one day a week where you don't do any journeys by car?

By planning an "office day" in advance, you can get a lift to work and give your car a break too.

Car sharing works just as well when it isn't an "every day" commitment.

Why not try it one day a week?

Does your employer encourage car sharing?

Some organisations in Swindon offer priority parking spaces for car sharers, and offer a "guaranteed ride home" for you or your car sharer so that nobody's stranded if there's an emergency during the working day.

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