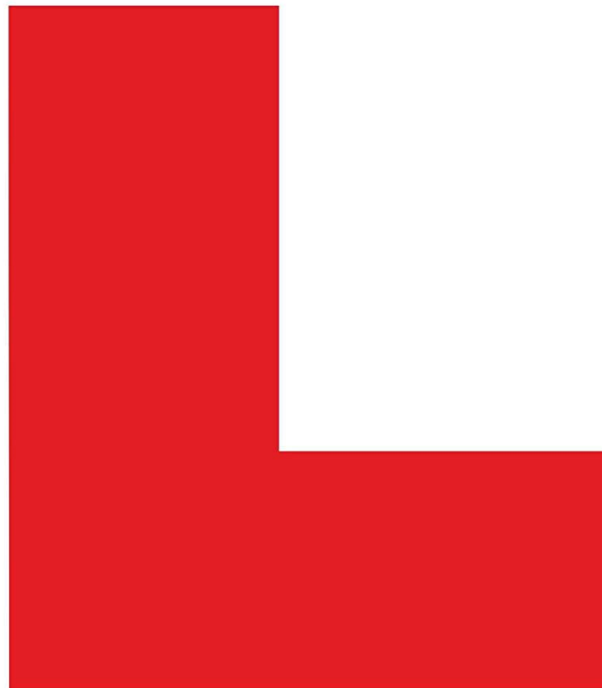




Relax, it's just a
driving test!





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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.

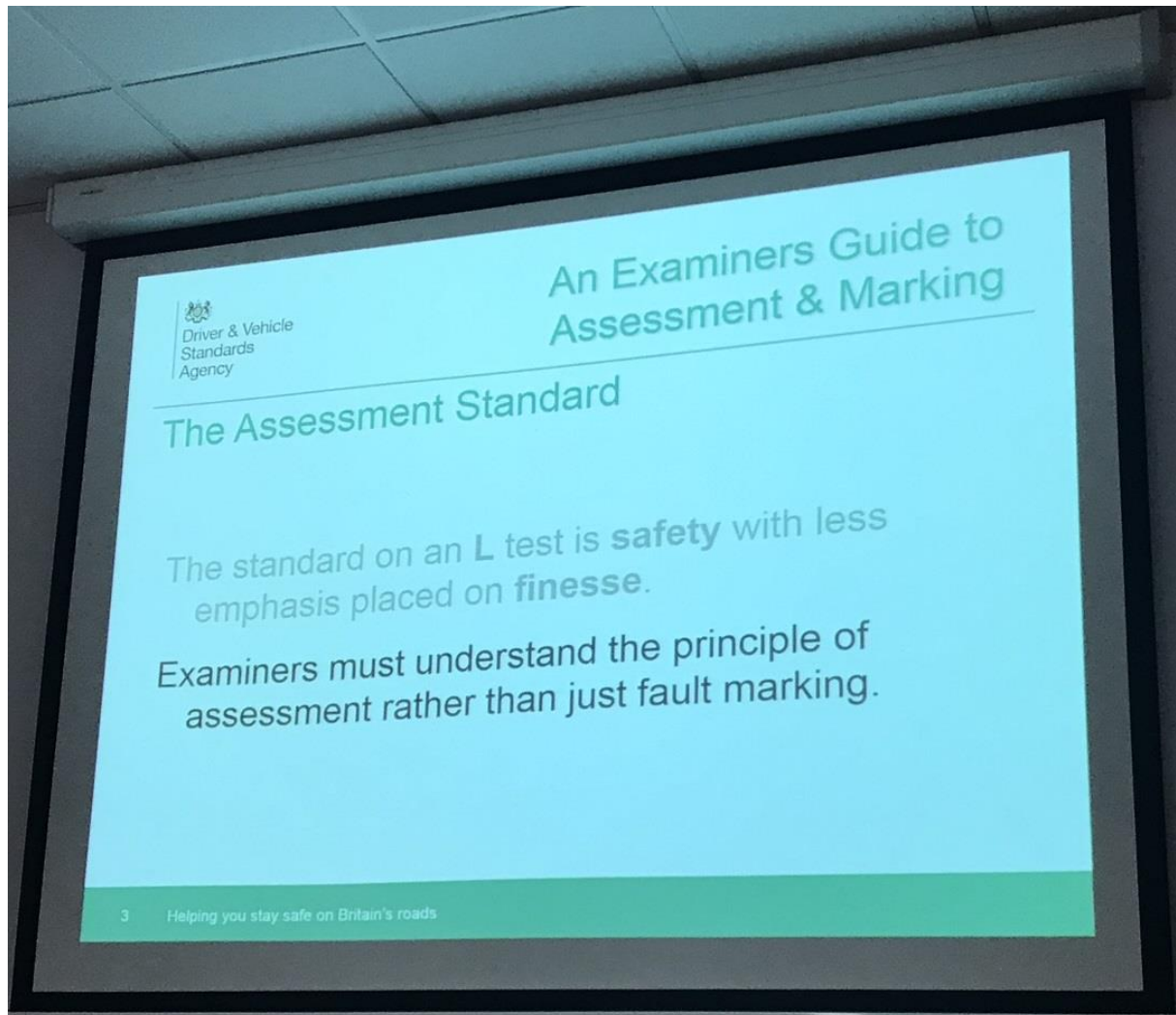


I normally sit with my students and discuss things they need to be aware of, but this takes ages and I'm getting old and forgetful!

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!

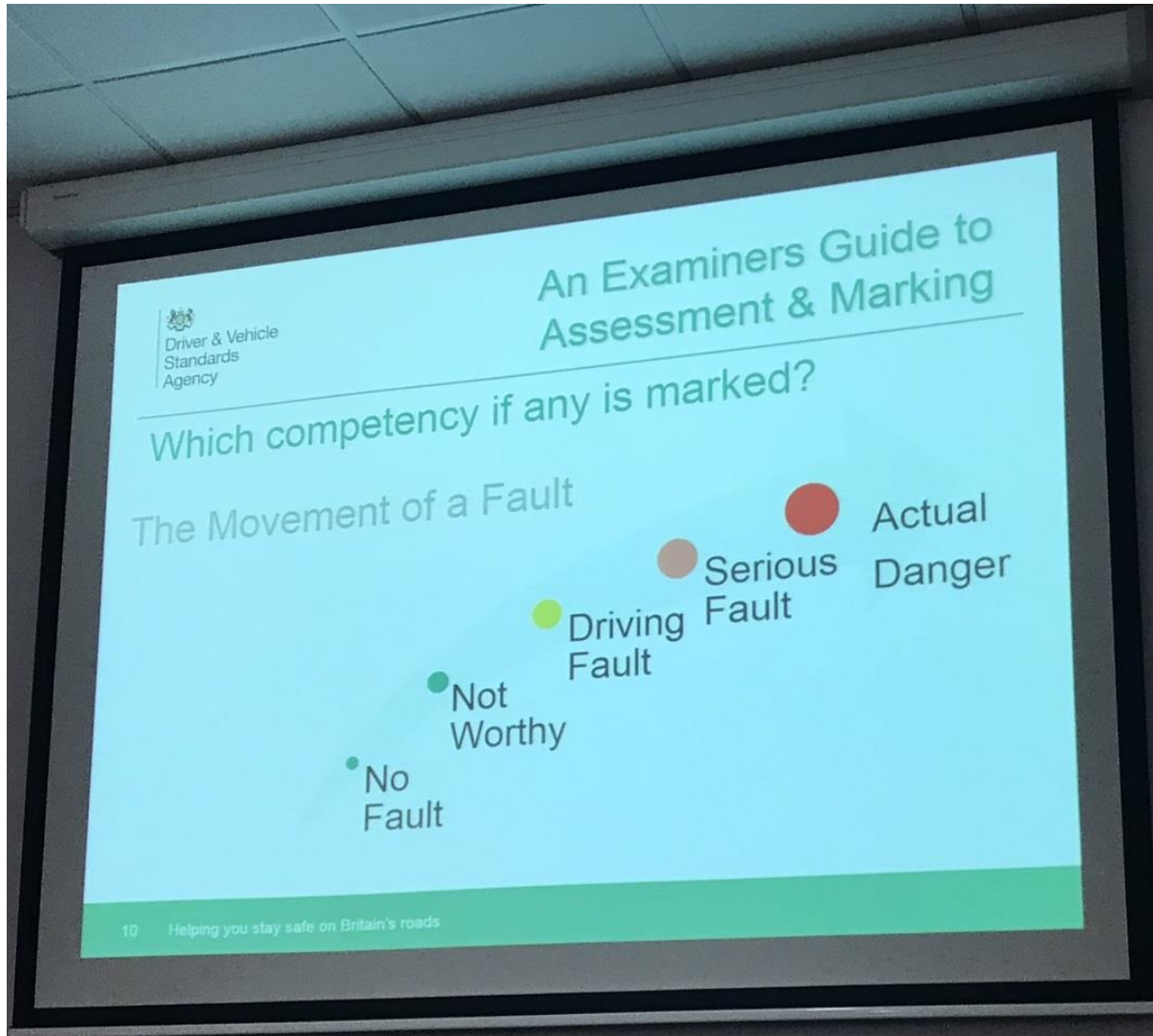
They will decide how dodgy your driving is based on how you could affect others.

