



## Driving test check list

The driving test itself is not that difficult. All you need to do is stay calm and go for a drive.

For every driving test, I normally sit with my students and discuss things they need to be aware of. I thought you would be useful if I put these thoughts down on paper so that you can read them yourself; so without further ADO let's crack on.

### Have you got your driving licence with you?

Please remember that you only need to bring your driving licence which is the bank-card shaped piece of plastic. Previously you also had the counterpart which was the A4 piece of paper. This piece of paper is no longer a legal document and can now be destroyed.

When you book your driving test, you are told to bring your theory test certificate with you. This message is a generic message used for all types of driving licence category (you're going for category B as a learner car driver). The government already knows that you have passed your theory test because it is linked into your driver number and so was logged when you passed your theory. If the government didn't know about your theory pass, then it would not have allowed you to book a driving test. It is for this reason that the driving examiners do not ask to see your certificate.

For other licence categories other than your own, the same linking of theory and practical tests does not yet exist and so they DO have to produce the theory certificate. The generic message is designed for those people and not for you. Of course, if you want to bring your certificate there is nothing stopping you, it's just that you don't need to so don't panic if you can't find it.

### Is the address correct?

Have you moved house since getting your provisional licence? If you have then we need to tell the examiner so that they can tell you how to get your new licence when you pass.

If it's going to be a while then I suggest that you get your licence updated because there's a £1000 fine, yes ONE THOUSAND POUND fine for incorrect details.

It's free to update your licence and can be done here:

<https://www.gov.uk/change-address-driving-licence>



Ouch!!

### Signature the same?

Not so big an issue this one, just make sure that you sign it the same as your driving licence when asked to by the examiner. Again, you can update all of this if you have made a change.

### Head restraint position OK?

Just make sure that you have put your head restraint at the right place as you would when doing your normal cockpit drills.





## Relax, it's just a drive to collect a prescription for the examiner

Now we both know that a driving test can't be any more complicated than just driving around. You will need to drive for approximately 30 minutes showing how you deal with the various situations that you come across.

Nobody knows what will happen on the day of your test. All we know is that you will have a route to go around. Whilst on that route, anything could happen and you will just need to deal with it in a logical way. That way doesn't need to be the way the examiner would do it; it just needs to be a logical solution to a problem that takes into account the effect on others –if it's safe then the examiner will like it.

A driving test consists of:

- a minimum of 28 minutes of driving
- 10 minutes of that will be the independent drive (following directions or signs)
- 1 manoeuvre randomly picked on the day from the 4 you'll have practiced
- Possibly 1 emergency stop (on average only 1 in 3 tests get an emergency stop; it's randomly checked)

Now, we know that this is going to happen. If you can't do some of it then don't go to the test until you can. If I was going to be asked to make a cup of tea, I wouldn't ask to be assessed on tea making until I could make a good cuppa!

There are examples of previous test routes available to download from my website. You've probably even done some in the car with me already. Those routes that you have seen are actual routes that I recorded whilst on a test. Do you feel confident that you could deal with the roundabouts, traffic, emergency services, pedestrians and the rules of the road whilst going around them? If so then you are ready; if not, then why are you going to the test?

Loads of people get wound up worrying about the driving test but really there is nothing to worry about.

Let's put this into perspective:

- Driving a car is a luxury, nice to have but lots of people survive without a licence.
- Don't get me wrong, it's exceedingly useful to have one, but if you fail the test, you're no worse off than you currently are.
- You will get a licence; we just hope that it's at your upcoming test, if it isn't though, you'll get it at a later date.
- No one is going to burn your house down or kill your cat if you fail; you just improve in the areas that the examiner comments on and then you'll pass next time.
- Most examiners are ex-driving instructors. They have children of their own and they wish you nothing but the best. I had an examiner comment that she was having a bad day because she had failed the previous 6 people that day for not being at the right standard. She thanked my student for giving a nice courteous drive, gave a few pointers on ways of improving to keep safe and gave her a licence.





