The Secrets To Passing Your Driving Test

For a new learner the task of starting driving lessons can be a really daunting prospect. All the learner wants to do is pass his/her driving test, yet it seems such a minefield to get a full licence. There is the theory test to worry about, the driving test and even choosing the correct instructor for you. Luckily this guide is here to help you. We recognise everyone is different and everyone learns differently. Our driving school aims to cater for everyone who wants to learn to drive whether they are able bodied, disabled or even wanting a trailer licence, we can help you. This guide aims to cover information on all car tests.

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Choosing The Right Instructor For You

This can be a minefield and there are various factors to consider, but I will start at the beginning. Phone up and speak to the instructor; have a conversation with the potential instructor. Is the conversation engaging? Is the instructor asking you questions about you, or telling you about himself/herself? If the instructor can engage you in conversation then this is a good start as it probably means then the lessons will be engaging. If the conversation is all one way telling you about themselves this usually means the instructor is fixed on his/her agenda and will not be willing to allow you to get involved in the planning of your lessons. The questions instructors hate most is the price question.

Learner: How much are your lessons?

Instructor: £xx per hour with a £xx introductory rate.

The instructor has not even asked what your needs are!

Remember if you are buying on price the instructor with the cheapest hourly rate may not be the cheapest instructor. We have found that sometimes the cheapest instructors haven’t always given value for money. For instance if you were quoted £20 per hour and it took you 40 hrs to pass your test you would be paying £800, on the other hand if a instructor was charging £25 per hour and you took 30 hours to pass your test well this would only cost £750 and save you 10 hours of time as well.

Will your instructor involve you in the planning of lessons? If you are involved you will find your lessons far more enjoyable and also take ownership of your learning.

Does the instructor offer anything to aid your learning? Handouts, starter packs or theory training? Any of these may add value to your lessons.

Remember in this process you are the most important person, you are the one paying for your lessons.

Look on the internet for local instructors websites. Is the site updated regularly? Are there recent testimonials? If the answer is yes it means the instructor is actively looking for your business and testimonials are probably one of the best ways of knowing if your potential instructor is keeping his clients happy.
Theory Test

In order to book your practical driving test you need to have passed the theory test. You cannot even book your practical test before the theory has been passed. Now students take different approaches to this. One is to start lessons and get help from an instructor. Instructors have various tools available to help you with your theory learning. You could buy a DVD from Amazon with help for your theory. There are also various online programs that can help you.

A good instructor will give you help with your theory and a lot of this can be done at home without spending valuable lesson time on theory.

We use a product called theory test pro. You can find our free trial here:

Free Theory Training

On test day you must have your photocard AND the counter part of your licence both of these parts = 1 licence. You will NOT be able to take your test if you don’t have both parts. If you have the old style licence you will need to take your signed licence and a valid passport.

To pass your theory test you have to answer 50 multiple choice questions and achieve at least 43 correct answers. You will then have to take a hazard perception test. You have 14 videos. One of the clips has a double hazard and is worth 10 marks. The other 13 clips have one hazard and are worth 5 marks each. You have to score a minimum of 44 marks to pass this part of the test.

At the end of the test you are handed a letter telling you if you passed or failed. If you haven't managed a pass you will have to take both parts again.

IMPORTANT There are plenty of companies out there that charge a booking fee to book the theory test for you (not usually driving schools). You can book it here for free. Your test should cost £31 and you will get a choice instantly on times and dates you can book.

Book your theory test here for free
Practical Driving Test

On practical test day you will usually be picked up by your driving instructor in enough time to get you to the test centre and have a warm up drive. You should arrive at the test centre in plenty of time so you don’t feel rushed.

You must have your photocard AND the counter part of your licence both of these parts = 1 licence. You will NOT be able to take your test if you don’t have both parts. If you have the old style licence you will need to take your signed licence and a valid passport just like the theory test.

Before you start the driving ability part of your test, you’ll have an eyesight check and be asked 2 vehicle safety questions.