Personally, I mark harder than examiners 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 & Vehicle Standards Agency

An Examiners Guide to Assessment & Marking

An example of the defined outcome

An **insignificant** deviation from the defined outcome that does not compromise safety or can be a matter of finesse

Look

Speed

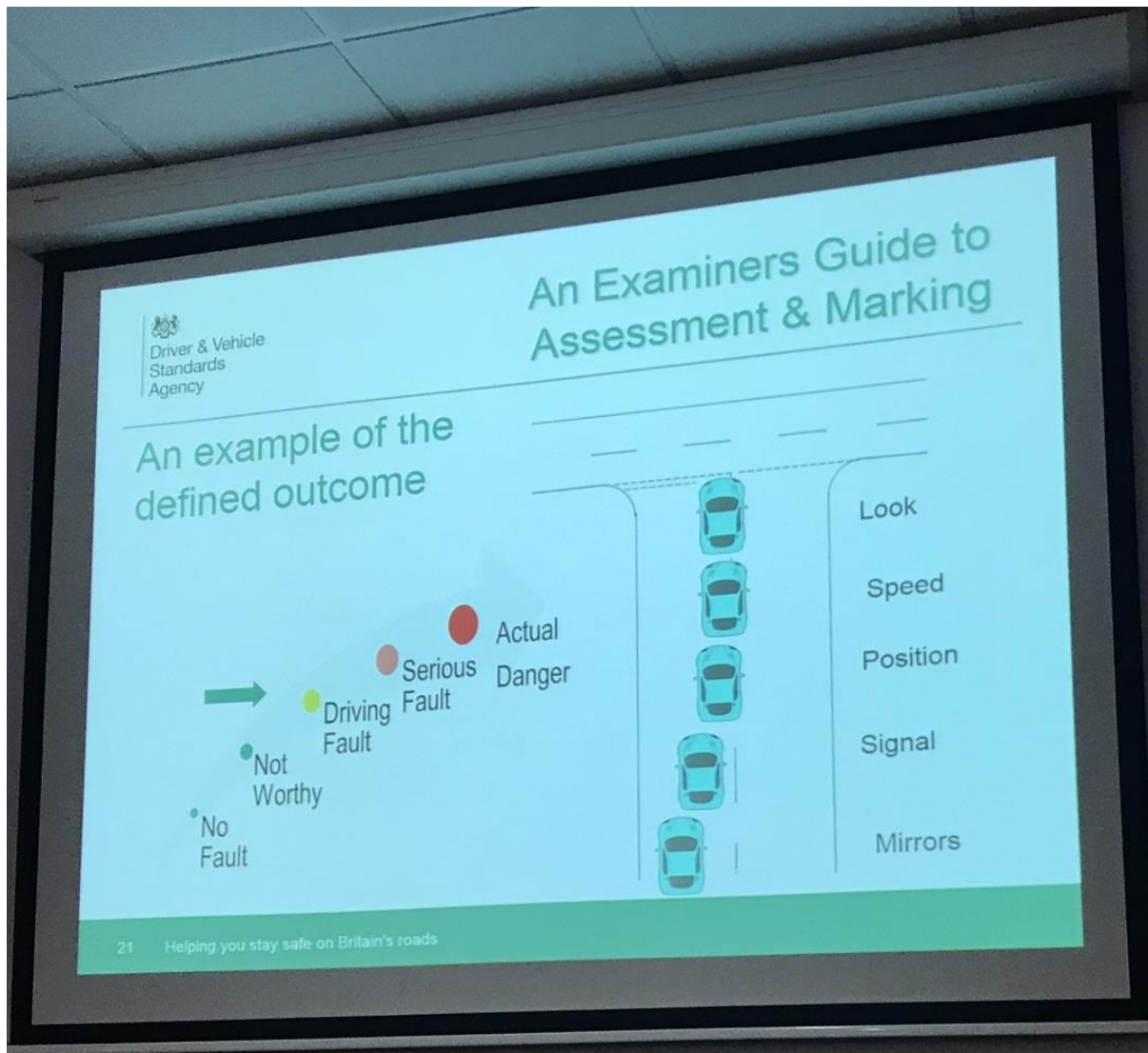
Position

Signal

Mirrors

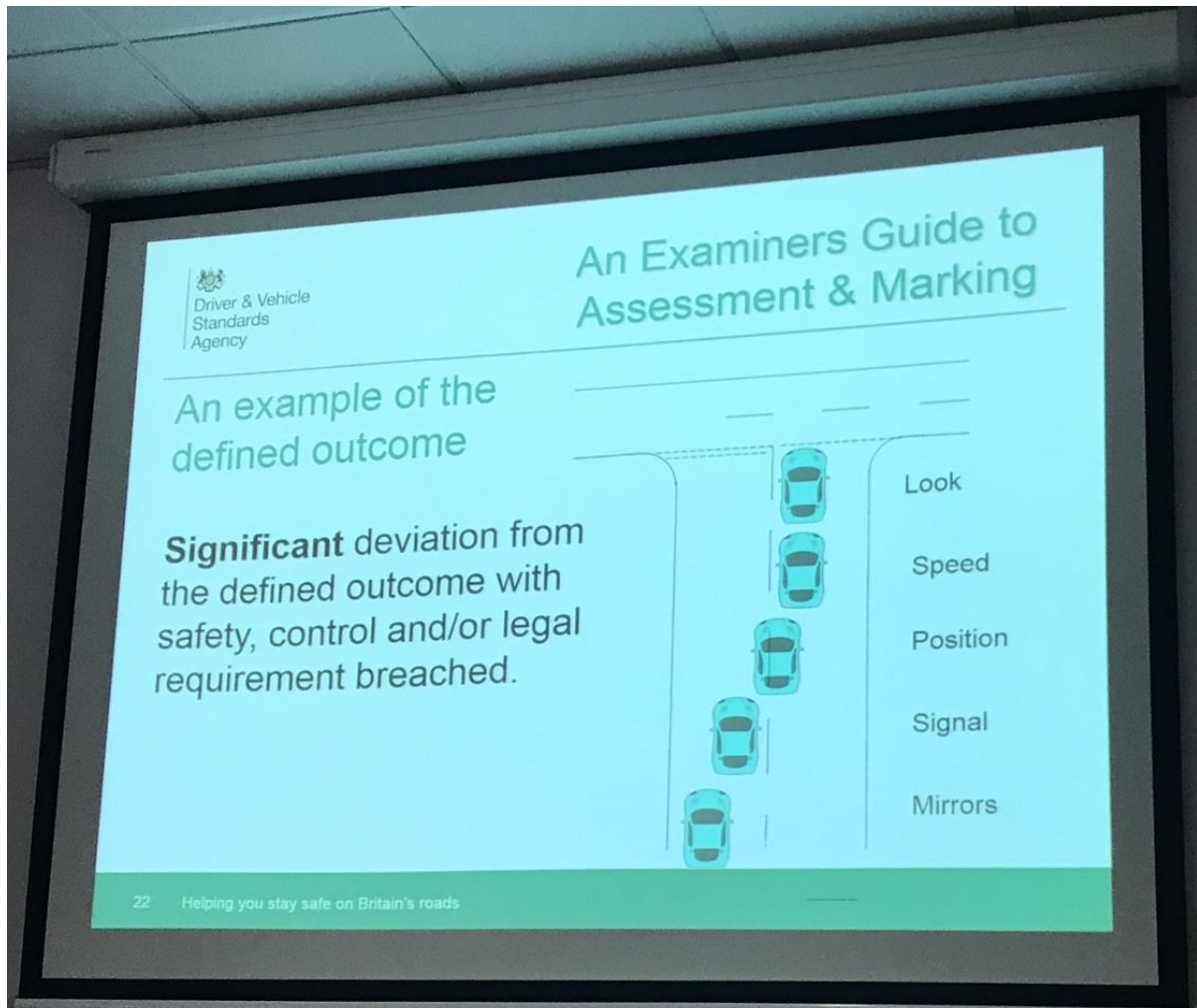
18 Helping you stay safe on Britain's roads

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!

