

Failure drives young innovator to help others get behind the wheel

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Fifty percent of all trainee drivers in the UK will fail their theory test* but a young award-winning Edinburgh-based innovator has created the ultimate tool to make it easier and more fun for thousands of young people to learn to drive safely.

Matthew Carter failed his own theory test shortly after graduating with a Masters in Product Design from Strathclyde University. But on the day he walked home from his first failed attempt, he was hit by a lightbulb moment. The result is the world's first educational colouring book on driving theory that uses diagrams not descriptions to engage young people in learning. It has already been endorsed by numerous driving instructors and has helped testers of the book pass their tests.

'As I trudged home for my test, I was looking at all these people sitting in their cars and I thought, I've got a degree but I still can't pass a simple theory test,' said Matthew. 'I had used loads of different ways to try to memorise the answers from monotonous apps to boring text books, but then I realised I needed to do more than learn answer by rote. This test is a crucial part of improving road safety. We need to know and remember this stuff so we are better drivers. I knew the way I remember best was visually so I created a colouring book. I passed on my second attempt.'

Anatomical colouring books have been used for more than 40 years to train doctors and now Matthew has used the approach to help trainee drivers absorb and retain every single aspect of driving theory. Teaming up with illustrator Katie Forbes and driving professionals, he created The Theory Test Educational Book for Learners, A Colouring Book. An 'offline' learning solution free from distractions which can disrupt learning on mobile phones, the book contains concise learning points, paired with beautiful illustrations to explain the learning points. Readers can then colour in the illustrations, making it easy to commit the theory to memory.

"Only using multiple choice apps and books is like trying to pass an exam by only studying past exam papers. You need to use the textbook too. Unfortunately the textbook is the Highway Code which is a 36,000 word book of rules. It's not easy to read or remember. That's where we come in" - Matthew Carter

The theory test is a compulsory component of obtaining a licence to drive in the UK, and involves answering at least 43 of 50 multiple choice questions correctly. There are 1.9 million attempts at the theory every year; only 50 per cent are successful.

'As a visual learner, revising for my theory test seemed far from appealing. But then I had the opportunity to Study in Colour and found that this unique study aid really helped. Very interactive and original idea - I passed with flying colours!' said Grace Feakes, an advertising post-graduate student at Leeds University.

He has since won numerous awards and grants, valued at nearly £4000, that have enabled him to set up his own publishing house, Colour Academy, and launch his book as the first in a series called Study in Colour.

He is currently one of 15 young entrepreneurs on the shortlist for a Young EDGE award, which could bring in an additional £15,000. He was also: recognised as one of Scotland's young disruptors by the Sir Tom Hunter Foundation; highly commended in the SIE Fresh Ideas Competition winning intellectual property grant funding by SIE; won a 'Will it Work' grant from the Prince's Trust and achieved top 60 in the Converge Challenge Kickstart category, awaiting final presentation. While still at university he won through to Strathclyde University Rising Stars program for business acceleration and snapped up a coveted place on the Royal Bank of Scotland's Entrepreneur Accelerator programme.

But it's the young people who have benefited most from his innovation.

'Study in Colour helped me start revising for my Theory Test. I was really struggling to get into the material but the book made it easy and fun to begin studying! I Passed first time!' said Abbie Irving, a student at Strathclyde University.

The book is now available for pre-order, with books coming fresh off the press on Monday 26 November 2018.

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**All stats regarding the theory test are from DVSA.*

About the Team

Matthew Carter grew up in Edinburgh and attended James Gillespie's High School. After reconnecting with old teachers, Matthew held a focus group with current pupils for early feedback on prototype books he'd created at JGHS. This feedback was instrumental in the development of the book. Matthew is a recent graduate of the University of Strathclyde, and is part of the University's Rising Stars program that accelerates entrepreneurs.

Colour Academy Publishing Ltd is a start-up publishing company created by Matthew Carter after graduating from Strathclyde. The company aim is to create books that help visual learners study and pass national tests. The theory test book was developed over a 12 month period with three rounds of user testing throughout product development.

Illustrator Katie Forbes, originally from Tain, is an award-winning architect student at the University of Strathclyde, where she met Matthew. Earlier this year, she completed an exchange at the Bauhaus University in Weimer, Germany. She developed her artistic talent after working as an artist in the famous Tain Pottery throughout high school. Katie's unique style and humour gives the book its charming character.

Notes to editors:

The UK Car Theory Test is set by the DVSA. Key Facts:

- Contains a 50 question multiple choice test, in which you must score at-least 43/50 to pass.
- Must be passed before the practical driving test can be taken.

- There are ~1.9m attempts at the theory test every year, with a pass rate of ~50%.
- The Theory Test costs £23 for each attempt

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Matthew is available for interview; we would be pleased to arrange a trial for one of your journalists.

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