

**[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/LearnerAndNewDrivers/PracticalTest/DG\\_4022542](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/LearnerAndNewDrivers/PracticalTest/DG_4022542)**

## Special needs and the practical driving test



When you book your practical driving test you should say if you have any special needs or disabilities. This is so the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) can make reasonable adjustments for your test. Find out what you need to tell DSA about if you have special needs.

### **Taking the practical driving test if you have special needs**

DSA provides a number of facilities for you if you have special needs or physical disabilities. You can read about more about these facilities on this page.

No matter how serious your disability might be, you'll still take the same driving test as everyone else.

### **Health conditions that could affect your driving**

The law requires you to tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) about any condition that might affect your ability to drive safely. Find out if you need to tell DVLA about your medical condition.

### **What to do when you book your practical driving test**

When you book your practical driving test, you'll be asked if you will be bringing an interpreter with you.

You'll be asked if you have:

- any condition which affects your movement
- any missing limbs
- any special learning needs
- arthritis
- dyslexia
- epilepsy
- paraplegia
- any other special needs

You'll also be asked if you are:

- deaf - either profoundly or not

- heavily pregnant

### **Taking a test with more time allowed**

More time might be allowed for your test if you have certain special needs. This gives the examiner time to talk to you about your disability and any adaptations fitted to your vehicle.

You don't need to have a badge through the Blue Badge Scheme to be able to take a test with more time.

### **Taking the practical test if English isn't your first language**

You can bring your own interpreter for your practical driving test. They must be at least 16 years old. Your approved driving instructor can be your interpreter.

You will need to arrange your own interpreter and pay any fees that they charge. Driving examiners are very experienced at dealing with candidates who speak little or no English.

### **Taking the practical driving test if you have hearing difficulties**

If you are deaf or have hearing difficulties, the examiner will communicate with you by whatever means works best for you.

At the start of the test the examiner will tell you what will happen by using written notes. They will also look at you to help you lip read what they are saying if you find that helpful.

The examiner will usually give directions to you as hand signals. These will be explained and shown to you using written cards before your test starts.

### **Taking an interpreter with you on your practical driving test**

You can bring your own interpreter for your practical driving test if you use sign language. They must be at least 16 years old. Your approved driving instructor can be your interpreter.

You will need to arrange your own interpreter and pay any fees that they charge.

### **Taking the practical driving test while you are pregnant**

You can take a driving test at any stage of your pregnancy. However, you must be able and willing to do an emergency stop.

### **Taking the eyesight test if you have reading difficulties**

At the start of the practical driving test, the examiner will ask you to read the number plate on a parked vehicle.

If you have learning difficulties or do not speak English, you are allowed to write down the shapes of what you see on the number plate.

You need to read the number plate 20 metres with a new-style plate and at 20.5 metres with an old-style plate.

### **Special needs and the independent driving section of the test**

When you book your test, tell DSA about your special needs. Your examiner then knows which type of special needs you have, so reasonable adjustment can be made during the independent driving section.

This could be by asking you which method you prefer - following traffic signs or a series of directions (a maximum of three), which are supported by a diagram. In some cases this may be shortened to just two directions.

## Independent driving and riding section of the practical test



Your practical driving test will include approximately ten minutes of independent driving. It's not a test of your orientation and navigation skills. Find out what independent driving is and how it will be assessed during your test.

### Which tests include the independent driving or riding section

The independent driving or riding section is included in the following practical driving tests:

- car
- motorcycle module two
- large goods vehicle (LGV)
- passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) tests
- approved driving instructor (ADI) driving ability (sometimes called 'part two')
- taxi

### Independent driving explained

Your practical driving test will include approximately ten minutes of independent driving. 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 are going when following verbal directions, the examiner will show you a diagram.

It doesn't matter if you don't remember every direction, or if you go the wrong way - that can happen to the most experienced drivers.

Independent driving is not a test of your orientation and navigation skills. 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.

### The independent driving route

If you ask for a reminder of the directions, the examiner will confirm them to you.

If you go off the independent driving route it won't affect the result of your test unless you commit a driving fault.

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

If there are poor or obscured traffic signs, the examiner will give you directions until you can see the next traffic sign - you won't need to have a detailed knowledge of the area.

You can't use a sat nav for independent driving as it gives you turn-by-turn prompts.

