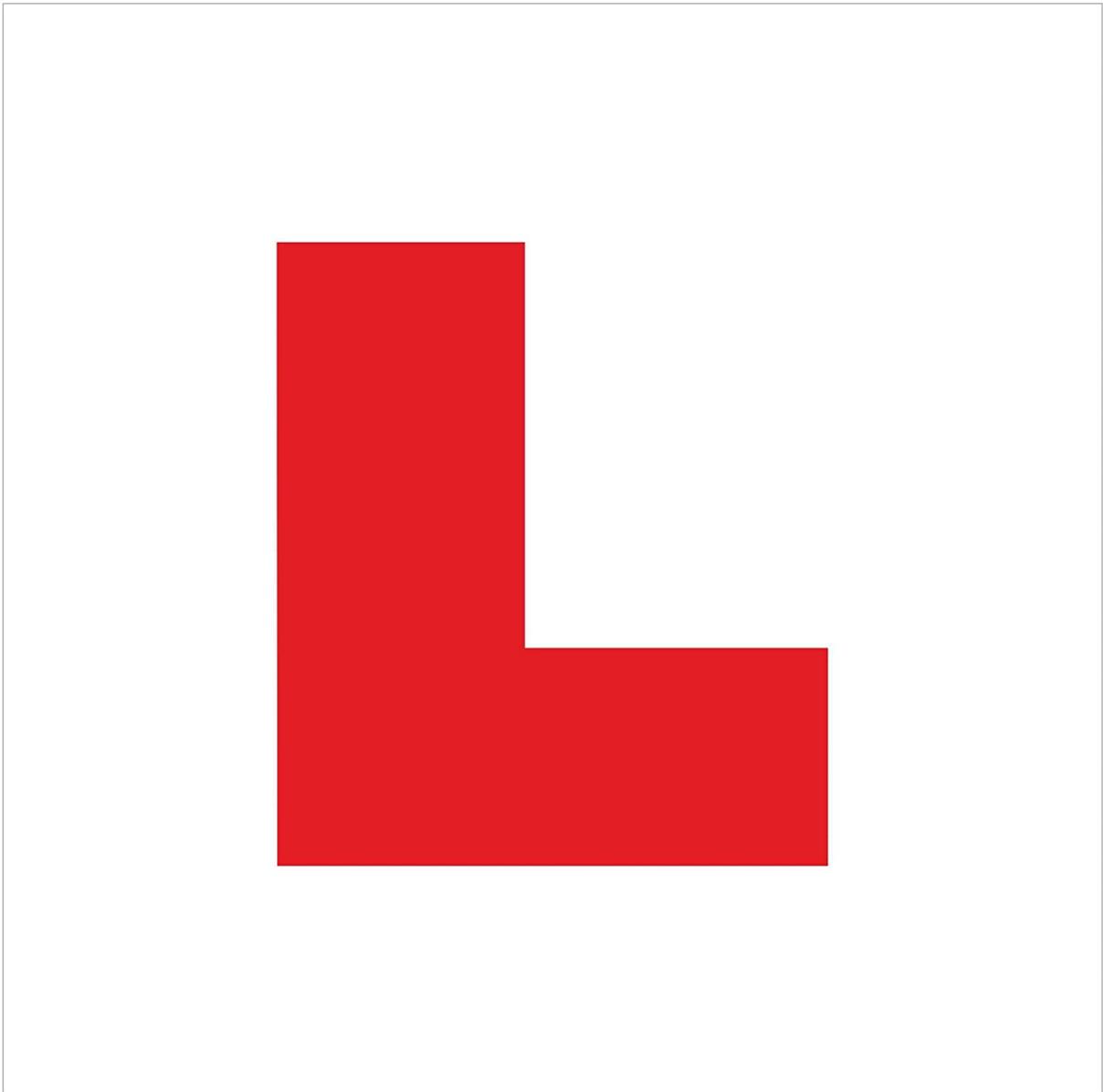




Relax, it's just a
driving test!