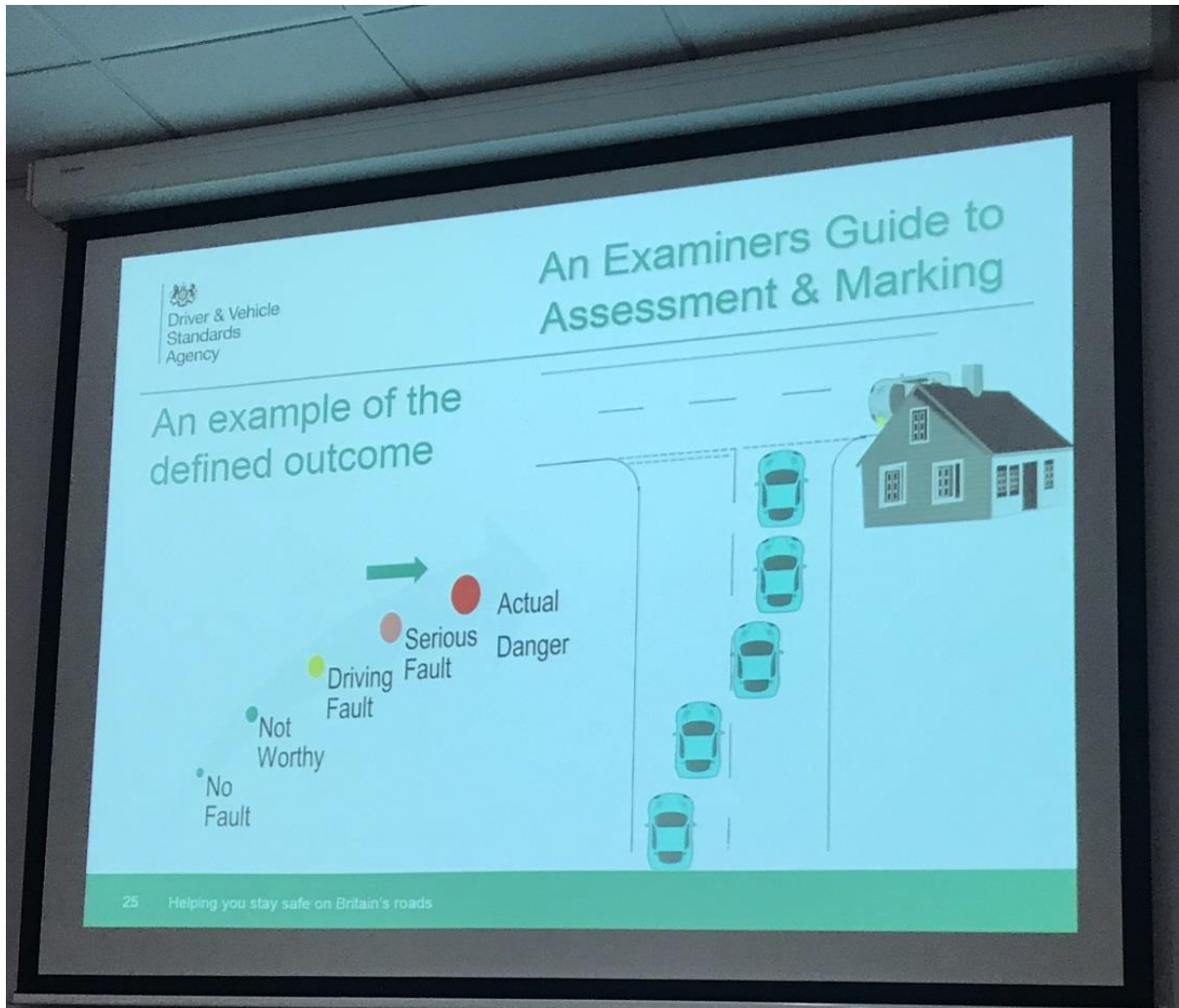
Serious faults – This is a potentially safety critical error. An example would be going around a corner too fast thus going across the central line potentially into the path of oncoming vehicles. There isn't a car there at the time so no one was affected, but you were just lucky that no one was there.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

If you are driving on a bit of road you don't need to be driving on, examiners have been told to place an imaginary car there (more on that later). 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 is 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 potentially terminated.

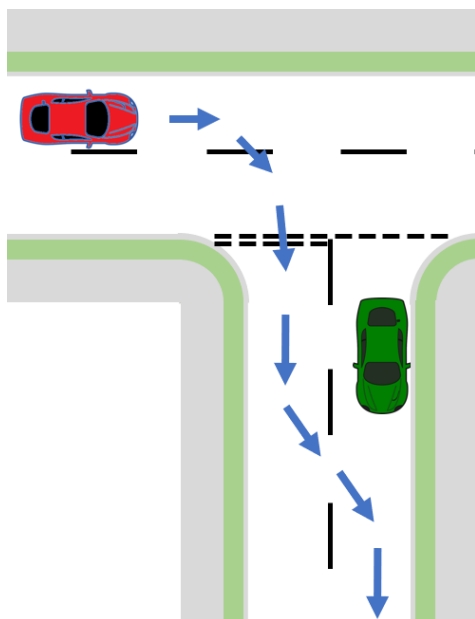
Combined, this means that you can fail for:

- 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!

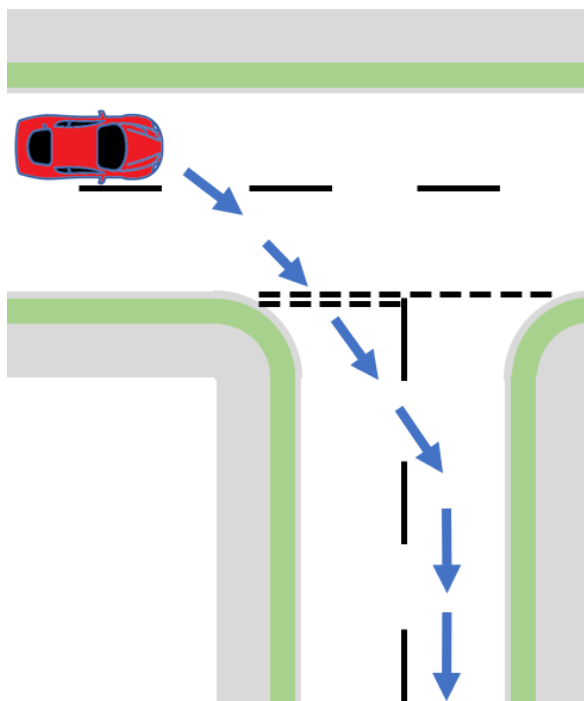
Always remember that you are demonstrating your knowledge of driving.



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 wait in the waiting room. You can use the toilets if you want to.

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



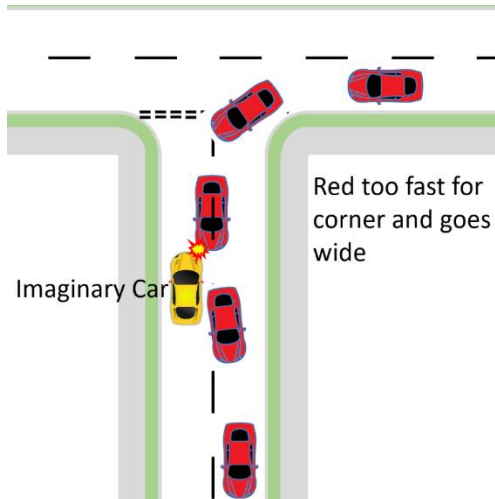
10 minutes of following road signs and

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.

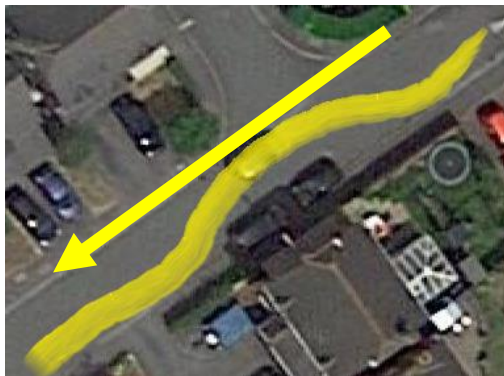
They will use it when you are driving somewhere you don't need to be.