Independent driving tests how you make your own decisions.

### **Special needs**

The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) has procedures to identify special needs and disabilities when tests are booked online or over the phone. The examiner then knows which type of special needs you have so reasonable adjustment can be made.

For the independent driving section, this could be by asking you which method you prefer - following traffic signs or a series of directions (a maximum of three), which are supported by a diagram. In some cases this may be shortened to just two directions.

Driving examiners are very experienced at dealing with candidates who speak little or no English. For example, sometimes they will write place names so it is clear to you where you're being asked to drive to.

You can have an interpreter along with you on your test if you wish. Your approved driving instructor can act as your interpreter.

### **Information from the DT1: internal operational guidance for driving examiners in the conduct of driving tests**

Available on our website at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/dsa/category.asp?cat=732>

### **5.08 TIME ALLOCATED FOR TEST**

More than one test period is normally allocated for an L test for a disabled person because of the extra documentation involved. Extra time is also allowed for candidates who are deaf without speech or who have declared a severe degree of deafness. If a candidate in one of these categories fails to declare their disability when applying for the test, only one period will have been allowed. The test should however be conducted, the documentation being left for completion later in the day if necessary.

### **5.09 DIRECTIONS ON ROUTE**

Try to ensure that as far as possible the instructions are given when the vehicle is stationary and the candidate can see your face clearly. Speak clearly and not too fast. Do not shout. Keep your head still. Try to move your lips a little more than you normally do. Please be patient.

The examiner should agree with the candidate beforehand how instructions about the route and manoeuvres are to be given. This should be done in writing or, if the candidate is accompanied by a signer, through them.

Note: The signer may be the ADI or accompanying driver.

There are now small electronic communication devices available to facilitate conversation with people who are hard of hearing. If asked to use one of these devices, the examiner should comply, after first ascertaining that it can be worn other than around the neck.

Independent drive section. Where a disability or special need is declared or is apparent, and providing the test is not undermined, examiners should, wherever possible adapt their approach to accommodate the candidate and acknowledge any coping strategies used. (Please see Chapter 7.35 General Matters, Independent Drive Section for full explanation)

### **5.10 DEAF CANDIDATES (*motorcycles*)**

In the case of deaf candidates or those with a hearing defect that would make radio communication impractical, the examiner should give directions on route with the aid of a diagram or map, taking into account the candidate's local knowledge of the area. Care should be taken to ensure that the distance between briefing points is not too long, nor the directions too complicated.

Independent ride section. Where a disability or special need is declared or is apparent, and providing the test is not undermined, examiners should, wherever possible adapt their approach to accommodate the candidate and acknowledge any coping strategies used. (Please see Chapter 7.35 General Matters, Independent Drive Section for full explanation)

If the booking section knows that the candidate is profoundly deaf in both ears, 2 periods will be allocated for the test. If a candidate reports for test with a hearing problem, which was not declared, on their application, the examiner should ascertain the extent of the deafness and check whether it can be overcome by the radio equipment. If not, the test should be postponed so that it can be re-booked with more time. The procedure of rebooking should be explained to the pupil.

### **5.11 WITHOUT SPEECH**

Directions can be given without difficulty, although examiners should bear in mind the possibility that the candidate may not have understood them.

Independent drive section. Where a disability or special need is declared or is apparent, and providing the test is not undermined, examiners should, wherever possible adapt their approach to accommodate the candidate and acknowledge any coping strategies used. (Please see Chapter 7.35 General Matters, Independent Drive Section for full explanation)

### **5.12 COMBINATION OF DEAFNESS AND WITHOUT SPEECH**

The examiner should conduct the test as far as they reasonably can, resorting to less conventional methods of communication if necessary. The test must not however be distorted to an unacceptable degree to meet the candidate's handicaps. If the test cannot be conducted to a standard, which enables the examiner to reach a decision, they should terminate the test and make a special report to the Sector Manager for onward transmission to Standards and Regulation.

## **6.01 CATEGORY B1 - THREE WHEEL CARS, MOTOR TRICYCLES AND QUADS**

Vehicles designed so that the examiner can sit in them (such as a Reliant Robin) should be booked on a car programme and a normal car test carried out. The test will take the form of a normal car test including the reversing exercises, if a reverse gear is fitted. (Note: the fee is the same as a car test).