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Introduction

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

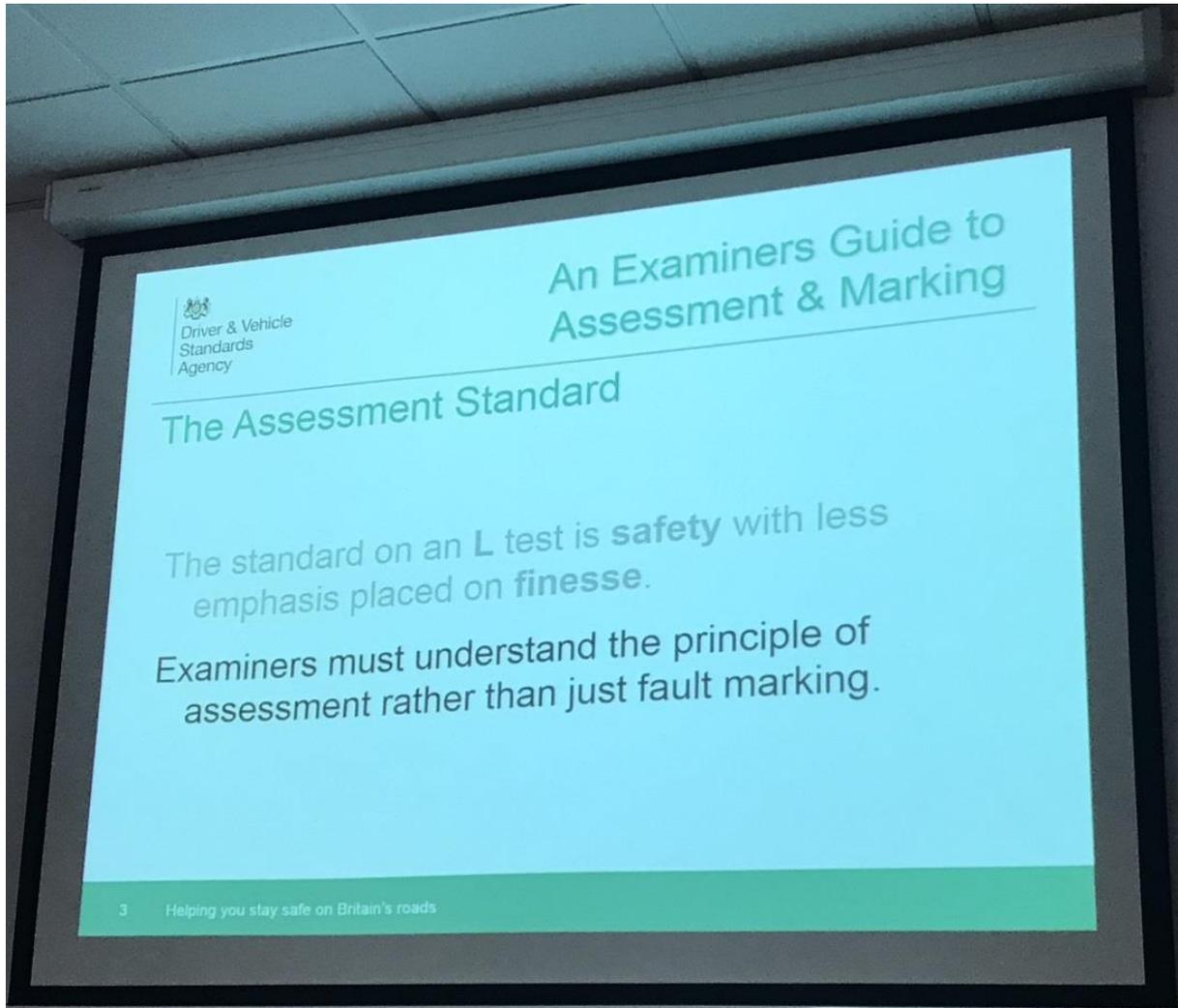


Prior to Covid, for every driving test, I normally sit with my students and discuss things they need to be aware of, but this takes ages and I'm getting old and forgetful!

I thought it would be useful if I put these thoughts down on paper so that you can read them yourself; so without further delay, let's crack on.

How do examiners mark it?

I went to Cardington for a day tour (where they train examiners) to get a high-level view of the training examiners get and this is the quick version for you. I chatted with the Chief Examiner and what a lovely lady she is as well! I took some photos of their slides:



What I got from this is that they are trained to assess situations and adapt.

They do not just mark faults!

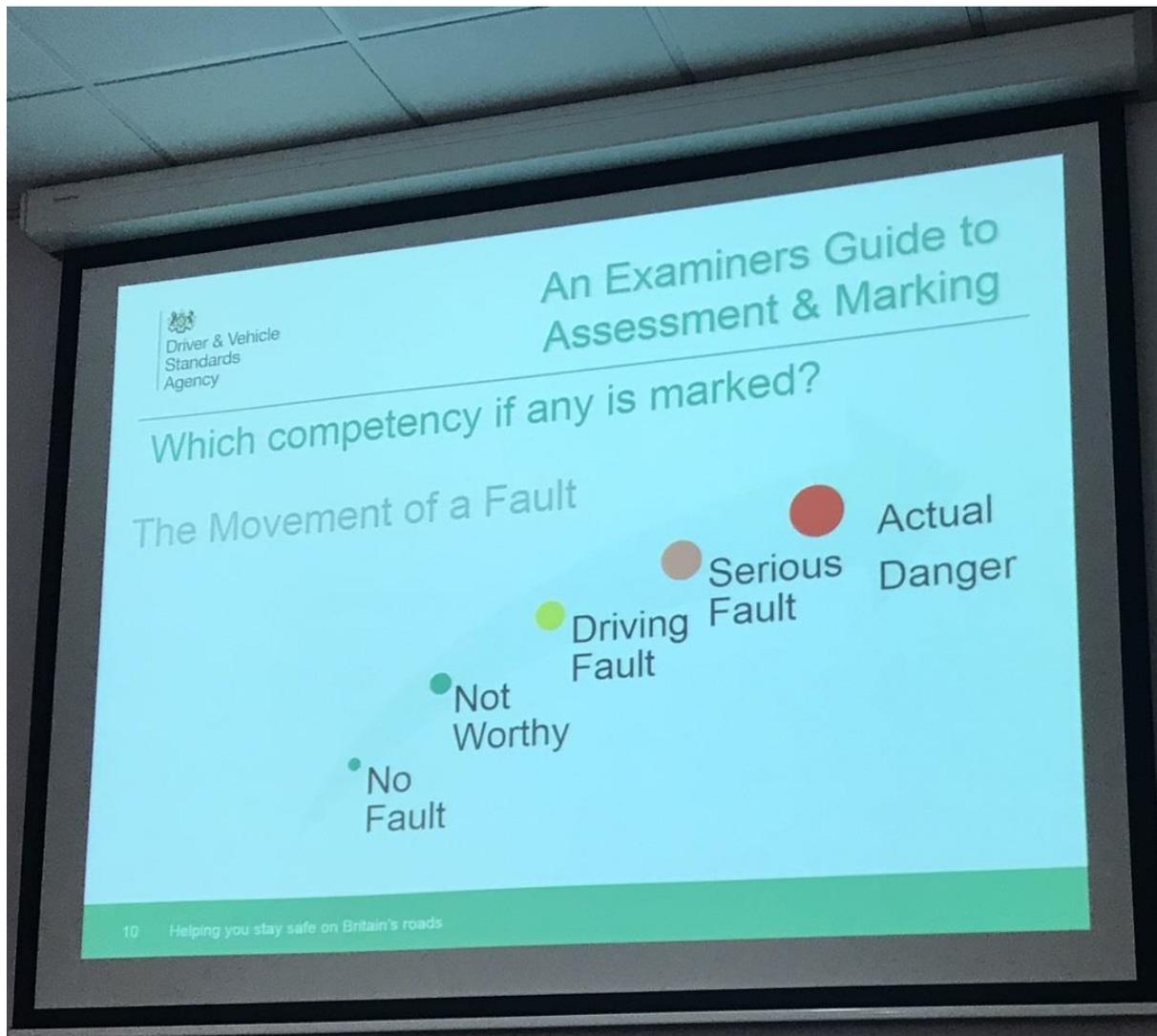
They will decide how dodgy your driving is based on how you could affect others.

I mark harder than examiners do because I need to fix errors, so I mark everything you do wrong; they're only interested if you would:

