



What is the process for learning to drive?

Provisional Licence

For starters, you need to apply for a provisional licence. You can apply for your driving licence once you are over 16½ but can't sit any tests or drive on a public road until your 17th birthday. You are not allowed to take **driving lessons** until your provisional licence has been accepted and in your possession. Application process is easy. You simply need to fill out a driving licence application from the Direct Gov website (see the links on my website) and pay a provisional licence fee (£50 as at 26/8/2012).

Provisional licences, however, puts drivers under certain restrictions.

1. You must clearly display L-plates on the front and rear of your car.
2. You can't drive a car alone. Learner driver must be supervised by a full driving licence holder aged at least 21.
3. Learner drivers are not allowed to use motorways.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PROVISIONAL LICENCE CONSISTS OF A PHOTO ID CARD THE SIZE OF A CREDIT CARD AND THE A4 PAPER COUNTERPART. BOTH PARTS MAKE 1 DOCUMENT; WITHOUT BOTH PARTS YOU ARE UNABLE TO TAKE THE DRIVING TEST SO YOU MUST KEEP BOTH PARTS SAFE!

Driving test

You will have to pass the UK **driving test** before you can get your full driving licence. Worried about deteriorating road safety, Driving Standard Agency (DSA) continues its efforts to improve the ways learner drivers are tested. We have seen some changes introduced over the past several years and further revisions are on the way, however, the current requirements currently consists of two basic parts: **theory test** and **practical driving test**.

Theory Test Overview

Your theory test will include two parts:

Part 1: multiple-choice questions test

Part 2: hazard perception test

Both parts are done in the one session with a few minutes rest between. You have to pass both parts in order to pass the theory test, fail one part and you have to sit both again.

Now don't worry about the tests; you sit in a room with a number of other people also doing them. You are all in your own cubicles so you can't disturb or be disturbed by others. You look at a monitor and have a mouse.

The test starts and you answer multiple choice questions, check your answers, then finish. A few minutes later you move on to the hazard perception part. You are now shown 14 video clips. You click the mouse whenever you see a hazard; 14 clips later, you leave the room and collect your results from the desk outside.

ONCE YOU PASS THE THEORY TEST YOU NEED TO KEEP THE PASS CERTIFICATE YOU ARE GIVEN. IT CONTAINS A REFERENCE NUMBER THAT YOU NEED TO BOOK PRACTICAL DRIVING TESTS!!! KEEP THIS DOCUMENT SAFE





Part 1: Multiple-choice test

To pass this test you need to demonstrate your knowledge of the Highway Code and a level of common sense. There are approximately 310 rules and a number of pictures or diagrams in the Highway Code. You could be asked questions from a bank of approximately 1400 questions. This basically means that you could be asked the same question five different ways - so it's not that bad!!!!

During the multiple-choice part you have 57 minutes to answer 50 questions; to pass the test you need to score at least 43 out of 50.

Part 2: Hazard Perception

The hazard perception test starts a few minutes after the multiple choice questions part. You will be shown 14 video clips. 13 of these videos have one hazard in them and 1 video has 2 hazards; you never know when the 2 hazard video will pop up so you have to keep watching till the end of each video.

You click the mouse whenever you see a hazard or potential hazard. The sooner you identify the hazard, the higher you score on that video. The highest score you can get for each hazard is five. The pass mark is 44 out of 75.

The videos explained

Let's say a video is 3 minutes long. It will show you looking through the windscreen of a vehicle at a typical road ahead of you; the car is driving down the road. At some point something will happen that could cause you to change speed or direction. This will be a mobile object such as a pedestrian or car, not something immobile like a road sign or turning.

In this example, let's pretend that the event happens 53 seconds into the video and stops 58 seconds into the video.

Time clicked	Score
Before 53 seconds	0
53	5
54	4
55	3
56	2
57	1
After 57 seconds	0

WARNING!!!!!!

The program is looking for cheating so avoid:

Clicking 3 times or more in quick succession

Clicking in a pattern such as once every second

If the program suspects you of cheating, you will get a message displayed and score zero for that video.