Vehicles such as the 'Hot Rod' Type (motorcycle front end and car rear) and quads should be booked on a motorcycle programme and take the form of a normal accompanied motorcycle test, except that the 'U' turn, wheeling without the use of the engine and the 'Balance' question will be omitted. The candidate will wear a radio for communication whether or not a helmet is worn.

Note: The test will only be available at DTCs where motorcycle tests are normally carried out and the fee will be the same as for a car test.

Note: Motor tricycles may be reversible or non-reversible; in the latter case examiners should not be concerned that either the reverse or reverse parking or turn in the road exercises cannot be carried out. Before beginning the test for a motor tricycle the examiner will need to ascertain whether it is reversible and act accordingly. Examiners should not comment upon or concern themselves with the means by which, in some cases, a reversing gear may have been rendered inoperative.

## **6.02 INVALID CARRIAGES**

This test will be conducted from any DTC on the lines of a Home Test - that is with the examiner on foot similar to a Category F test. The candidate will be directed round a route consisting of blocks and the test will include an Emergency Stop - Angle Start - Hill Start if possible and normal driving. (Note: there is no fee for this test)

For driver licensing and testing purposes an invalid carriage is defined as a mechanically propelled vehicle with an un-laden weight not exceeding 10 cwt, specially designed and constructed, and not merely adapted, for the use of a person suffering from some physical defect or disability, and used solely by such a person.

These vehicles are exempt from excise duty, but should display a valid 'exempt from taxation' vehicle excise licence.

Drivers of these vehicles normally signal with direction indicators, and should not be asked to demonstrate arm signals during the test.

A candidate who passes the test in an invalid carriage should be given a DSA10 for category B1, and the D255 should indicate that the candidate should be restricted to invalid carriages only.

### **6.03 MODIFIED/UNUSUAL MACHINES**

On occasions, candidates will attend for test on an unusual machine (i.e. a grey import) or there will be no plate or they will claim that the machine has been modified. Examiners will usually be able to decide either from their own knowledge or the documentary evidence produced which category the machine falls into. In cases where the category cannot be decided then advice should be sought from the SE, area ACDE or Standards and Regulation

In all cases the category of the machine must be decided prior to the start of the drive and the candidate should be informed of the decision.

Whatever the test result, full details of any modifications should be entered on the DL25.

### **6.04 CATEGORY P - MOPEDS (Including electric mopeds)**

#### **DEFINITION**

For a machine used before 1 August 1977, 'moped' means a motorcycle with an engine not exceeding 50 cc and equipped with pedals by means of which it can be propelled.

A machine that fits the above definition except that a pedal or pedals have been removed and foot rests fitted, or permanently fixed so that they can no longer be used as a means of propulsion, falls within category P.

For a machine first used on or after 1 August 1977, 'moped' means a motor cycle with a maximum design speed not exceeding 30 mph, a kerbside weight not exceeding 250 kg and, if propelled by an internal combustion engine, an engine not exceeding 50 cc.

All motor cycles with engines up to and including 125 cc, first used on or after 1 August 1977, should carry a small plate showing the machine as being either a 'standard motor cycle' (category A) or a 'moped' (category P).

Usually the date of a machine's first registration counts as the date when it was first used. If a machine has a registration suffix letter 'S' or later, and carries a plate, that should normally be used to determine which category the machine falls into.



A machine with a registration suffix letter earlier than 'S' which does not exceed 50 cc and has usable pedals should be regarded as a moped; unless it is clearly a later machine carrying a 'cherished' number plate.

### **6.05 PROCEDURE**

Tests of candidates on mopeds should follow the procedure for the conduct of the motorcycle test.

### **6.06 LEFT-HAND DRIVE VEHICLES**

Examiners should bear in mind that a candidate driving a left-hand drive vehicle should exercise special care, and make full use of the mirrors when about to overtake other vehicles or change direction to the right.

### **6.07 ELECTRICALLY ASSISTED PEDAL CYCLES**

Certain machines with the characteristics of conventional pedal cycles, but with a small measure of assistance from an electric motor, are excluded from the motor vehicle category in the Road Traffic Act. Riders of these cycles are therefore not subject to the driver licensing and testing regulations and, if candidates present themselves for test with one, they should be advised accordingly.