- upset someone
- break the highway code or
- a law

There are five categories

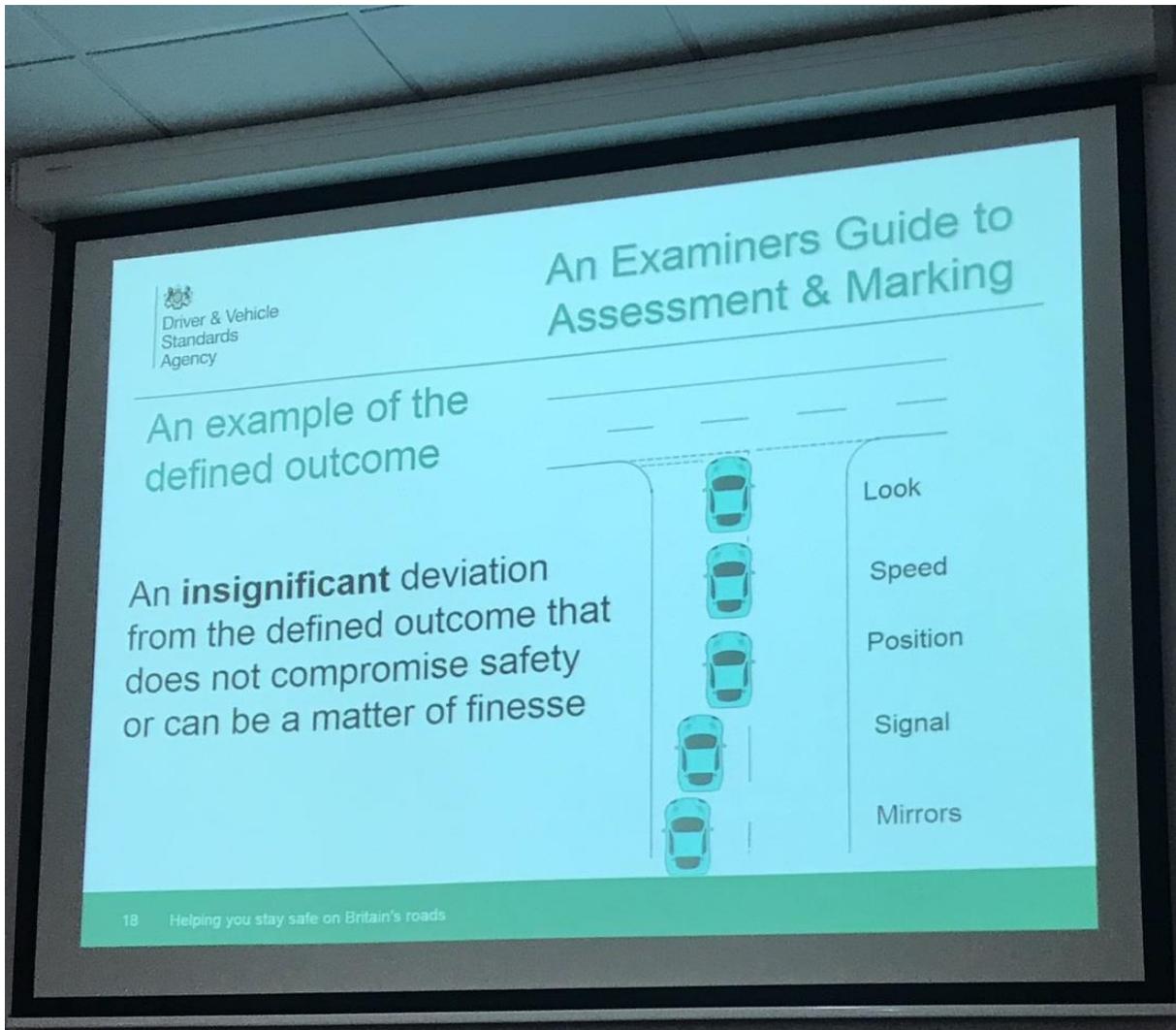
When you are doing your lessons, I will often mark your score sheet as having **minor faults** (officially called Driver Faults because if you get enough of them, they aren't really minor) or **major faults** (this means a Serious or Dangerous fault). I tend to mark every fault so that I don't forget to improve areas of weakness. The examiners look at it more from a road safety point of view.



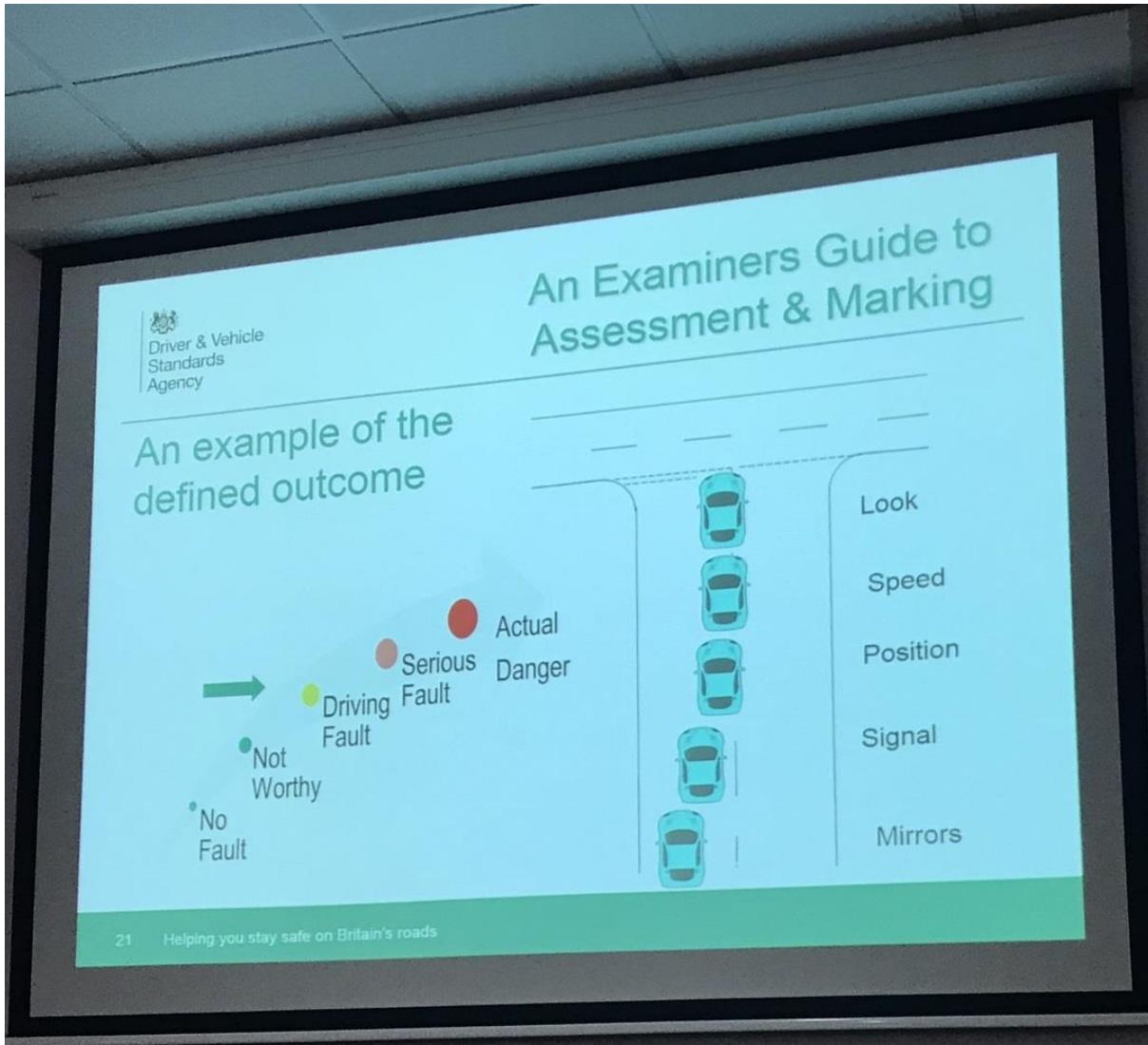
They use:

No fault – you are perfect in every way! But you know this already....