You’ll have to read a number plate from a distance of:

- 20 metres for vehicles with a new-style number plate
- 20.5 metres for vehicles with an old-style number plate

You can write down what you see if you can’t speak English or have difficulty reading.

We have provided the safety questions you could be asked in the appendix.

You’ll be asked 2 vehicle safety questions. These are also known as the ‘show me, tell me’ questions.

The examiner will ask you one ‘show me’ question, where you’ll have to show them how you’d carry out a vehicle safety check.

You’ll also be asked one ‘tell me’ question, where you’ll have to explain to the examiner how you’d carry out the check.

The driving part of your test will last about 40 minutes. Throughout the test your examiner will be looking for an overall safe standard of driving.

During your test the examiner will give you directions that you should follow. You’ll drive in various road and traffic conditions. You should drive in the way your instructor has trained you.
It should include:

- normal stops
- an angle start (pulling out from behind a parked vehicle)
- a hill start

You might also be asked to carry out an emergency stop.

You’ll have to show how well you can reverse your vehicle. The examiner will ask you to do one of the following exercises:

- reversing around a corner
- turning in the road
- reverse parking - either into a parking bay, or parallel parking at the side of the road

Your driving test will include around 10 minutes of independent driving. It’s designed to assess your ability to drive safely while making decisions on your own.

Carry on if you make a mistake, because if it’s not a serious mistake it might not affect your result.

Your examiner will ask if you want your instructor, or another person, to:

- sit in the back of your car during your driving test
- be with you after the test for the result and feedback

This person will usually be your driving instructor, but it could also be a relative or friend. They also have to be over 16 years of age and cannot take part in the test.

Your practical driving test will include around 10 minutes of independent driving. It’s not a test of your orientation and navigation skills.

During your test you’ll have to drive independently by either following:

- traffic signs
- a series of directions
- a combination of both

To help you understand where you’re going when following verbal directions, the examiner can show you a diagram.

It doesn’t matter if you don’t remember every direction, or if you go the wrong way.

Driving independently means making your own decisions - this includes deciding when it’s safe and appropriate to ask for confirmation about where you’re going.
It won’t affect the result of your test if you go off the independent driving route, unless you make a driving fault.

The examiner will help you get back on the route if you go off it or take a wrong turning. You can then continue with the independent driving.

The examiner will give you directions until you can see the next traffic sign if there are poor or obscured traffic signs. You won’t need to have a detailed knowledge of the area.

You’ll pass your test if you make:

- 15 or fewer driving faults
- no serious or dangerous faults

When the driving test has ended, you can call your instructor over if they didn’t go with you on your test. This is so they can listen to the result and help you with any feedback afterwards.

The examiner will:

- tell you if you passed or not
- explain how you did during the test

There are 3 types of faults that can be marked:

- a dangerous fault - involves actual danger to you, the examiner, the public or property
- a serious fault - could potentially be dangerous
- a driving fault - not potentially dangerous, but if you make the same fault throughout your test it could become a serious fault

The examiner will give you a pass certificate if you pass the test. They will also ask you if you want your full licence to be sent to you automatically.

Once you have passed your test you can start driving straight away - you don’t need to wait for your full licence to arrive.

You have to wait another 10 working days before you can take another test if you don’t pass. Working days don’t include Sundays and public holidays.

The examiner will also give you feedback about how eco-efficient your driving is.

Test prices are £62 for a weekday and £75 for a weekend test like the theory some companies charge you to book your test. You can do it for free here

Book your driving test
There are lots of reasons why a candidate fails a practical driving test here are some reasons people fail their practical test.

- Observation at junctions: - not looking enough or failing to act properly on what you see.
- Reversing: - not doing effective observations
- Use of Mirrors: - not looking in your mirrors effectively
- Incorrect use of signals: - when pulling over on the left it is common to leave a left signal on when pulling away
- Incorrect positioning on the road: - getting in the wrong lane at a roundabout is a good example of this
Appendix

Show Me Tell Me Questions

Q1. Open the bonnet, identify where you would check the engine oil level and tell me how you would check that the engine has sufficient oil.