The machines are:

Bicycles with a kerbside weight not exceeding 40 kg and an electric motor with a continuous rated output not exceeding 0.2 kilowatts; or

Tandem bicycles and tricycles with a kerbside weight not exceeding 60 kg and an electric motor with a continuous rated output not exceeding 0.25 kilowatts

The machines are required to be fitted with pedals by means of which they can be propelled, an electric motor which cannot propel the vehicle when it is travelling at more than 15 mph, and a plate showing the manufacturer's name and the continuous rated output of the electric motor.

### **6.08 VEHICLES WITH AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION**

A vehicle with automatic transmission is defined in regulations as 'A vehicle in which the gear ratio between the engine and the wheels can be varied only by the use of the accelerator or brakes'. In general a vehicle without a manual clutch is regarded as an automatic.

The following points of driving technique are common to all automatic systems:

#### **HANDBRAKE**

The handbrake should be applied for temporary stops, e.g. waiting at a red traffic light, a junction, or in a traffic hold-up, if they are likely to be of a long duration

Short stops may not require the application of the handbrake

The handbrake may need to be applied to prevent 'creep'

Faults committed in these cases should be recorded at Handbrake

#### **FOOTBRAKE AND ACCELERATOR**

The use of the right foot for both brake and accelerator pedals has considerable safety advantages. It is therefore recommended practice for normal driving, but is not necessarily applicable to disabled drivers. The use of the left foot on the brake pedal should not however be marked as a fault unless it involves the use of the footbrake against the accelerator

The use of both feet when manoeuvring in a confined space is acceptable if carried out correctly, i.e. speed is properly adjusted so that no large throttle opening or heavy braking pressures are involved.

Any fault should be recorded at footbrake and/or Accelerator, or in the 'control' box if it occurs in the reversing, reverse parking, or turn in the road exercise

### **6.09 PARTICULAR DRIVING SYSTEMS**

#### **FULLY AUTOMATIC SYSTEM**

This type has selector settings for forward and reverse, neutral and/or park. It also has

settings which enable the driver to select and retain a particular gear ratio or range of gear ratios, e.g. to obtain engine braking when descending a steep hill, although gear changes are normally made automatically. Most automatics of this type enable the driver to make an immediate change into the lower gear, to obtain extra acceleration, by means of 'kick down' or part throttle operation actuated by the accelerator pedal. In nearly all cases the selector lever is mounted on the floor or the steering column in the position normally occupied by the gear lever, but there are exceptions, e.g. a panel of press buttons on the fascia.

## **SEMI-AUTOMATIC SYSTEMS**

With these the driver has to select the gear required by movement of the gear lever as with a manually controlled gearbox, but there is no clutch pedal. For driving test and licensing purposes these vehicles are regarded as automatics.

## **PRE-SELECTOR SYSTEMS**

In these the gear is selected, before it is required, by manual movement of a selector lever, which is normally mounted on the steering column. When required, the gear is engaged by a single depression and release of the gear-change pedal, which is situated where the clutch pedal would be on an orthodox transmission.

### **6.10 'THE CLUTCH' AND 'GUIDOSIMPLEX'**

These adaptations enable a vehicle to be driven in manual or automatic mode. The candidate can choose which mode to drive the vehicle in and if successful should be issued with the appropriate DSA10.

Disabled candidates may use the vehicle for a test in automatic mode as a means of overcoming their disability. If successful, the candidate should be issued with a restricted licence in the usual way.

### **6.11 CENTRIFUGAL CLUTCHES AND FREE-WHEEL DEVICES**

Vehicles fitted with these devices do not fall within the definition of vehicles with automatic transmission. The use of a free-wheel device or centrifugal clutch in addition to a pedal-operated clutch is at the discretion of the candidate.

### **6.12 HILL ASSIST**

Many new vehicles are being fitted with a 'hill assist' device as standard. This system allows a driver, when moving off on an uphill or downhill gradient, a couple of seconds to move their foot from the footbrake to the accelerator before the device releases the footbrake automatically. If this device is fitted drivers still have to coordinate the controls

and take the correct observation when moving off; consequently vehicles fitted with such a device are suitable for the practical driving test.

### **6.13 CITROEN XM PARKING BRAKE**

Citroen XMs are fitted with an `emergency and parking brake`. This brake is operated by the driver pushing in a control fitted under the offside face vent and depressing an additional foot pedal situated to the left of the clutch pedal on the manual model and to the left of the brake pedal on the automatic version. The parking brake is released by pulling out the control fitted on the dash.