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.

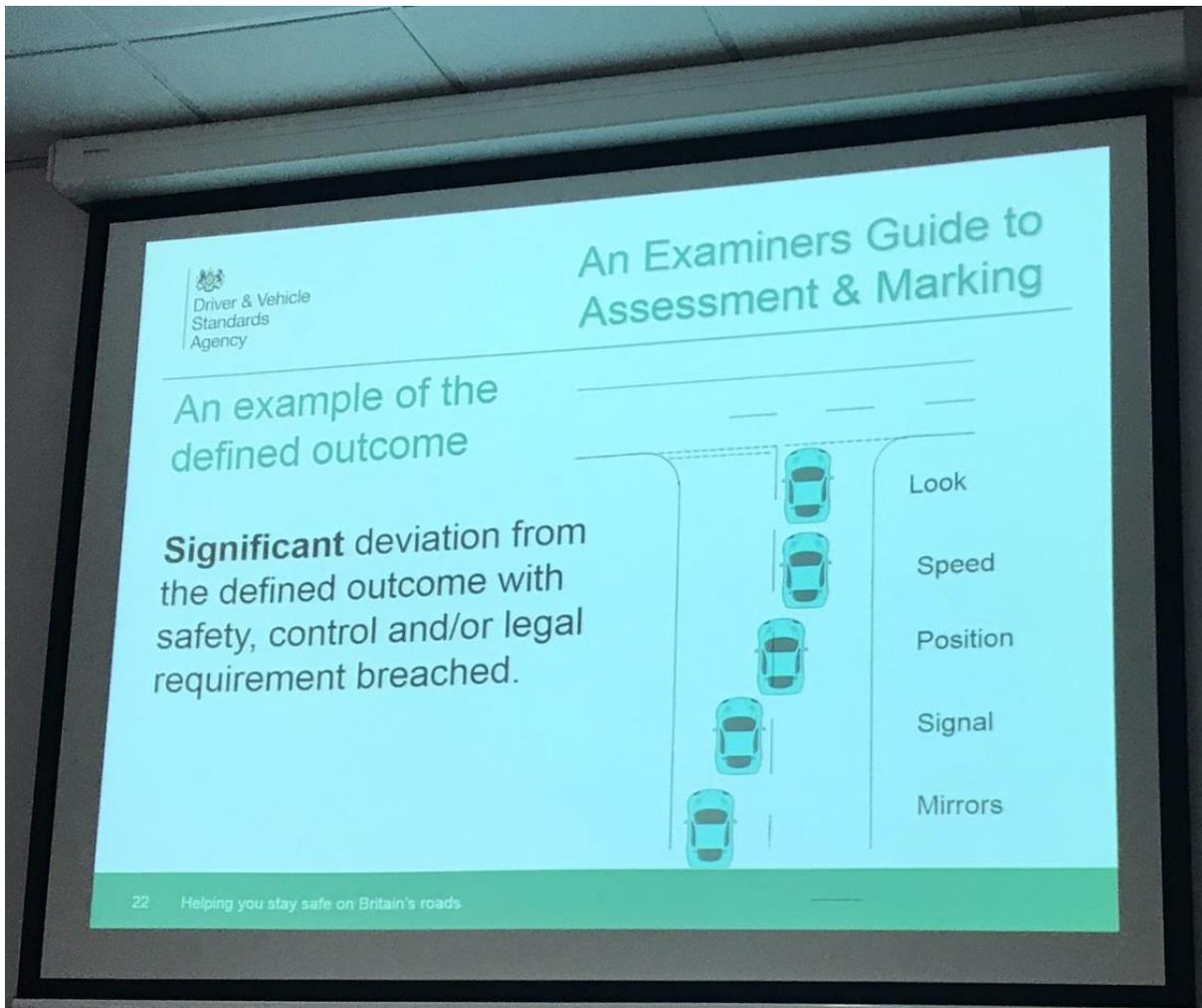


Driver faults – This is an error like stalling the car. You have done something, but it didn't really affect anyone. You can still pass your test with 15 driver faults.



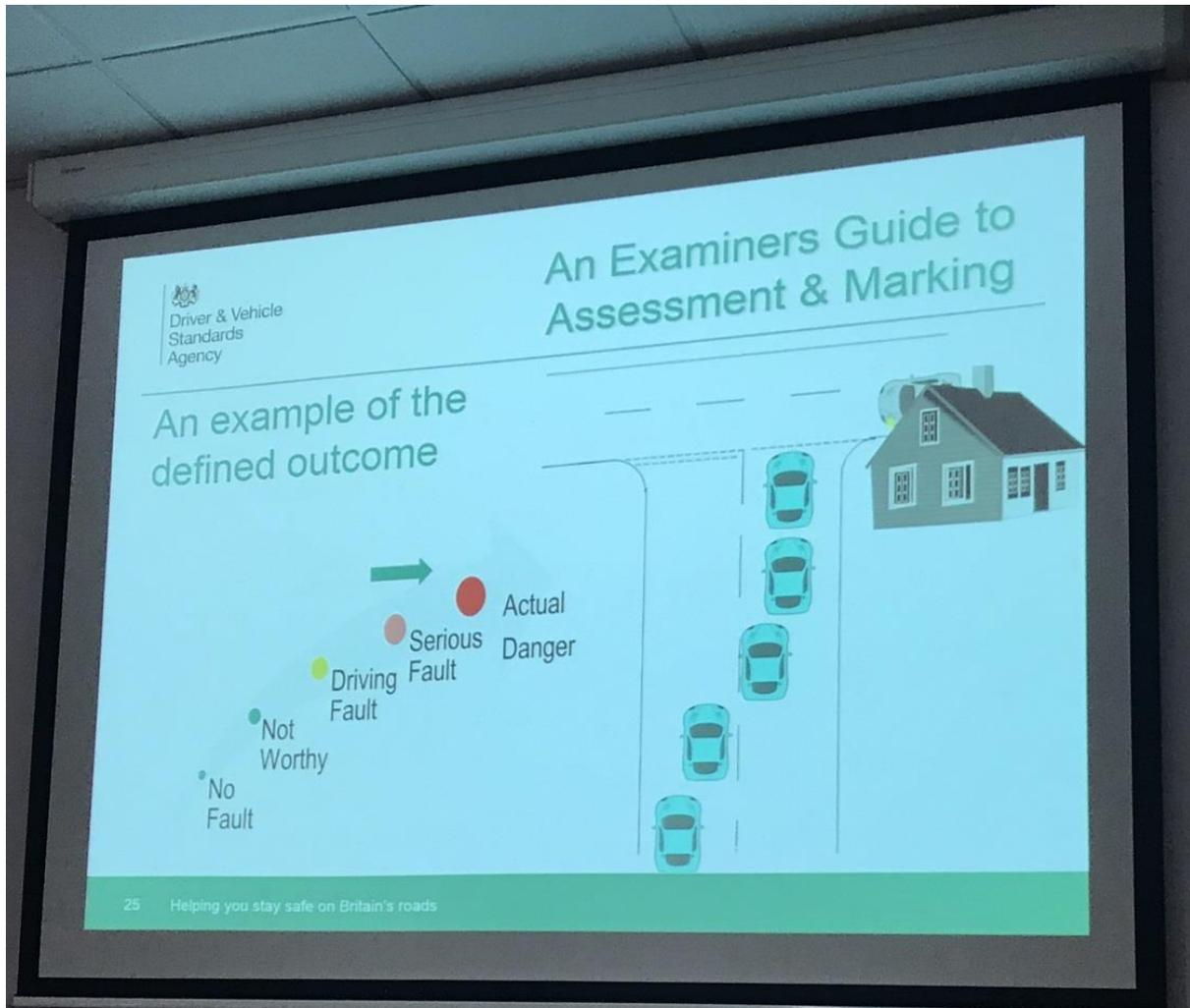
In this example, you have crossed the line taking up some of the approaching vehicles lane – naughty you! Oncoming traffic can still get passed but, come on, you should be able to stay on your side of the road!