The examiner was upset and annoyed that she had to ruin 6 peoples days because the driving instructors had allowed those people to go to a test when they weren't safe enough to be allowed on the road on their own.

A driving examiners job is to assess your drive and make sure that you can safely control a big metal box that kills people. They're primarily concerned with keeping you and others alive and won't sign the paperwork if you give them doubt.

Think of it this way: Your dad says you can use his car if you can prove that you are safe and responsible. To be unbiased, he asks your neighbour to go for a drive with you and report back. The neighbour, reports back that, ok you were a bit fast on the odd corner, missed 1 indicator but was impressed with your awareness of your surroundings and overall, you're a safe driver. So you get the keys to your dads Porsche – yeah right....

Be nice to the examiner – they are only trying to keep you alive; and if they think that you would benefit from a few more hours under my wing before being released on your own, then they will ask you to go and practice more. They do not like making you cry and they much prefer seeing people bouncing up and down and running around excited. They also have less paperwork to do if you pass (I understand) so they really want you to pass.

I have seen many examiners pass someone who has failed their manoeuvre but produced a great drive because you only do the manoeuvre periodically. So there you have it, they pass people who are safe even if they should fail them technically. Of course, if you start driving on pavements or trying to hit cars, miss pedestrian crossings or drive too fast for conditions, then your core drive needs work and so you will rightly fail.

## To help you, let's look at a couple of scenarios:

### Scenario 1.

You're on your driving test and you're being judged by an examiner who will pick holes in your driving.

He sits in the car and then says, 'turn right, turn left and follow signs for Reading'. When you get to Southwood he asks you to turn the car around and then he directs you back to the test centre.

### Scenario 2.

You've gone to the test centre to do a mock with me. The examiner comes out and says, 'Gav, can you help me please? I have damaged my leg and can't drive, I need to get to the pharmacy to pick a prescription but they close soon, can you give me a lift?'

'Well I'd like to buddy but it's Dave's driving lesson'

'oh don't worry about that, you jump in the back and I'll direct Dave there'

'ok, no probs' So I get out and sit behind Dave.





'Ok Dave, turn right, turn left, then follow signs for Reading'. Now assuming that you're at the Farnborough test centre, signs for Reading will take you to Southwood whereupon he says 'Park here please'.

He nips out, gets his prescription, jumps back in. 'Just turn the car round Dave'. So you do (that's your 'turn in the road' manoeuvre done!). Great, now he just says, 'at the roundabout go ahead, right at the traffic lights ' etc.

Soon enough you're back at the test centre having done the examiner a favour and he's so delighted that you get a licence. Now, providing you didn't scare him or anyone else, why wouldn't he like getting a lift?

### Yeah, but . . . .

Now we both know that what I have just described is the same thing; you're just going to Southwood and back again in a loop that takes about half an hour.

Can you turn left and right? Can you deal with roundabouts? Do you make sure you're not going to hit anyone before you do something? OF COURSE YOU CAN!! IT'S CALLED LOOKING AROUND AND BEING SENSIBLE!!!!

If you do either scenario, you'll do the same thing. However!!!! Doing someone a favour is far less daunting than going on a test so just think of it in that way and it's much easier.

Whether or not you can do it comes down to how you view the test. If you allow your nerves to overpower you then you will more than likely fail the test, just relax and drive to Southwood.

A very wise woman once told me:



Even the Queen goes to the loo son, we're all the same; we just do different jobs

Thanks mum. Don't make the examiner out to be someone they aren't; you're just as important as they are.

She also said:



That's no mountain for a stepper'



What she means is, you could look at a mountain and be daunted by it:



I'll never climb that!!!!

OR you could break it down into more manageable chunks.



Yeah Baby!! That's just stepping on one rock and repeating 1 million times – a bit boring but nothing I can't do!!