The emergency brake can be operated by applying the additional pedal, which will operate the brakes without power assistance. Drivers are advised not to drive with the release control pushed in when driving normally.

### **6.13 CITROEN XM PARKING BRAKE**

The emergency brake can be operated by applying the additional pedal, which will operate the brakes without power assistance. Drivers are advised not to drive with the release control pushed in when driving normally.

### **6.14 BICYCLES WITH ANCILLARY MOTORS**

The DELTA DART and similar engines can be attached to a pedal cycle to convert it into a moped. When such machines are presented for a category P driving test they must display a number plate, road fund licence and the rider is required to wear a standard motorcycle helmet. Ordinary cycle helmets are not acceptable.

### **6.15 ELECTRONICALLY OPERATED PARKING BRAKE (handbrake)**

From 1 November 2010 vehicles fitted with an electronically operated parking brake are suitable for use during a practical driving test. There are usually two ways of releasing an electronically operated parking brake: by depressing the footbrake whilst releasing the parking brake, then coordinating the accelerator and clutch to move away, or coordinating the accelerator and clutch and when the electronics sense the clutch is at biting point the parking brake releases automatically. The parking brake will not usually release automatically if the accelerator is not used or the controls are not coordinated correctly - providing there is no loss of control either method is acceptable. If an examiner needs to take action to stop the vehicle if the electrically operated parking brake is applied and held on when the vehicle is in motion it will bring the vehicle to a controlled stop.

### **7.07 INTERPRETERS**

A candidate may be accompanied by an interpreter to help them to understand directions. An interpreter may also accompany deaf and/or deaf without speech candidates. The

interpreter must be at least 16 years of age. As from 6th April 2010 driving instructors are allowed to act as an interpreter on behalf of their own pupil.

If a signer is present, it might be convenient to allow them to sit in the front of the car to explain the examiner's requirements. This will normally only be necessary at the beginning of the test. In any case the interpreter should occupy the front seat only when the vehicle is stationary.

### **7.10 LGV/PCV CANDIDATES**

In view of the recommendations about medical fitness of LGV/PCV drivers it is very unlikely that an LGV/PCV test candidate would be deaf and/or deaf without speech. If such a candidate does attend for test, the examiner should conduct the test and forward a note about the candidate's condition to the SE for transmission to DVLA, Swansea.

### **7.35 Independent Driving**

#### **Disability/ Special Need/ Language**

Some disabilities may affect a candidate's ability to read traffic signs, whilst for others following a series of verbal directions could be difficult. If a disability or special need is declared at the time of booking, the examiner's journal will be annotated accordingly. (DVLA do not require form D255 for deaf, dyslexic, or dyspraxic candidates, unless there is a further associated disability). Where a disability or special need is declared or is apparent, and providing the test is not undermined, examiners should, wherever possible adapt their approach to accommodate the candidate. Some candidates might feel the need to use one of a variety of coping strategies when driving independently. This should be allowed wherever possible, without comment, and their driving performance assessed in the normal way.

When informed (either by the journal, or personally) that a candidate has a special need such as dyslexia, dyspraxia etc, examiners should tactfully establish how severely this affects them when following directions.

In these cases examiners should ask candidate which is their more able method, following traffic signs, or following verbal directions. Therefore, to cover each scenario, examiners should always carry one full set of route diagrams so they are able to deliver either method.

Examiners should be prepared to:

When using a traffic sign route, write down place names if the candidate is struggling to understand the place name.

Limit the verbal direction section to just 2 instructions at one time

- On the verbal direction pre brief suggest if it helps that directions can be given as 'next side' rather than 'left' or 'right' e.g. 'at end of road turn to my side, take the next road to your side and at the roundabout take the exit to your side. So, (showing diagram) that's end - my side, then turn - your side, roundabout - your side. Can you repeat that please'
- Include appropriate landmarks in the verbal directions when showing candidate the diagram e.g. 'end of this road turn right, then take the next road on the left just after the big cinema, and then ahead at the roundabout'
- If considered necessary to help the candidate visualise an instruction a simple written prompt may be placed on the diagram e.g. petrol station. (Examiners should ensure that a 'clean' diagram is used for subsequent tests).

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