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.

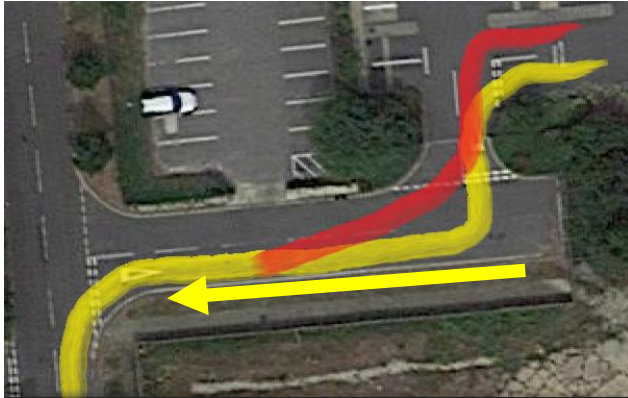
In the following examples, Yellow lines are the desired route; **the Red lines WILL RESULT IN FAILURE!!!**



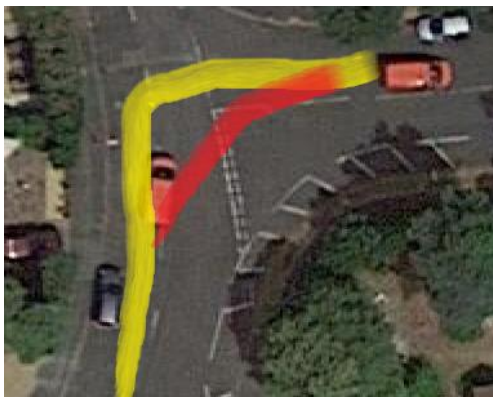
In this example, cars parked on the left force me to be on the right, but notice that I return to the left at the junction because of the danger of people emerging at the junctions on my right.



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 that 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 you know what 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!

Farnborough satnav route 1 17/12/19 1:50pm



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 examiner's 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 dad's 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 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.

Do default driving but be prepared to adapt

Read your road signs. If the roundabout sign says:

Left, the examiner is checking you approach in the left lane with the left indicator on.

Ahead, the examiner is checking that you approach in the left lane with no indicator on.

Right, the examiner is checking that you approach in the right-hand lane with the right indicator on.

However, be prepared to adapt your drive:

If you're going ahead, plan for the left lane but if that lane is marked as left only, then move one lane to the right.

If you're going right, plan for the right lane but if there are two lanes that go right, move into the left of the two.

Just have a plan to show default driving but adapt it if need be.

It's not hard, you know what to do, just show the examiner that.



The test is just a tick box exercise

In my former life, I used to be a computer programmer.

I would programme a computer to do certain actions under certain conditions.

A driving test is no different. I train you to position the car at a certain place when you are doing a certain action.

When turning right from a main road into a side road, I teach you to position the car near the centre white line with your door mirror almost touching the line. You wait in front of the exit until it is safe to proceed. When it is safe to proceed and there are no pedestrians crossing the road, you turn into the entrance.

When you are approaching a stop line, you are to drive to the line and stop at it. After this you may creep forward to improve your vision if you want. This is a legal requirement, if you don't stop at the line, you have broken the law so the examiner has to fail you.

All an examiner is doing is checking to make sure you do these things when you are faced with these situations. They are just checking that my programming is being followed by yourself.

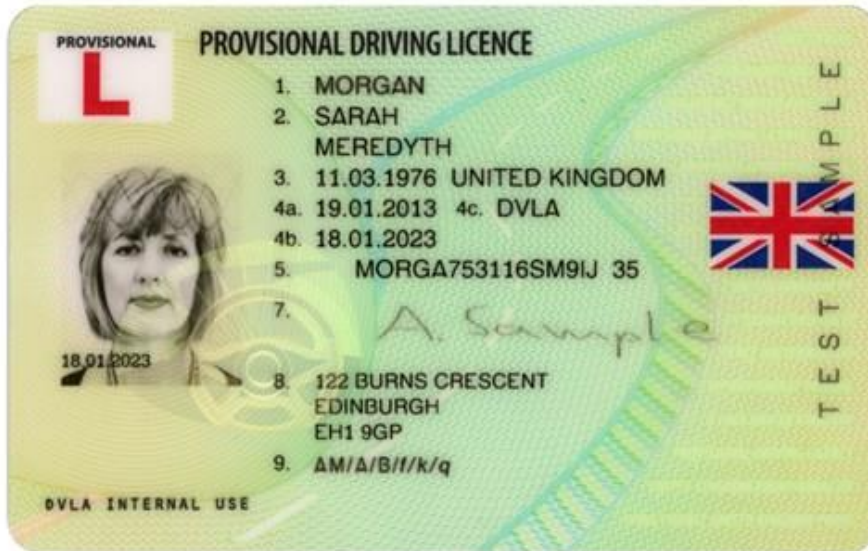
It is assessed on a per junction basis and so, if you show them what you have been taught at each junction or event, they will be happy with what you are doing. However, if you decide to show them something that is not what I have taught you to do, don't be surprised if they don't like it.

Of course, be prepared to adapt to circumstances if required.



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.

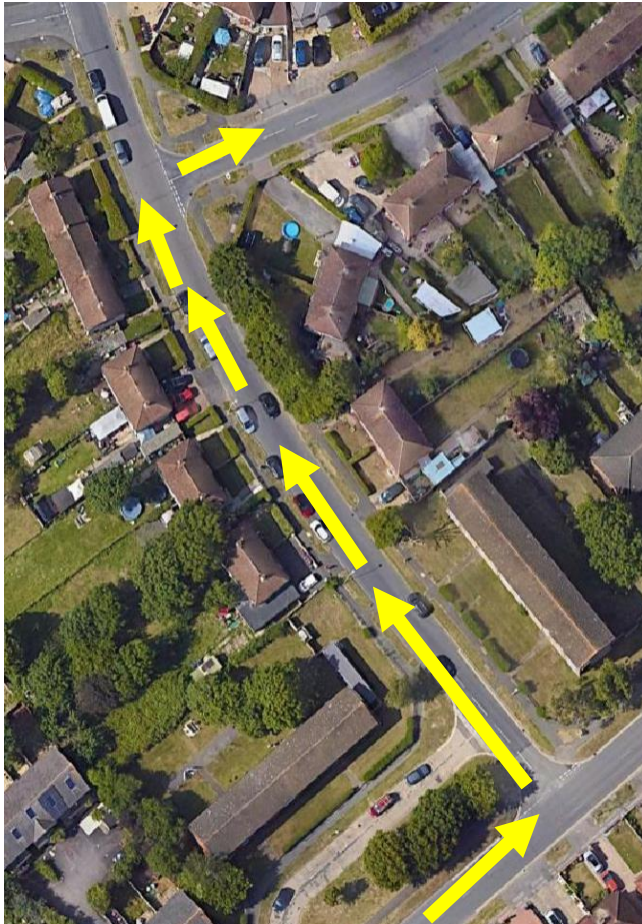
A very common question people ask is 'where am I going?' Normally this happens when a student is approaching a roundabout and either has missed a road sign or has forgotten what the instruction was. The examiner will happily tell you where you need to go but will not necessarily tell you how to do it. If you do forget where you are going or you think you have missed a road sign, let the examiner know early so that you do not run out of road and therefore time to work out what you are going to do.

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 downhill 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



An example of someone failing was when an examiner asked the student to turn left and then right.

The student turned left but forgot the instruction to turn right. The examiner said "it's this turning here", the student suddenly broke and turned into the side road but also affected the vehicle that was following them at the time.