A driving test is the same thing. All you have to do is turn left and right at a few junctions and repeat for half an hour. As long as you know it is safe to turn when you do so, then each corner will be fault free. At the end of the test, you will have a collection of perfect corners and the examiner will be delighted with you.

## There are four categories

When you are doing your lessons, I will often mark your score sheet as having minors or serious faults. I tend to mark every fault so that I don't forget to improve areas of weakness. The examiners angle is more from a road safety point of view.

They use:

**Not worth mentioning** – this would be a small error like slightly cutting a white line or slightly breaking the speed limit and then immediately fixing it; so they don't mention it.

**Driver faults** – This is an error like stalling the car. You have done something but it didn't really affect anyone. You can still pass your test with 15 driver faults.

**Serious faults** – This is a potentially safety critical error. An example would be going around a corner too fast thus going across the central line potentially into the path of oncoming vehicles. There isn't a car there at the time so no one was affected but you were just lucky that no one was there.

**Dangerous faults** – This is an actual safety critical error. Same error of going around a corner too fast thus going across the central line but this time there was a car there. The examiner feels the need to step in either verbally or physically.



This means that you can fail for 16 or more driver faults or 1 serious fault or 1 dangerous fault. It's also worth pointing out that if you get 5 driver faults in the same field then you can have that converted into a serious fault at the examiner discretion.

Interestingly though, because of the 'Not worth mentioning' category, people often think that they have made errors thus failed the test and then discover that the examiner didn't care about the error.

## **NEVER THROW THE TOWEL IN – YOU MAY NOT HAVE FAILED YET!**

### Feel free to ask questions

The examiners are not there to catch you out; if you are confused about anything or lost, just ask them and they will happily clarify anything that you are unsure about.

### Never do something suddenly

If you suddenly change speed or direction, you are likely to confuse or inconvenience other road users. You are marked on how you could potentially affect others and so you should not do anything that you

1. Haven't warned people about or
2. Don't look like you're doing

### You are allowed to go the wrong way

**You are not marked on where you go, you are marked on how you get there.**

If you drive into a left turn only lane, just go left! The examiner will then point out that you may have gone the wrong way and redirect you back on route.

The risk is that the road you went down by accident might lead you to make an error, but if you don't make an error then all you've done is make your test 2 minutes longer than it needs to be – so relax.

I sometimes get into the wrong lane in an area I don't know – it's normal! The question is, do you cut people up trying to force your way back into the correct lane or do you do the safest option of just going the wrong way, turning around and then going the correct way?



SAFETY ALWAYS!!

YOU ARE GUARANTEED TO FAIL IF YOU GO AGAINST AN ARROW ON THE FLOOR. IF A LANE SAYS IT GOES LEFT OR AHEAD, YOU GO LEFT OR AHEAD. I DON'T CARE IF YOU WANTED TO GO RIGHT – YOU WILL FAIL IF YOU DO.

### Stalling is a driver fault

We all stall so expect to get 1 driver fault if you do. I have seen people pass having stalled 4 times so don't panic! The time people fail is when they just drive off after stalling without checking it's safe to move off.

If you stall, people behind you are likely to overtake you; why wouldn't they? Just make sure you check before you move off again and all will be fine.





## Play dead when parking up

On the driving test, you will be asked to park up by the side of the road about four times. They are checking to see if you use your mirrors and tell people what you were doing before you do it. They are also checking that you look for people before pulling away again. Don't forget that you must do a second blind spot check over your right shoulder when moving off at an angle; this would normally happen when pulling off from behind a parked car at about 45 degrees.

It is quite common for a learner to park and 1) leave the left indicator going, 2) leave the car still in the same gear they approached in and 3) just put the handbrake on.

When they go to move off again, they pull away with the left indicator still going and possibly stall from having the wrong gear chosen. If you always ensure that you have switched everything off and put the car into neutral, then when you go to pull away there will be no issues. Even if you had pulled away safely, some people still have the left indicator going and panic because they've pulled away with the wrong signal –the examiner probably doesn't even care but the student will worry about it unnecessarily.