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. They would let the test continue so you get your full 30 minutes.



Clearly, in this example, you're just lucky there's no approaching vehicle. Examiners have been told to place an imaginary car (more on that later) where one would normally be if you are driving on a bit of road you don't need to be driving on. If you would have hit the imaginary car, you get a serious fault.

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. You are driving dangerously so the examiner can terminate the test there and then.



In this slide, you are committing the same error as before except this time there is actual danger there. You are trying to reshape my car! Test is terminated.

Combined, this means that you can fail for:

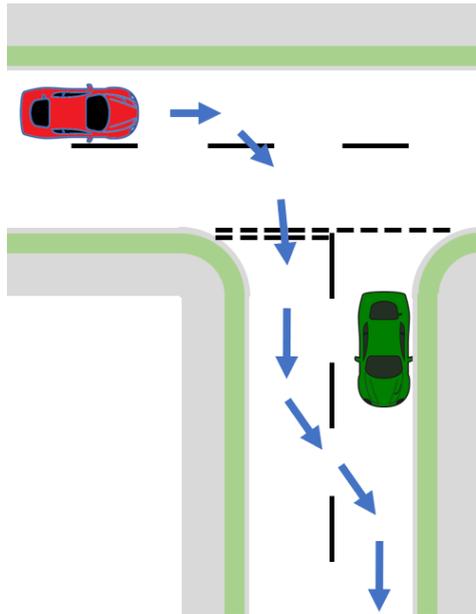
- 16 or more driver faults or
- 1 serious fault or
- 1 dangerous fault
- It's also worth pointing out that if you get 5 driver faults in the same field then you can have that converted into a serious fault at the examiner's discretion.

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

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

During Covid times, the rules have now changed that once you have failed your test, you go straight back to the test centre. Before Covid, they would let you complete a full test so that you get a full report on your driving. This was useful because if you would have failed for multiple things, they would highlight them all, so you could fix them all before the next test. The Covid changes mean that you only know about the first thing they didn't like.

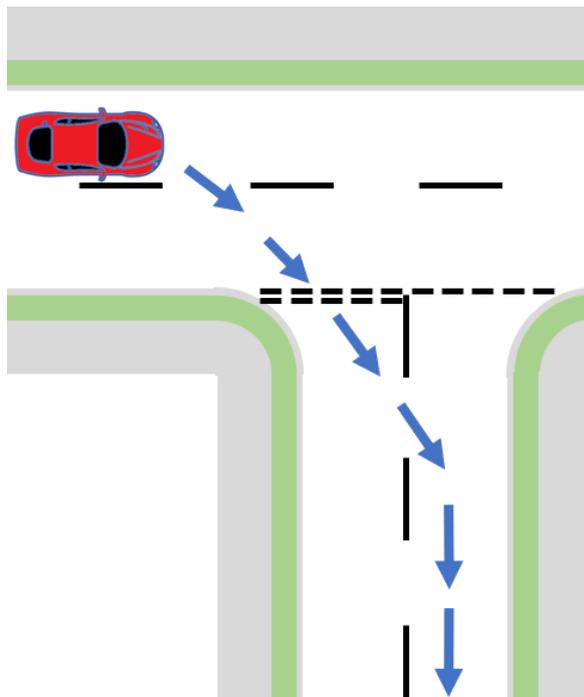
Always remember that you are demonstrating your knowledge of driving.



They will look at your drive from an actual **'here and now'** point of view and a **generic** point of view.

If you need to enter a road on the wrong side of the road because there's a parked car blocking your ability to use the correct lane, as long as you have approached slowly and checked it's safe, this is fine.

In this **'here and now'** situation, you have done what was required safely.



Enter (or exit) a junction on the wrong side of the road when you could use your lane, the examiner will look at this **generically** and think 'entering a road on the wrong side when you don't need to is inherently dangerous and will lead to a crash in due course'.

You have committed a serious fault and failed your test.

The Test Itself

On the day, we go to the test centre, park in the car park and either walk to and wait in the waiting room or they will come to you in the car park. It's worth going to the toilet at a local petrol station before going to the centre, just in case they don't let you use the toilets. You will need a pen with you to sign a piece of paper.

There are two types of test you could be asked to perform, satnav or non-satnav. 80% are satnav tests, 20% are non-satnav tests.

A driving test consists of:

- A minimum of 28 minutes of driving (normally between 30 and 35 minutes subject to traffic)
- Following signs and directions from either signs, satnav or the examiner
- 1 manoeuvre randomly picked on the day from the 4 you'll have practiced. These could be: Parallel Park on the left, Forward park into a parking space then reverse out, Reverse into a parking space or finally, Park on the right facing traffic, reverse 2 cars lengths then re-join traffic safely
- Possibly 1 emergency stop (on average only 1 in 3 tests get an emergency stop; it's randomly checked)
- Hill start
- You may go onto a dual carriageway but it's not guaranteed

Satnav Test 80% of the time



20 minutes of following a satnav and

10 minutes of following what the examiner says.