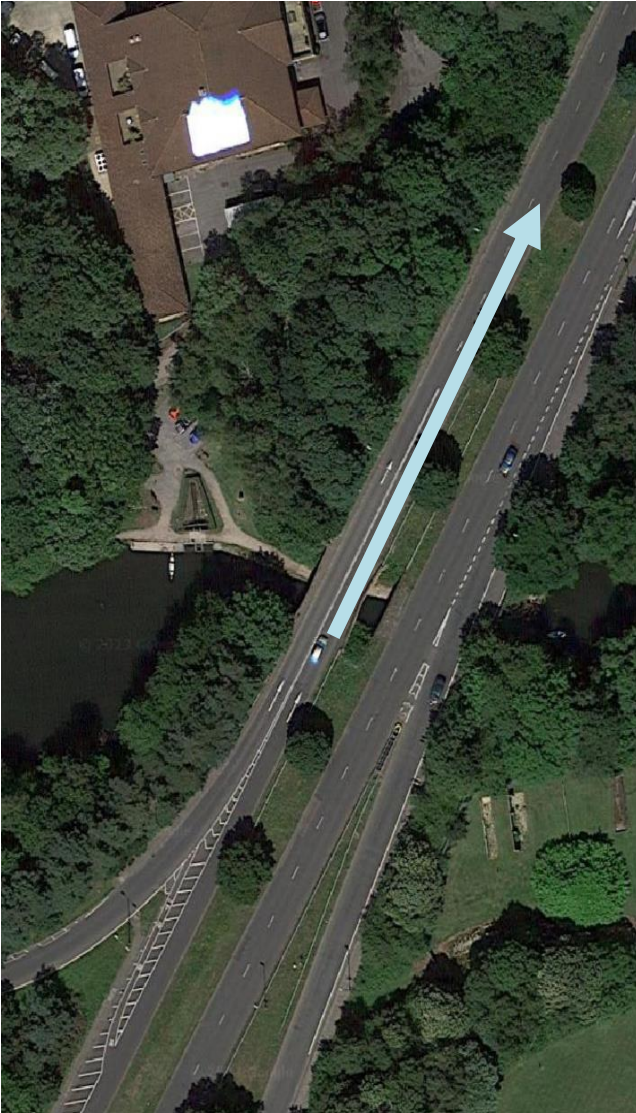
Personally, I felt that this was unfair of the examiner at the time.

I have only seen this occur once in the 12 years and 600 or so tests that I have been in. In all other instances, the examiner will let you go past the road you should have turned into and then they'll just direct you with very little fuss.

At the time, I was going to complain to the examiner but then I was thinking that he just gave a real-world situation to my student who then reacted incorrectly.

For Example: I'm driving to a party, my wife is giving directions, she suddenly says "turn here". I would only turn if I had time to safely slow and turn without affecting anybody. Now that I know the turning that she wants me to take, I would continue down the road and find somewhere to turn round, then return and take the road that she asked for.

Another example happened on a test:



This road is the A325 between Farnborough and Aldershot and has a 60mph limit.

My student was the light blue line which feeds us into the right-hand lane of 2 lanes.

In the left lane ahead was a lorry followed by 3 cars. My student decided to overtake them all and pull in front of the lorry.

They did this just before the 50mph sign because they took a long time to overtake. The lorry behind didn't really slow down so the student entered the 50mph zone above 50mph and slowly slowed to 50mph.

The examiner said 'the best option was to just pull in behind the 3 cars and not overtake, however, I'm pleased you didn't brake suddenly in front of the lorry. If you had braked suddenly, I would have failed you.'

This is an example of when an examiner is thinking more about safety than rules. If it is safer to break the speed law for a second or two to avoid a collision, then do it and fix it as soon as you safely can.

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 (because they have to wait for oncoming traffic), 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.



At the Farnborough test centre, you are often parked next to the kerb in the left lane of a two-lane urban dual carriageway. Because you are parked in the left-hand lane, cars will naturally move into the right-hand lane to pass you. Remember that they should return to the left lane and so if you move off, you are blocking their ability to return to the left.

From this I want you to see that the number of lanes is not important, it is the fact that:
You are being overtaken and
Somebody should return to the left and
We may affect them.



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:

1. switched the indicator off
2. put the car into neutral
3. put the handbrake on

then when you go to pull away you will put everything you need back on and 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. You don't have to do this but I recommend it to make your life easier.

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.

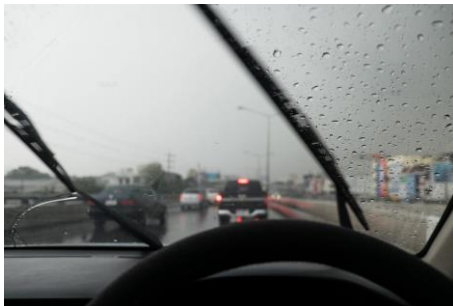
They are not trying to trick you, they are checking that you would not blindly follow a satnav but actually take responsibility for your drive.

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.

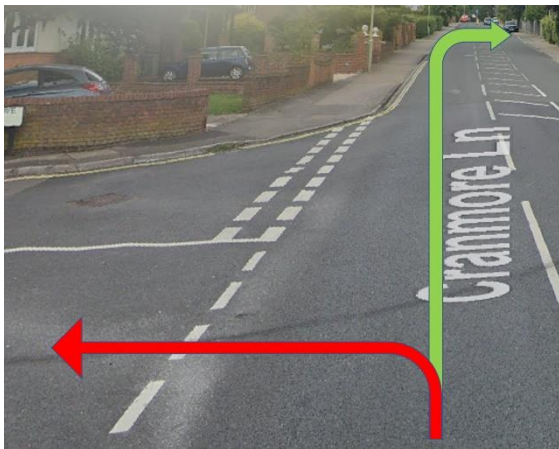
Happy turning lights and wipers on and off?



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.

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=x3uUpugjzTE&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. To nod at them and give opportunity is fine.

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 must 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 will wait and then traffic 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.

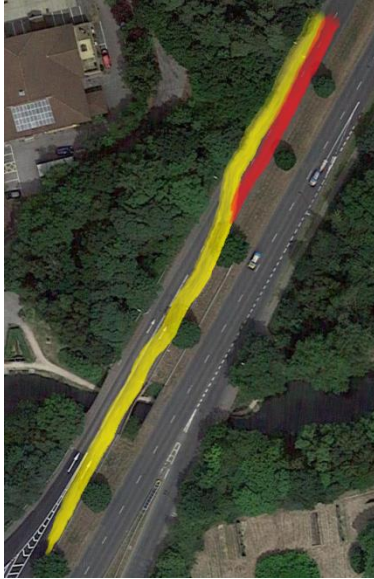
I have seen many excellent drivers drive like complete numpties when under pressure and it all comes down to letting nerves take over.

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 moment where 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

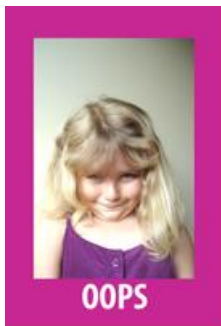
This is really important!!

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 you made it with salt rather than 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.

LOTS OF PEOPLE
FAIL FOR THIS!!



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.**

This usually happens on the road heading back to the test centre in Farnborough. A learner gets into the right-hand lane, drives slowly so people pass them on the left. You have to wait to see if they put a right indicator on.

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 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.

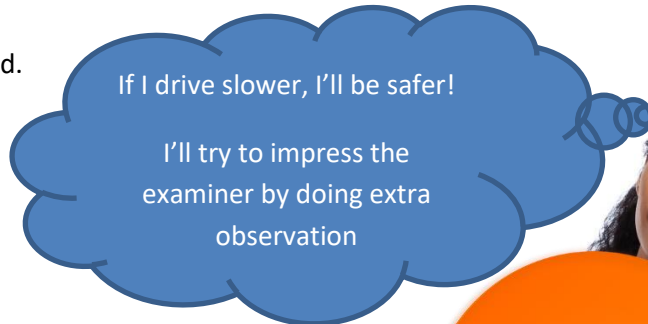
The 'extra' mirror work meant that just when they normally would have been focussing on where they were going, they were checking a blind spot and therefore hit things. If you're not watching where you are going at a corner, who knows where you will end up?

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!



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.