If you always reset the car when you park up, the car will be OK when you pull away again.

## Watch lane markings

It goes without saying, that you should watch where you're driving. Remember that the back of the car turns tighter than the front and so you should ensure that you drive in your lane accordingly to avoid wandering into other lanes.

## Keep your eyes peeled

Why would an examiner ask you to go down a road if there wasn't something to test you on? Never drop your guard and be alert.

As an example, the examiner could ask you to take the first right turning but this might be the second road on the right due to the first road having a no entry sign. They are not trying to trick you, they are checking that you would not blindly follow a satnav but actually take responsibility for your drive.

## Phone off?

You don't need unnecessary distractions, turn it off or at least put it on silent mode.

Whilst on this topic, don't forget that it is illegal to hold anything whilst driving. A student once started to open a bottle of water at a traffic light but then put it back again and the examiner commented at the end that they would have to fail them had she started drinking it.

## Happy turning lights and wipers on and off?

You don't know what the weather will do whilst you are out. Make sure that you know how the wipers work correctly on your car; the same goes for your lights.

## You are in charge of the car

Don't forget that you are in charge of the car. If the examiner asks you to do something that you feel is unsafe, don't do it.





Now the examiner will never ask you to do something dangerous or break the law, but you might mishear them. An example of this might be that the examiner asks you to turn first right. When he asks you this, you might be currently approaching a left turn; it is very common for people to try and please the examiner, be mistaken and suddenly turn left. You should avoid suddenly doing anything on the driving test as this may result in a collision.

If I was driving somewhere and my wife suddenly said 'oh it's this turning on the left now', I would simply go ahead, turn around and then come back to the road and go down it; I would not potentially endanger myself or anyone else just because we were near the junction.

### Watch safety margins

Only a fool breaks the 2 second rule! Officially this kicks in at 40mph but I find it's applicable at all speeds.

Having said that, I personally add 1 additional second and make it 3 as the 2 second rule is the MINIMUM distance; the more you have, the safer you are. Additionally, if you count fast then having less than 3 seconds doesn't frighten the examiner but less than 2 will.

It's 2 in the dry (but make it 3)

4 in the wet (but make it 5)

20 when on snow and ice (but if it's like that, the test will have been cancelled anyway)

Also, you should count: one Mississippi, two Mississippi as this actually takes 2 seconds to say.

### Buses and learners, plan to go around them

You are supposed to be emulating going for a drive to get somewhere. Any normal person would wait for a safe opportunity to go around a learner and then carry on their journey. You should do the same because you are saying that you are a normal driver now.

The examiner is looking for a driver not a learner; therefore do not drive like a learner, just get on with it when safe to do so.

Just as a word of caution, the Highway Code states that you should give way to buses wishing to re-join the traffic if safe to do so. If you have started to overtake and they move forward, just keep going. Buses usually stop facing the kerb; in order to move off again, they need to move forward a metre or so.

They do this so that they can use the door mirror to see if they are being overtaken; do not panic when this happens, expect it and don't worry.

### Cyclists, give them room

Do not risk the life of a cyclist because you feel that you have to continue making progress. If it is not safe to overtake, do not overtake.

When passing a cyclist, you should allow the same amount of room as overtaking a car and then you can pass at any speed you like (subject to speed limits of course). If this is not practical, leave room for a virtual cycle path and pass them no more than 10 miles per hour faster than they are currently travelling.







## Test centre car parks

Reading has a STOP sign at the exit of the car park. Everyone MUST stop at the line and then creep.

Farnborough is just a normal road exit but because you can see quite well, some people have been tempted to cut the corner on the exit.

DO NOT demonstrate to the examiner that you are happy to exit a road on the entrance – driving on the wrong side of the road when you don't have to is not recommended and WILL result in a fail (See imaginary car below)

## Never wave people across the road

By all means give pedestrians the opportunity to cross ahead of you by staying back but never beckon somebody to walk into the road. If you give someone the opportunity to go, they will check both ways and walk out when safe. If you wave someone out, they will step out into potential traffic without looking first.