Don't forget, if a satnav tells you to turn at a junction, you still follow what the road signs tell you; don't just blindly follow a satnav!

Non-satnav 20% of the time



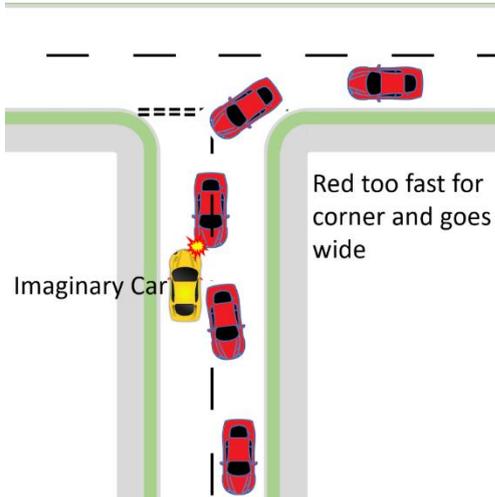
10 minutes of following road signs and

20 minutes of following what the examiner says.

So as you can see, in all instance you will be following road signs, it's just that sometimes the examiner will give you instructions and others the satnav will.

Examiners use an Imaginary car

To be consistent across the country, examiners have been told to use an imaginary car in situations 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.

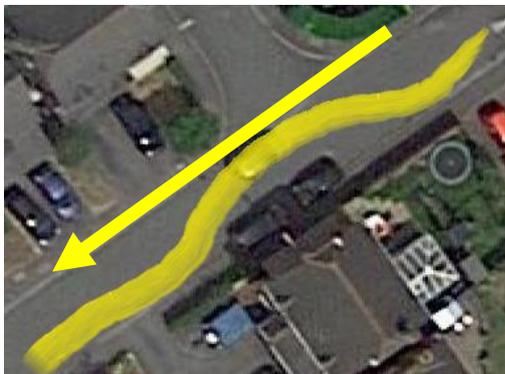
They will use it when you are driving somewhere you don't need to be.

If you need to be on the wrong side because of a parked car for instance – don't worry, this is perfectly acceptable as long as you have checked it's safe before going around the parked car.

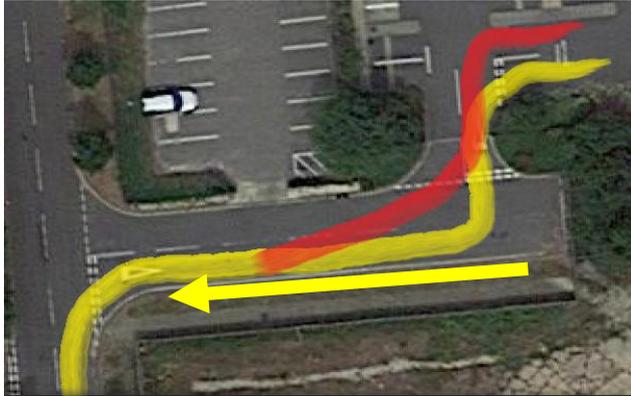
In the following examples, Yellow lines are the desired route; **the Red lines WILL RESULT IN FAILURE!!!**



In this example, cars parked on the left force you to be on the right, but notice that I return to the left at the junction because of the danger of people emerging at the junctions on my right.



This picture shows that you have to be on the wrong side of the road at a junction. As long as you take care when passing to check for emerging vehicles, you'll be fine.



In this example of leaving Farnborough test centre car park, if you stay on the left then you'll be fine but if you exit a junction by going through the entrance then you have just failed.



Turning right into a side road. Stay on the left and you'll be ok, cut the corner and you may fail.

They will mark the iPad

They have an iPad and various boxes to mark; they need to mark some boxes from an admin point of view. If you see them making marks, it could be simply because they have asked you to do something.

For example, they will ask you to park up 4 times on the left; every time you do so, they will make a mark so they don't forget. When you have done your manoeuvre, they will mark it. This doesn't mean you've done anything wrong, just that they have asked you to do something.

Of course, you may make an error that also gets marked, but some examiners wait 5 minutes before logging it, others wait until the end.

The point is, when they make a mark, it could be for anything and might not even relate to what you have just done.

So as they will be making marks and those marks can mean anything, don't worry about them. Just ignore them marking and keep driving, you can still pass with zero faults even though they have been making marks.

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.

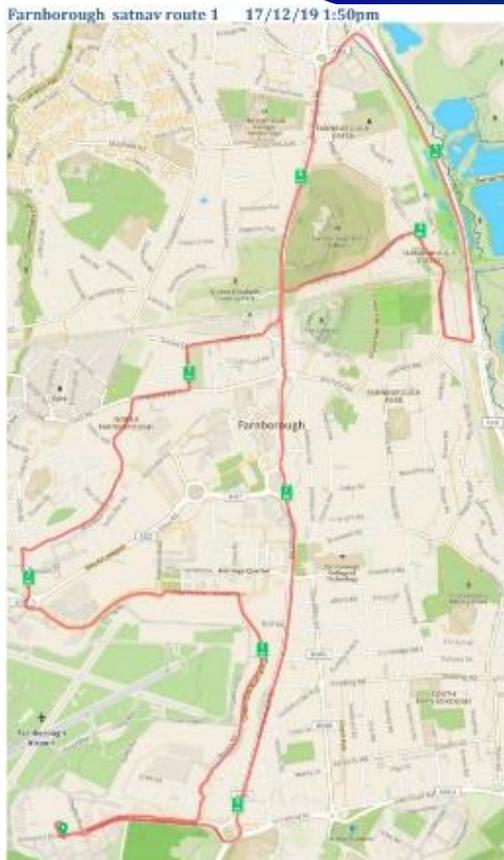
Nobody knows what will happen on the day of your test. All we know is that you will have a route to go around. Whilst on that route, anything could happen, you will just need to deal with it in a logical way.



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 and complies with the highway code then the examiner will like it.



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 would only go to the test when I could make a good cuppa!



There are examples of previous test routes available to download from my website and I've made videos of the test routes in Farnborough, watch them! 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.
- A lot of examiners are ex-driving instructors. They have children of their own and they wish you nothing but the best, you only have to show that you are a safe driver.

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 are 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; they much prefer seeing people bouncing up and down and running around excitedly. They also have less paperwork to do if you pass so they really want you to pass.
- I have even seen 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, drive through occupied 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 forward anywhere here please'.

He nips out, gets his prescription, jumps back in. 'Just reverse out to the left or right Dave'. So you do (that's your 'forward bay park' 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? Can 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.