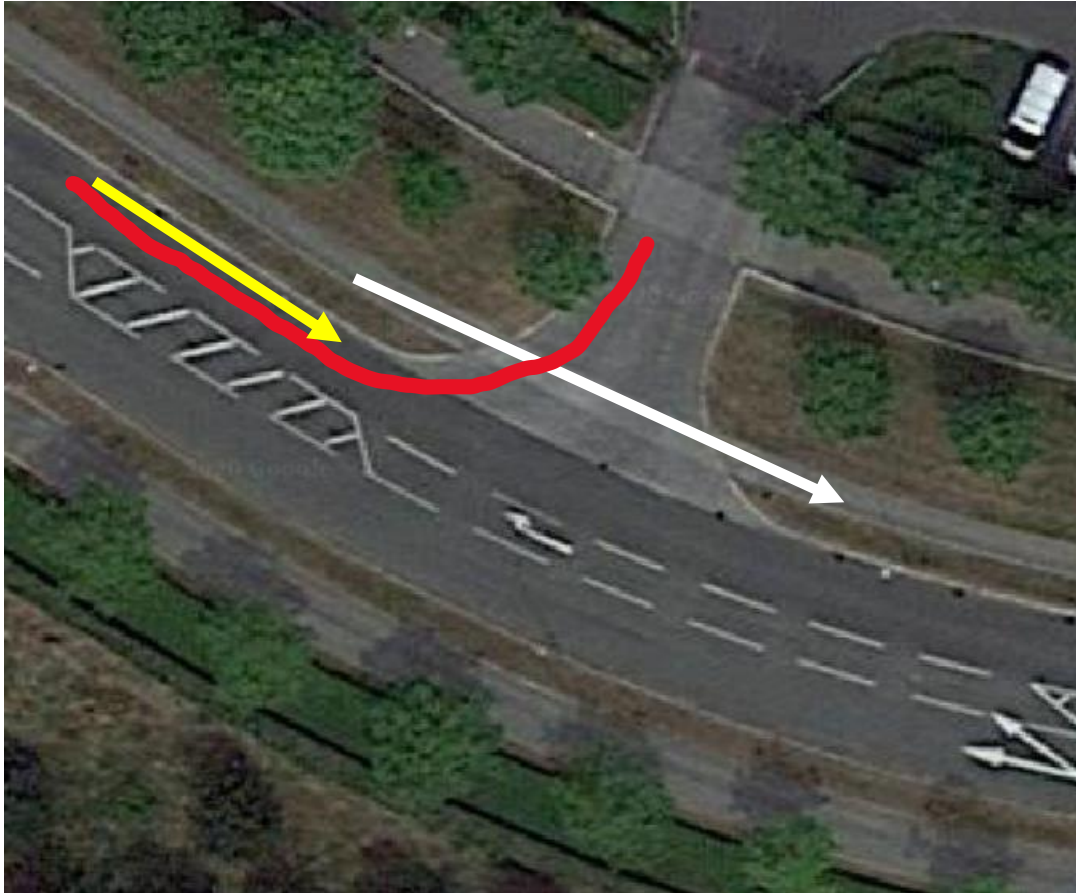
The main reason to fail when doing this is not doing a perimeter check around the car prior to moving off again after doing the stop. If you demonstrate that you will stop in the middle of the road and then just drive off without checking to see if you are being overtaken, then **YOU WILL FAIL!**



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.

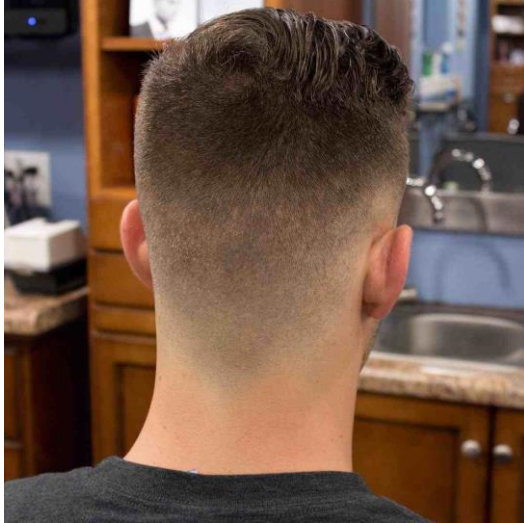
As you (red line) approach a side road to turn left, don't pass someone (yellow line) just prior to turning (like a cyclist), this includes on the path as well.

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.



Parking on the left

You will be asked to park up on the left potentially 4 times. (The examiner will mark his iPad each time so that he doesn't forget he's asked you to do it; this doesn't mean you have done anything wrong so relax).

You will get a park on a normal road when:

There's traffic behind you

When there isn't traffic behind you

To do a hill start (you might get this naturally at a traffic light though)

From behind a parked car (you might get this naturally if they ask you to perform a parallel park as your manoeuvre)

You must park next to a kerb no wider than a drain cover (or steering wheel) away from the kerb. You could be anything between 1 and 10 inches from the kerb for example.

You must have checked your mirrors before hand and decided if you wanted to indicate or not. Try not to hit the kerb but if you do, it's only a minor, you have not failed.

The examiner will often ask this at a time when to park up immediately would be potentially stupid to see if you also think it's a stupid place.

When parking on the left, you should pick a place you would be happy to leave the car for 30 minutes knowing that you're not affecting anyone.

Don't park:

On double yellow lines (single yellows are often fine and the examiner will say 'don't worry about the single yellow line for this').

At bus stops.

Near pedestrian crossings.

In front of a driveway.

Near central islands thus making it difficult for large vehicles to get around us.

At a place where people would have difficulty seeing ahead to get around you, such as, on a tight corner or near the crest of a hill. To do so would put people into potential oncoming traffic without knowing if there was any. Please note, it is not a problem to park on a corner or a hill if the place you pick gives good visibility to others.

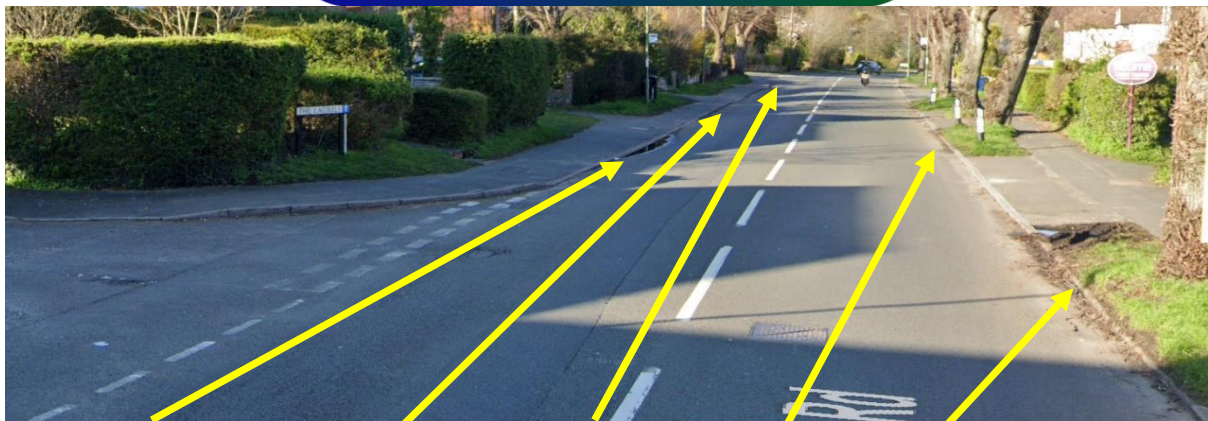
Opposite a junction (overtaking people would be forced onto the wrong side of the road just at the point where people are pulling out of a side road).

Opposite a bus stop (when a bus turns up it could potentially result in the road being completely blocked).

Opposite a parked car when you have the option to not park opposite a car. If the road has cars all along it then parking opposite a car is fine but if you can park to allow better flow of traffic, please consider it.

Hopefully you get the idea, this list is not full. Think about how your actions would affect other people and be considerate.





1

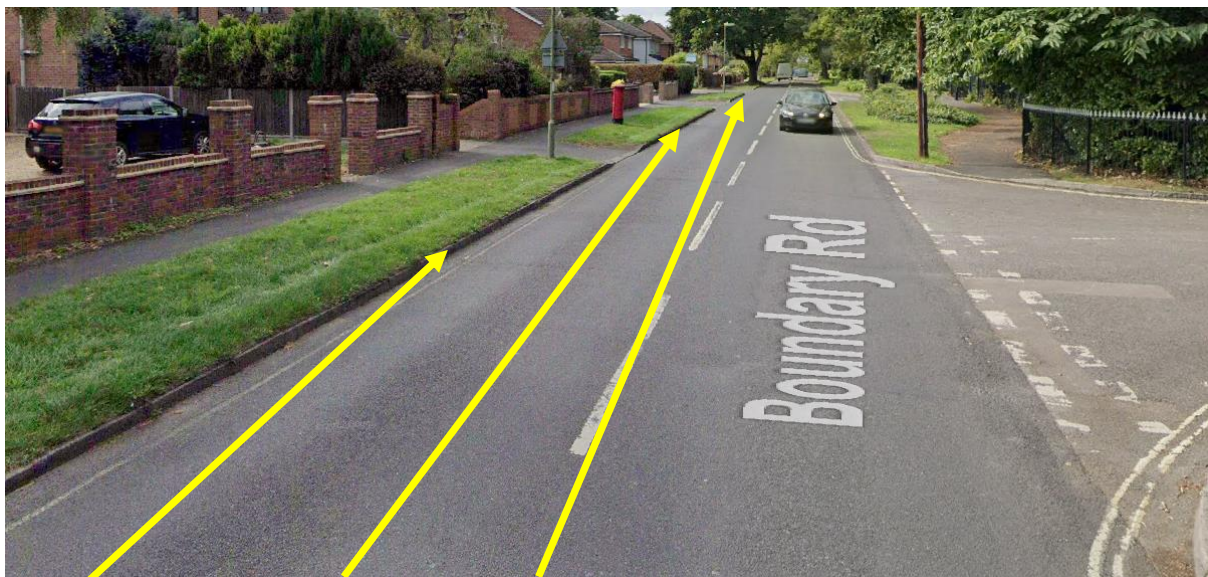
2

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5

1. Not too bad but quite near a junction, depends on how long your vehicle is, probably avoid.
2. Bad, there is a request bus stop here - minor
3. Bad, there is a request bus stop opposite side of the road - minor
4. Bad, there is a request bus stop opposite side of the road - minor
5. Bad, opposite a junction - minor