To invite someone out into traffic is an immediate fail.

## Examiners use an imaginary car

To be consistent across the country, examiners have been told to use an imaginary car in situations in order to help them decide if someone is driving dangerously.

An example would be where a car turns left into a side road but is travelling so fast that they end up crossing the central white line in the new road. The examiner won't wait for you to crash into something before commenting that it is dangerous driving, they will use an imaginary car and if you would have hit it then you have driven dangerously.

Because of this, they can now use an imaginary car wherever they like. They will use it when you are driving somewhere you don't need to be. If you need to be on the wrong side because of a parked car for instance – don't worry, this is perfectly acceptable.

## If it's raining – slow down!

You have to be mindful of speed limits and of an appropriate speed.

If you are driving in dangerous conditions such as heavy rain or passing near parked cars then it is prudent to slow down to minimise risk to us and others. You might not be breaking the law but risking life and limb by crashing through deep puddles would be daft.

Keep your sensible head on when driving. A bit of rain might mean that a nice straight road can be taken at the same speed as when dry but corners will present reduced grip for braking and turning so come in slower and drive sensibly. If the same road has deep puddles on it then a reduction in speed on the straights would make sense.

## Stay calm

Be self-aware. When you speak in public or do presentations, you're always told to speak slower because adrenaline is coursing through your veins and makes everything feel slow. As a result of adrenaline you end up talking really fast and no one can understand you.





The same drug in your body makes you drive faster, brake later and talk like you're some sort of simpleton. Now, always assess what you are doing; if you come into a corner too fast and make a messy corner then acknowledge that the test is making you drive out of character, relax and then just come in slower for the next corner.

I have seen many excellent drivers drive like complete numpties when under pressure and it all comes down to letting nerves take over.

You will be asked 4 times to park on the left to check that you're using your mirrors, warning people, picking suitable places to park and doing second blind spot checks when pulling away. This means that you have 4 places where you can relax again, take a deep breath and take a moment to compose yourself.

The examiner always says for you to move off when YOU feel ready to go, so don't rush; take your time, chill out a bit.

I've even seen students ask to park up because they were getting wound up due to an error they had just made; the examiner agreed, they took a moment and then carried on AND THEY STILL PASSED!!!

### We drive on the left

You'd think this is an obvious one but many people fail for driving in the right hand lane for no reason.

The right hand lane is for overtaking or turning right. It is illegal to pass on the left in free flowing traffic. If you drive on the right, people can't physically use the right hand lane to pass you, they also can't legally use the left lane to pass thus you are monopolising two lanes – rude!

It's fine to use the right hand lane when required but if you don't need it, get out of it! Always be self-aware and make sure you are behaving yourself.

### Just queue on the left in traffic

You might come across 2 lanes with cars queuing, such as at a traffic light.

You are, of course, most welcome to queue in the right hand lane and overtake those on the left if you so wish. The right hand lane is for overtaking or turning right so if you don't plan on out-accelerating the cars on the left then don't use the right hand lane.

You also don't know when the examiner will give you then next instruction so just staying on the left just makes life easier.

The exception to the above is on dual carriageways. The examiner normally tells you that you will be on the road for 2 miles so if you think you can overtake in time then please do; if you're not sure, just follow the car in front at a safe distance.

### Leave room to pull away again after parking behind a car

This is a lesson we can all learn from someone else's mistake.





A student was asked to park up before the next parked car. When they parked up, they decided to move forward a bit to clear the driveway that they would otherwise have been parked in front of; this left no room to move off safely though.

The examiner asked them to move off again, so they did. They didn't back up first though and so the examiner had to hit the brake to avoid hitting the car in front.

This goes down to keeping calm again. Any sensible person would reverse back because there wasn't room to move off but because of being in test conditions, the student just tried to please the examiner and took an unnecessary risk.