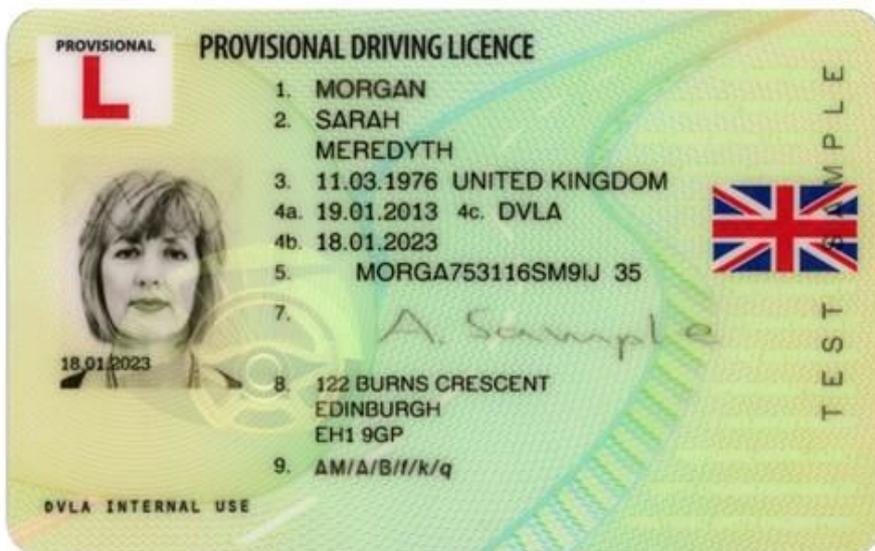


Yeah Baby!! That's just stepping on one rock and repeating 1 million times – a bit boring but nothing I can't do!!

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.

Generally

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 to a new 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 before your test 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, thinking about it, mirrors, seat etc for that matter.

We normally drive for the hour before the test so your car should be all set up anyway, but I'm just highlighting it.

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.

Just make sure that when you ask them, you still stay focussed on what you are doing at the time. A student recently failed for driving at 39 in a 30 and this happened because she turned to ask the examiner a question whilst going down hill and didn't keep an eye on her speed.

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

Never move off whilst being overtaken

This could be from being parked up or just after an emergency stop. If you are being overtaken, you stay still.

Having said that, if cars are queuing behind you waiting for an opportunity to overtake you, then you can move off to free up the flow of traffic if it's safe to do so. Just make sure they aren't currently passing you.

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 (**you don't even get marked down for this!**)

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 GO RIGHT INCORRECTLY.

Stalling is a driver fault (most of the time)

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! Here are three examples of failures though:

Stalling in 3rd

Just relax, check you are actually in 1st gear by physically moving into neutral and back into 1st, often people think they're in 1st when they're actually in 3rd. Don't just look at it and pat it! Physically move the lever out and back into 1st.

I've seen people fail because they've stalled at traffic lights three times in a row in 3rd and the examiner has said 'perhaps 1st would be better'. Well you could have checked that yourself!

This time, try and pull away slowly, if you do it slowly you are guaranteed not to stall and you will move off much quicker than if you panic and rush the clutch, a rushed clutch just leads to more stalling.

Moving off without checking

The other 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.

Stalling into traffic

Stall into the path of approaching traffic at a roundabout causing them to take evasive action (that's also a reason why I teach you to stay back from lines).

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 shoulder in the direction you're going 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

- leave the left indicator going
- leave the car still in the same gear they approached in and
- 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 though that the back of the car turns tighter than the front and so you should ensure that all of your car stays in your lane 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.

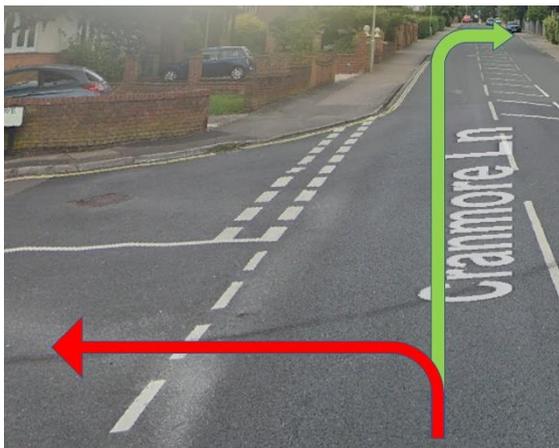
Happy turning lights and wipers on and off?



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. The 'Show Me Tell Me' video and document I have produced will tell you all this if you don't know.

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.

Watch this video on youtube to see why we have a 2 second rule:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3uUpujzTE&t=20s>

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 large vehicles 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 must 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.

You MUST stop at the STOP lines



So many people treat stop lines like give-ways. By law you MUST stop at the stop line; after you have stopped you may then creep to improve your view but if those wheels don't stop you have failed.

Don't even look for traffic until you have stopped; this will remove the temptation to go if there's a gap before you have stopped.

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).

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 to walk into traffic is an immediate fail.

Just to clarify, you are allowed to thank people by waving at them, just don't invite them out into a road.

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 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 a road has deep puddles on it then there's a big chance of aquaplaning (floating and therefore skidding on water) or deep water pulling you to the side. A reduction in speed on the straights would make sense to avoid this issue.



If you come across a whole road flooded, the shallowest point is often the middle of the road so you will find that people in both directions will try and use the shallowest point.

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.

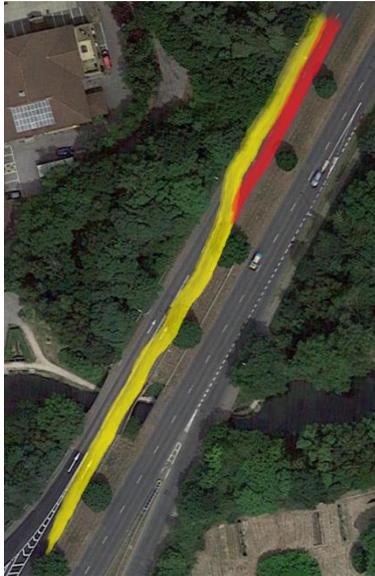
I have seen many excellent drivers drive like complete numpties when under pressure and it all comes down to letting nerves take over.

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 was obvious 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 goes against the highway code 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 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.

This is the road between Aldershot and Farnborough and you get fed into the right hand lane; make sure to return to the left as soon as it's safe to do so.

On the A331 between Farnborough and Aldershot, 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.

Just queue on the left in traffic

You might come across two 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.

Create 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

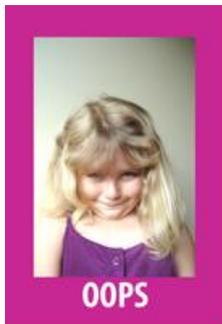
This is really important!!