1

2

3

1. Bad, opposite a junction - minor
2. Good, single yellow line and not opposite anything
3. Bad, opposite another junction - minor



1

2

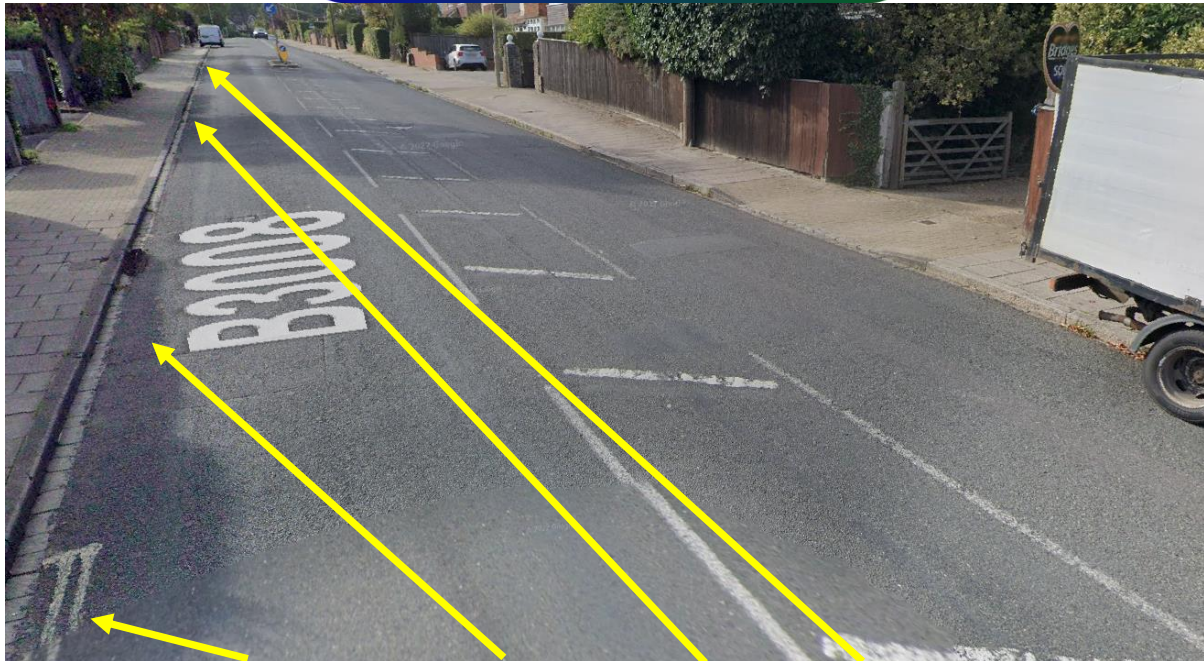
3

4

1. Good
2. Bad, blocking a driveway - minor
3. Bad, opposite cars thus blocking the whole road – this would be a serious fault
4. Bad, opposite a junction - minor



Here you can see that there are cars parked everywhere so to join them is not as a problem as long as traffic can still get through.



1

2

3

4

1. Bad, double yellow lines
2. Not great, there's a van opposite, 3 would be better - minor
3. Good
4. Bad, there's a central island thus blocking the road – serious fault

MEGA IMPORTANT
POINT!!!!



If you start to park up on the left and then think that it is a stupid place to park, **park there anyway**.

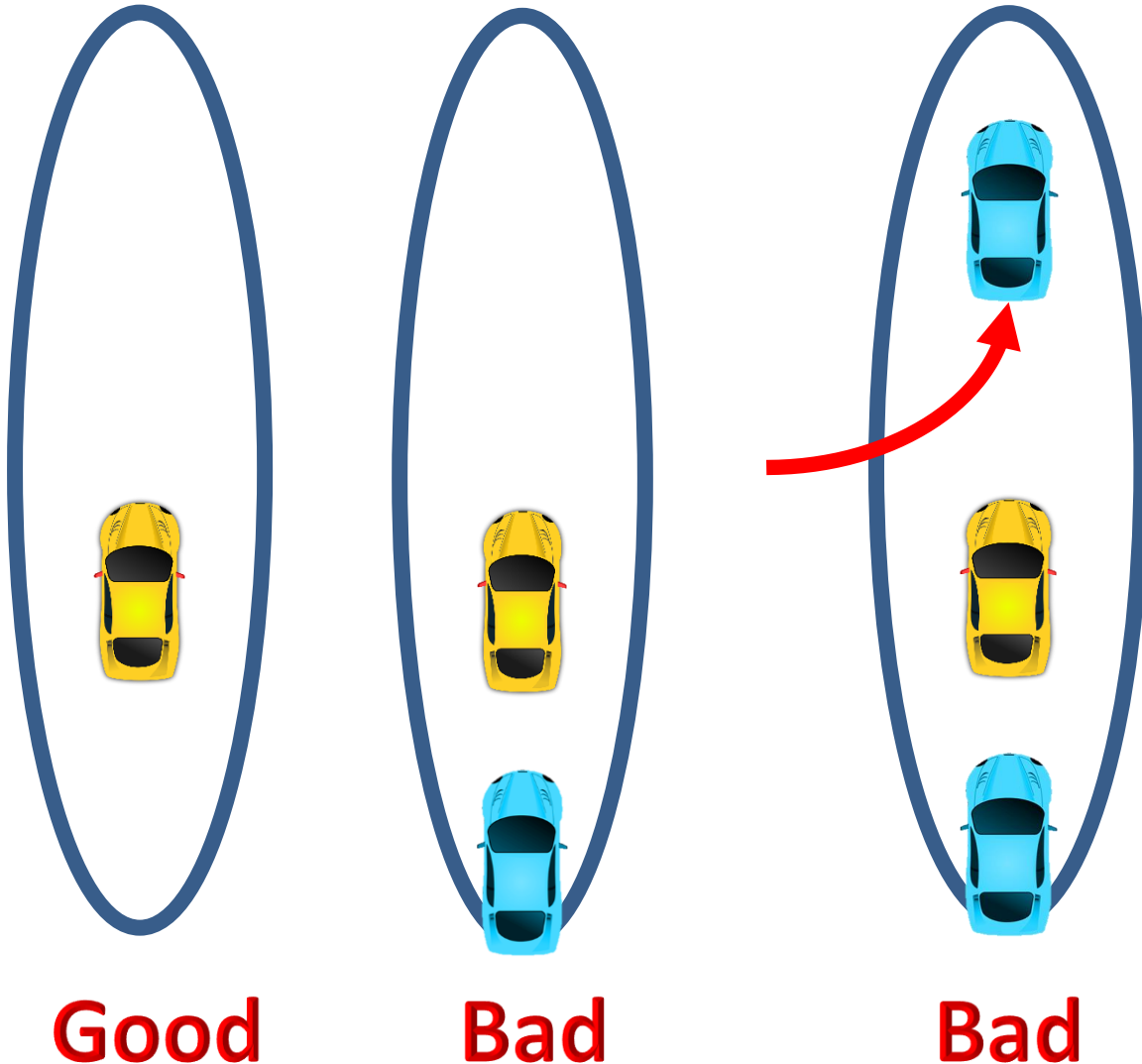
Then say something like 'this is a daft place to park, I'll move it in a second'. Now look around and make sure no one is overtaking you. Then find a better place making sure you do all your observation when moving off again.

The examiner will mark you on your final parking position, the fact that you parked up earlier and then relocated is not a problem (unless you move off without checking first).