Practical Driving Test

Just for clarification purposes, there are no targets or limits on the number of people allowed to pass each day or month. If you are good, you get a licence, if not, you don't; simples!!!

Once you've passed **theory test** you are allowed to take a **practical driving test**. At the time of writing, the test costs £62 during the week and £75 if taken at a weekend.

The test lasts approximately 40 minutes and all they're looking for is:

A nice safe drive

Reasonable car control

You to abide by any road signs of road markings

Your ability to anticipate dangers and do something about them

That's it! Drive nicely for about 35 - 40 minutes, don't do anything dangerous or potentially dangerous and you'll get a driving licence at the end of it. Just pretend that the examiner is your granny with a cup of coco in her hand; take her for a drive and you want her to return safely not having got flustered or spilled her coco.

As you walk to the car, you will be asked 2 questions out of 19 on basic car maintenance – all the answers of which you will know before the test so don't worry (Have a look around my website – I'll get the show me tell me questions on there). We will go through all of them before the test and I'll make sure you can understand and do everything; it's all quite simple and basically common sense. For each question you get wrong, you will be given a minor mark.

Once you have completed the "show me tell me" questions, you go for a drive and show your driving skills off.

Your examiner will give you directions which you should follow. For 10 minutes of the test you will also be asked to drive independently; an example could be 'follow signs for Reading'. You'll be also asked to perform 1 manoeuvre and a hill start and maybe perform an emergency stop (1 in 3 tests get an emergency stop on average).

The manoeuvres you need to be able to perform and so could be asked to perform are:

Reverse from main road into side road with the kerb to the left of the car (commonly known as a left reverse).

Reverse from main road into side road with the kerb to the right of the car (commonly known as a right reverse).

Turn In the Road (commonly, but incorrectly, known as the 3 point turn).

Parallel park behind a car, parallel to the kerb.

Reverse park into a parking space with the space on your left or right (commonly known as a bay park).

There is a marking sheet that the examiner marks your drive against. If you make a mistake you get a mark in a box. At the end of the test you must have no more than 15 minor faults on your sheet to get a licence.





The test marking system

There are 3 columns that the examiner can mark: Minor, Serious or Dangerous. You can be given Minor, Serious or Dangerous for the same fault so it's best not to do the fault in the first place.

The difference between a Serious and a Dangerous mark is that the examiner can call an end to the test if you are driving dangerously and the pair of you have to WALK back to the test centre. Get just one Serious or Dangerous and you have failed your test. Also bear in mind that the examiner can decide to turn a group of Minors into a Serious if they feel that you have an inherent problem with your driving. (i.e. getting 5 Minors for not checking your mirrors could be turned into a Serious, but getting the odd Minor here and there for different things wouldn't be converted.)

Let's say that the only fault you are making is to not checking your left mirror when turning left.

1. If there was no one else around at the time, you would get a Minor mark.
2. If there was a cyclist on the road that you had recently passed on the approach to the left turn; you would be expected to be looking out for them and so you would get a Serious mark (it is quite a serious problem if you know there are vulnerable road users around and don't look out for them).
3. If that cyclist was so close that they had to take evasive action to avoid being hit, you would get a Dangerous mark.

So as you can see, it isn't necessarily what you do, but more the outcome of what you do that decides how you are marked. You must be at the required standard before going for the test; you need to be able to deal with whatever the public throw at you so that in light or heavy traffic, pedestrians or not, you are able to cope with them all. If you don't make a mistake then you can't be marked down for it!

This also means that a substandard driver can pass their driving test if they are fortunate to be in light traffic. However, in normal traffic, that substandard driving will be exposed and they will fail.

It is quite common for people to book a driving test and 'just wing it'; as yet I haven't seen anyone pass the test when they do this. I also should point out that local knowledge of the area is a great advantage, booking a test in a town you don't know rarely pays off. Of course, if you are to the correct standard it shouldn't matter where your test is taken, but knowing how a road is laid out before you get there sure does help – You have been warned!!