A1. Identify dipstick / oil level indicator, describe check of oil level against the minimum/maximum markers.

Q2. Show me / explain how you would check that the power assisted steering is working before starting a journey.

A2. If the steering becomes heavy the system may not be working properly. Before starting a journey two simple checks can be made. Gentle pressure on the steering wheel, maintained while the engine is started, should result in a slight but noticeable movement as the system begins to operate. Alternatively turning the steering wheel just after moving off will give an immediate indication that the power assistance is functioning.

Q3. Open the bonnet, identify where you would check the engine coolant level and tell me how you would check that the engine has the correct level.

A3. Identify high/low level markings on header tank where fitted or radiator filler cap, and describe how to top up to correct level.

Q4. Show me how you would check the parking brake (handbrake) for excessive wear, make sure you keep safe control of the vehicle

A4. Apply footbrake firmly. Demonstrate by applying parking brake (handbrake) so that when it is fully applied it secures itself, and is not at the end of the working travel.

Q5. Identify where the windscreen washer reservoir is and tell me how you would check the windscreen washer level.

A5. Identify reservoir and explain how to check level.

Q6. Show me how you would check that the horn is working (off road only).

A6. Check is carried out by using control (turn on ignition if necessary).

Q7. Open the bonnet, identify where the brake fluid reservoir is and tell me how you would check that you have a safe level of hydraulic brake fluid.
A7. Identify reservoir, check level against high/low markings.

Q8. Show me how you would check that the direction indicators are working.

A8. Applying the indicators or hazard warning switch and check functioning of all indicators.
(if you need to switch ignition on - Do not start engine)

Q9. Show me how you would check that the brake lights are working on this car. (I can assist you, if you need to switch the ignition on, please don’t start the engine)

A9. Operate brake pedal, make use of reflections in windows, garage doors, etc, or ask someone to help.
(Do not start engine)

Q10. Tell me how you would check that the brakes are working before starting a journey.

A10. Brakes should not feel spongy or slack. Brakes should be tested as you set off. Vehicle should not pull to one side

Q11. Tell me how you would check that the headlights & tail lights are working. (No need to exit vehicle)

A11. Operate switch (turn on ignition if necessary), then walk round vehicle.
(As this is a “Tell Me” question, there is no need to physically check the lights.)

Q12. Tell me where you would find the information for the recommended tyre pressures for this car and how tyre pressures should be checked.

A12. Manufacturer’s guide, use a reliable pressure gauge, check and adjust pressures when tyres are cold, don’t forget spare tyre, remember to refit valve caps.

Q13. Tell me how you would check the tyres to ensure that they have sufficient tread depth and that their general condition is safe to use on the road.

A13. No cuts and bulges, 1.6mm of tread depth across the central 3/4 of the breadth of the tyre and around the entire outer circumference.

Q14. Show me how you would clean the windscreen using the windscreen washer and wipers.

A14. Operate control to wash and wipe windscreen (turn ignition on if necessary).

Q15. Show me how you would set the demister controls to clear all the windows effectively, this should include both front and rear screens
A15. Set all relevant controls including; fan, temperature, air direction / source and heated screen to clear windscreen and windows. Engine does not have to be started for this demonstration

Q16. Show me how you would switch on the rear fog light(s) and explain when you would use it/them.
(No need to exit vehicle)

A16. Operate switch (turn on dipped headlights and ignition if necessary). Check warning light is on. Explain use.

Q17. Show me how you switch your headlight from dipped to main beam and explain how you would know the main beam is on whilst inside the car.

A17. Operate switch (with ignition or engine on if necessary), check with main beam warning light.

Q18. Tell me how you make sure your head restraint is correctly adjusted so it provides the best protection in the event of a crash.

A18. The head restraint should be adjusted so the rigid part of the head restraint is at least as high as the eye or top of the ears, and as close to the back of the head as is comfortable. N.B. Some restraints might not be adjustable.

Q19. Tell me how you would know if there was a problem with your anti lock braking system.

A19. Warning light should illuminate if there is a fault with the anti lock braking system.