Most students fail this for moving off again without checking for overtaking traffic first, always check completely around your vehicle and do a second blind spot check in the direction of travel when emerging from behind a car. (This also applies to parking on the right of the road).

Safety Bubbles

There is an area around your car that you don't want people in because it makes you feel uneasy.



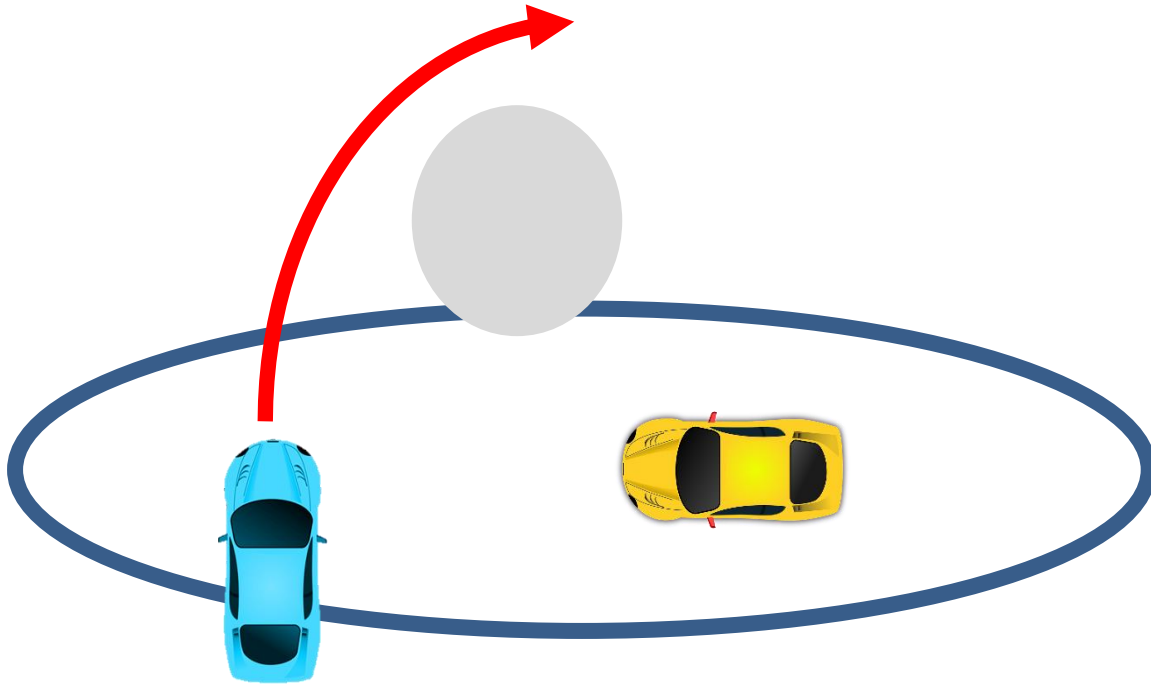
The examiner is looking at safety bubbles on behalf of others around you. If you tailgate someone or pull into the path of a vehicle and then cause them to slow, you will fail.

If you pull into the path of a vehicle and then drive slowly, the car behind will have to brake, it's your fault, you will fail. If you accelerate up to the speed of the surrounding traffic or speed limit and then the car behind must brake, that's their fault for driving too fast and you are ok.

Whenever you enter a new road, check your mirrors and if someone is catching you, accelerate quickly up to speed.

Another area where people get this wrong is at roundabouts, especially mini roundabouts.

Here the blue car is going through the safety bubble of the yellow car as they turn right at a roundabout.



If we were the blue car, the examiner will look in the rear-view mirror to see if the yellow car appears there before we turn. If it does appear, you have gone through the safety bubble and have failed the test.

Sure, today you pulled away without affecting the yellow car but the issue here is if there is a problem with your car and it doesn't pull away as expected, the yellow car will have to take evasive action. There is no safety margin if the car decides to stutter or you pull off in the wrong gear and stall; they will potentially hit you.

Do not affect others, if you go in front of a car, make sure there is plenty of room and don't let the car catch you.



Don't get back early

On a driving test, the examiner needs to see a minimum of 28 minutes worth of driving.

It is therefore a recommendation that you do not rush.

When adrenaline kicks in on a test, it is very common for a driver to take risks, drive too fast, brake late ETC.

If traffic is kind to you, there is a risk that you will return to the test centre before the 28 minutes have expired. The examiner therefore must drive around to use up the remaining minutes and as such extend the length of your test route.

If you take your time, relax, just go for a relaxing drive, you will return after 28 or more minutes have passed. This means that the examiner does not have to extend your route and you end up doing the shortest amount of driving. The less driving you do, the less you can do wrong!

Knowing that you do not want to return early, you can now take your time and concentrate on doing the best you can rather than rushing around. It benefits you greatly to just relax and return having done the shortest route but maybe taking 32 minutes.

I do not want you to now think that you need to drive slowly because you will be penalised for holding up traffic. I want you to make progress where you can safely but maybe take a few extra seconds to make a good decision at a junction. Maybe decide to let a car pass rather than try and get in front of it. Thinking about safety bubbles, it is much better to go out behind a car than in front of it.





You will be pleased to know that examiners get examined as well to ensure that they are all marking as they should. This means that you get consistent marking across the country.

Unfortunately, this means that every so often you might be told that you are taking another examiner with you. (It's happened twice in over 600 tests with me so it's pretty rare).

The second examiner is not marking you and has no input on your test; they will not change the outcome of the test. The first examiner will still mark you and pass or fail you as per the marking criteria they are taught. The second examiner will assess the first examiner and deal with them afterwards.

It really doesn't affect anything other than the car is a little heavier and might not accelerate as well. But as I use 2 litre diesels, you won't notice the extra weight much, it only really affects cars with small engines.



Have up to date Information when doing manoeuvres

In a recent test, a student failed when doing their parallel park; this is what happened.

1. The examiner asked them to park up by the side of the road.
2. Then told them to do the parking exercise.
3. The student looked around, pulled out and stopped next to the car they were going to park behind.
4. They looked around again and saw that the road was clear.
5. Then they put the car into reverse, had a quick think about what they were going to do and started to move.
6. The examiner put the brake on and pointed out that they were being overtaken at the time and we were about to swing our nose into the path of a car.
7. Fail.

What they needed to do was look around the car again just before moving; they had old information about the traffic in the road. The world around you changes by the second so you need up-to-date information.

This is what they should have done.

1. The examiner asked them to park up by the side of the road.
2. Then told them to do the parking exercise.
3. The student looked around, pulled out and stopped next to the car they were going to park behind.
4. They looked around again and saw that the road was clear.
5. Then they put the car into reverse, had a quick think about what they were going to do and started to move. (You should have a think before you start the manoeuvre, not whilst sitting in the middle of the road)
6. **They looked around again and saw that the road was busy.**
7. **They waited until it was safe to proceed, either because cars had finished overtaking them or people were happy to wait for them to park.**
8. **They then parked whilst keeping an eye on everyone just in case a car decided to overtake them again or a pedestrian walked behind.**
9. **The examiner let off party poppers, gave a round of applause, dancers appeared with pompoms chanting the students name one letter at a time.**
10. **I might have made up point 9.....**
11. **Pass.**





Make It a pleasant drive

Be kind to the examiner please.

Their primary role is to look after you and make sure that you are safe on the road.

A student of mine passed their driving test but with a lot of errors mainly down to speed related bad driving.

They accelerated quickly out of junctions which affected their steering.

They broke late causing the examiner to be thrown forward when stopping.

They were taking corners a bit too fast.

This is that damn adrenaline again causing them to drive uncharacteristically bad.

At the end of the test, the examiner pulled me to the side and told me that she was concerned that my student would kill themselves or their passengers and that I should have a word with them to calm them down.

I reassured her that's my student normally doesn't drive like a lunatic and that he appears to have saved bad driving just for her. I promised that I would pass on her concerns to him.

Now I pride myself on producing quality drivers. I do not take people to the driving test unless they have proven to me that they are capable of driving on the roads safely. I have full confidence that my student will be safe on the roads but he came very close to failing his driving test about five times.

This again comes back two not wanting to rush. Take your time do things correctly, look after the examiner so that they are happy that you will still be alive in a weeks time. They are ultimately there to allow you on the road if you are going to keep yourself safe. If they think that you need more training, they will fail you if you drive bad enough.

They do not want your death on their conscience. Just be nice to them and show them that you are as good as I think you are; they will happily give you a driving licence.