Come on people, you're being tested to see what you would do in given situations, just do the safe logical thing and you'll be fine!

### Admit your errors

This is really important!!

The examiner wants someone who is self-aware. If you make an error, a good driver recognises it and tries not to make the error again.

MEGA IMPORTANT  
POINT!!!!



Some people think that they should not admit errors because the examiner may not have seen it – yeah right! A person whose job it is to assess people's abilities doesn't watch the person they're assessing? Really?

You should assume that they are the All-Seeing-Eye and know exactly what is going on, you can't get away with anything, they see and know everything.

If you make an error and don't mention it, they are left wondering if you even know what you're doing – not a good situation. If you don't even know what you're doing, how are you going to know what other people are doing around you?

I've seen students make errors, admit the error, fix the error and at the end the examiner didn't even mark the sheet because we're all human and errors happen. However, I have also seen people do the same error, keep quiet and they were marked every time.

It's like at school, you get points for showing your working out. The end result might be wrong but you'd still get points because 90% of the thought process was correct. If you only show your end result, it's either right or wrong so if the last 10% was wrong, it's all wrong.

Help yourself out a bit and show the examiner that you know what you're doing, show off a bit with your excellent awareness and thought processes!

### Your manoeuvre only has to be 'good enough'

If I ask you to make a cup of tea, as long as it's made with tea, it's brown, warm and wet, it is a cup of tea. Doesn't have to be a good cup of tea, it might be awful and I'll wish we had a load of sugar, but you gave me what I asked for. The manoeuvres are the same. Don't panic, as long as you complete the manoeuvre and don't kill anyone, you'll still be fine, even if it was rubbish.





## Have strength of conviction

What this means is that you need to have faith in your ability to assess a situation and come up with a solution. I have recently had 2 people fail after 10 months of first-time passers and they both boil down to trusting your training and doing what you know is right.

### **Error 1**

First student was asked to follow signs for Reading (the sign said: right 3<sup>rd</sup> exit)  
They missed the sign and arrived in the left lane with no indicator going.  
The lane was marked as left or ahead only.  
The student said 'oops I'm in the wrong lane', they then checked, indicated right and turned right.  
They immediately failed.

What they should have done is go ahead because they were in the left lane with no indicator going, thus they looked like they were going ahead. All the traffic around them thought they were going ahead so to turn right will likely catch someone out and inconvenience them.

The issue is that they were at the give way line. Had they noticed the problem with many car lengths to go before the give way line, they would have had time to lane change before arriving at the roundabout. So, look ahead, plan and if you make a mistake, just go the wrong way; you do not get penalised for going the wrong way only for potential dangerous driving.

### **Error 2**

We were correctly sat at a zebra crossing allowing pedestrians to cross.  
A large group of pedestrians approached from the right of the crossing and we were delayed for a long while as they kept coming.  
Prior to crossing, some pedestrians stopped to wait for their friends to catch them up.  
Two cars opposite saw a gap in the pedestrians and drove through (thus breaking the law by driving on an occupied crossing).  
The cars driving across blocked the pedestrians that were now waiting to cross.  
My student suddenly doubted themselves and thought that they must have got the wrong end of the stick; 'if those cars are going, surely I should be going as well then!' they thought.  
They started to move off and the examiner stopped them because we are at a crossing with pedestrians waiting to cross.

Now, anyone would tell you that you should wait if people are attempting to cross; it's logical! But in the pressure of the test, it's easy to doubt yourself and copy others. If the student had strength of conviction and waited they would have passed that test.

### **Error 3**

This is a common error that I often see.  
4 cars go out on test and leave the test centre at the same time.  
First car in the group gets into the wrong lane to go somewhere.  
The next 3 all copy the car in front of them.

Don't copy them! They're a learner under pressure! That's the last person you should copy.

Have faith that your training is correct and just do as you are taught by me – you will be fine!