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.

Know when to overtake on the left

The highway code states that you can pass someone on the left:

1. In a one way street (you can get multiple lanes in a one way street)
2. In built up traffic and the lane to the right of you is moving slower than the left lane (traffic jam)
3. In free-flowing traffic when the car to the right of you is indicating right.

Now, these are all recommendations, but the examiner looks at everything from a safety point of view and if the Highway Code tells you something, you are to follow it. **Anyone who passes a vehicle on the left contra to the above rules will fail their test.**

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 3rd 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 young apprentice that your training is correct and just do as you are taught by me – you will be fine!

And no, I'm not your father! (It's a Star Wars movie reference for those who don't know).

Don't do 'Extra'

It's really common for someone to go overboard.

They try to drive 'extra' carefully, by driving slower, doing extra mirror work etc.

Recently a student failed because they were doing so much mirror work that they basically forgot to watch where they were driving and started missing the corners and hitting kerbs.

The 'extra' mirror work meant that just when they normally would have been focussing on where they were going, they were checking a blind spot and therefore hit things. If you're not watching where you are going at a corner, who knows where you will end up?

Additionally, they decided to drive 5mph under the speed limit. This increases the chance of problems because driving slowly causes frustration in the cars behind and they start overtaking at stupid places and then you have to deal with them.

If I wanted you to do 'extra' slow or 'extra' mirrors, do you not think I would have taught you how to do that?

I do not want you driving any differently than you normally do. It's your normal drive that means you are test ready and why I'm sending you for a licence, I don't teach one thing and then say, 'on your test I want you to start driving differently'.

I'm happy with your usual drive so the examiner will be as well. Trust me!

If I drive slower, I'll be safer!

I'll try to impress the examiner by doing extra observation

WRONG



Look around after the emergency stop

1 in 3 tests gets an emergency stop so you may or may not be asked to perform one.

You will be parked on the left and then told to perform one. We will have practiced this before going to the test so don't worry.

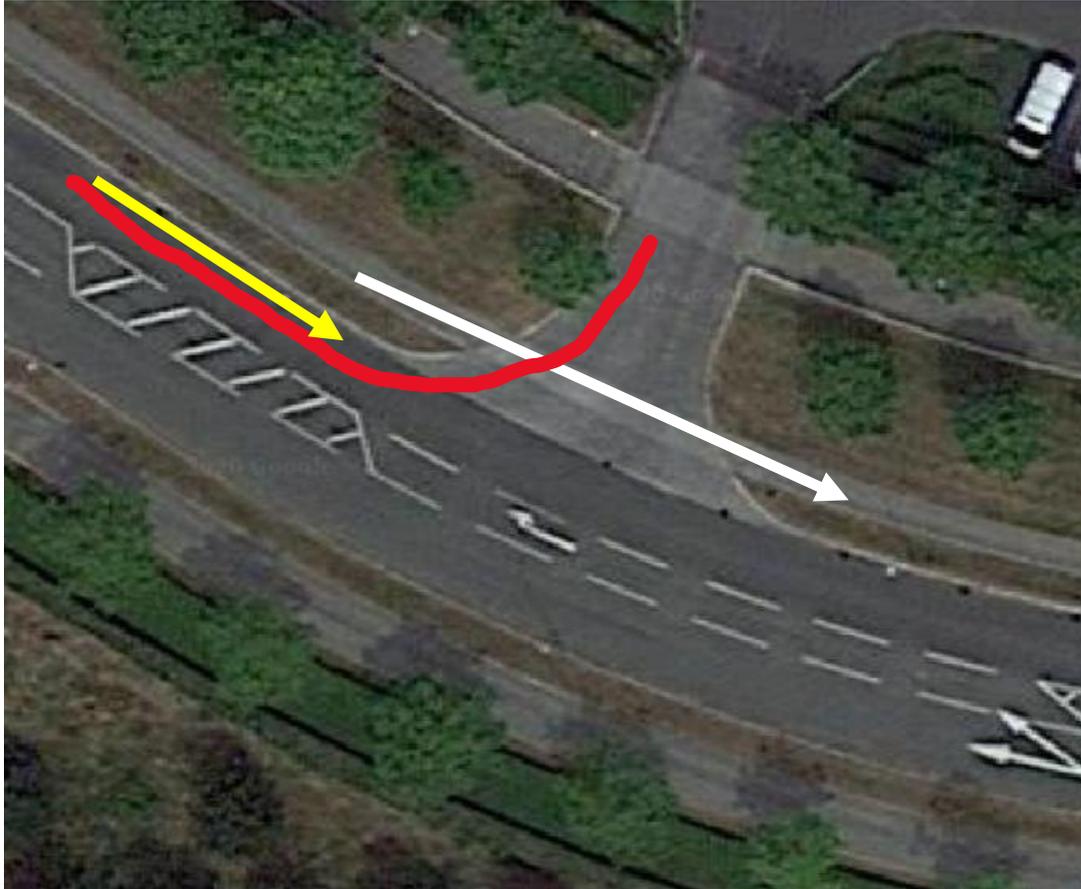
The main reason to fail when doing this is not doing a perimeter check around the car prior to moving off again after doing the stop. If you demonstrate that you will stop in the middle of the road and then just drive off without checking to see if you are being overtaken, then YOU WILL FAIL!



This car has stopped and is likely to be overtaken by the red van, therefore, don't move off!

If the van queues behind you however, indicate right and move off to free up the road.

Don't overtake before turning left



This is the entrance into Costco carpark in Farnborough and people often get caught out here.

As you (red line) approach a side road to turn left, don't pass someone (yellow line) just prior to turning (like a cyclist), this includes on the path as well.

Turning across the path of a cycle path with a bike just about to cross the road is asking for trouble (white line). The safest thing is to wait on the main road until you know the cyclist has seen you and won't cross the entrance. This also applies to pedestrians who might cross and haven't looked at you yet.

If there is a chance that the person may walk across in front of you, drive slowly and wait to see what they do but don't turn in until you are happy that it's safe.

Check that blind spot

The lack of a blind spot check on your right is a really common reason to fail your driving test.



I often hear people say that they did check over their shoulder into their blind spot but got failed anyway.

Look at the back of this blokes head. Where are his eyes pointing? Who knows? I don't.

Neither does the examiner.

You might turn your head to the right and turn your eyes even further right to look behind the car but the examiner can only see your head looking in the direction of the door mirror.

You must turn your head right and look directly backwards, not just with your eyes but head as well.

You could also say out loud that you are looking 'into the driveway behind me to look for an emerging car/ person/ cat etc'. If you prove to the examiner that you are looking that way, he won't fail you.

Help the examiner by showing him that you are doing what you need to do.