



# Dealing with the practical test

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# What to expect on the Day

When it all started. **The Driving Test** was first started on British roads on 1st June 1935, because of the casualties on the roads. Early Examiners were recruited from the services and Police. Driving tests were suspended during the war (1939-46). The car boom of the mid-fifties resulted in more new examiners recruited to fill the many vacancies. The driving test itself is a fairly simple one, lasting about 40 minutes.

## The aims, myths and Legends surrounding the practical driving test:-

**The aim** of the DSA (Driving Standards Agency) is to produce a test format that can be applied consistently throughout the U.K. However it cannot be exactly the same everywhere. London traffic conditions cannot be reproduced in the heart of Scotland, and while it's easy to be able to find a hill for hill starts in Wales, this cannot be done in the Fens. So Examiners have to take the areas as they find it, but the same standards are applied nationally, with the content of the test varying from area to area



**When you book the practical test** you will be sent an appointment card.

- Check the Date and time of your allotted test.
- Check the Test Centre and the type of test i.e. Group (category) B **See table below**

Description	Category	Min Age
Light motorcycles not exceeding 11 kW	A1	17
Motorcycles up to 25 KW	A	17
Any Size motorcycle	A	21
3 or 4 wheeled light vehicles Motor tricycles up to 550 kg	B1	17
Cars	<b>B</b>	17
Automatic Cars	<b>B Automatic</b>	17
Cars with trailers	B+E	17
Mopeds	P	16

- Check the cancellation date. Unless a cancellation is received on or before the cancellation date you will lose your fee if you do not attend the test.

**On the day of your test** you must bring with you

- The appointment card
- Your signed provisional driving licence (plastic photo card & paper counterpart)
- Your Theory test certificate

with hard heels are unsuitable for driving due to the extremely hard bottoms of these types of footwear that obstruct the feeling required by the feet to operate the pedals properly.

Both accelerator and brake pedals are worked with the heel on the floor. Wearing high-heeled shoes will be a problem since the heel is elevated and the operation of the pedals is hampered because of this.

In the other end of the spectrum, driving barefoot - although providing the maximum feel of the pedals - might result in injury on the feet.

In cases of traffic accidents with nothing to protect the feet, one might tread on broken glass and sustain major injuries. Slight pain in the foot might hinder stepping hard on the brakes in case of emergency.

## So what's the best footwear to use while driving?

But there is no need to buy another pair, you may already have one that will do just fine. Here are some features you can look for in the shoes you already have to check if they will do:

1. The sole of the shoe is very important in determining what type of footwear to use. The sole should neither be too thick or too thin. It should not be too soft or too flexible and it should have enough grip on the pedal to avoid slipping.
2. It should be lightweight to enable easy movement.
3. It should not hinder ankle movement in working various pedals.
4. It should not be unnecessarily wide as to cause stepping on two pedals at the same time.

For these considerations, your basic trainer shoes ( not the thick soled type) or plain flat shoes is best suited for driving. Not only do these provide enough feeling on the feet, these are also hard and thick enough to help you give the exact pressure needed for braking and acceleration. Most importantly, these types of shoes are comfortable enough for long driving.

To avoid near misses caused by driving with the wrong shoes, it is recommended that plain shoes or light trainers be used while driving. Ladies who like to wear the high heels or platform shoes could change into these before going out of the vehicle.

# Driving Test Failures Top 10

**Did you know** Nationally in 2001/02 approximately 1.3 million tests for car drivers, over 60,000 tests for lorry and bus drivers and over 91,000 motorcycle rider tests were carried out. About 1400 examiners carried out the car and motorcycle tests from 335 permanent test centres across Britain. In the same period, 1.25 million theory tests were conducted at 157 centres.

## Reasons for failing the Driving Test

1. Failure to act properly at road junctions 149,439
2. Reversing round a corner incorrectly 119,617
3. Failure to make proper use of steering 101,318
4. Problems with parking 94,728
5. Failure to make proper use of gears 76,945
6. Failure to make effective use of the mirrors 66,270
7. Driving too slowly 64,942
8. Failure to act properly when turning right 64,215
9. Causing delay by not pulling out promptly at junctions 62,221
10. Failure to move away correctly from stationary positions 56,086

# Proper Shoes For Driving

Proper shoes for driving play a **BIG** part in driving safety. Yet there are a lot of people who drive with thick-soled shoes, high heels or sandals or no shoes at all ! Using footwear not suitable for driving may cause accidents on the road. A study team interviewed several people involved in near misses due to improper driving footwear.

Here are some of the responses:-

- "Wearing the latest fashion thick-soled shoes, I was pressing down on both the accelerator and brake at the same time and not realising it. I thought, 'I'm stepping down the accelerator but it isn't giving much power."
- "While driving with high-heeled shoes, the heel got caught on the mat and delayed application of the brakes and I came close to colliding with the car in front. "
- "While driving in sandals, the accelerator pedal became pinched between my foot and the sandal. Unable to move over the brake pedal I almost collided with the car ahead."
- "My mother drove with long boots and missed operating the brake and collided into a lorry."
- "Driving in bare feet enabled me to get a good feel of the pressure being applied to the brake pedal. But the pressure applied can be unexpectedly weak and there was an occasion when a collision into the car ahead was narrowly averted."
- "Driving with my bare feet, the stocking I wore caused a slippage off my foot on the brake pedal and braking action was delayed."

The choice of footwear for driving must allow the foot to feel the pressure needed by the pedals to achieve the desired braking or acceleration. Shoes with soles of over 10 centimetres or clogs

- Photo identity (if an old style licence). DSA need to confirm your identity. Bring with you a form of **photographic evidence** that also bears your **signature**. The following are acceptable:-
- Current signed passport (Doesn't have to be British)
- Work I.D. card (must have photo and Signature)
- Trade union or students' union card (must have photo and Signature)
- School bus pass (must have photo and Signature)
- Cheque card or credit card (must have photo and Signature)

If you don't have any of these you can bring a photo of yourself together with a statement that it's a true likeness of you. This should be signed by any of the following:-

- Approved Driving Instructor
- CBT certified instructor
- Member of Parliament
- Medical practitioner
- Local Councillor
- Qualified teacher
- Justice of the Peace
- Civil servant
- Police Officer
- Bank official
- Minister of religion
- Barrister or Solicitor
- Commissioned Officer in Her Majesty's Forces
- If you are taking a motorcycle test, your valid CBT certificate

**Without production of these, the test will not take place and your fee will be lost**

### Did you know that:-

The first driving test in Britain were voluntary. This was introduced in March 1935. However this did not last long, because 3 months later, on 1st June 1935, the driving test became compulsory

**Arrive at the Test Centre** in good time. Each examiner works to a tight schedule, with up to seven tests to conduct each day. Lateness can mean that the test cannot be carried out and you will lose your fee. On the time of your test, the Examiner will call your name and ask you to sign an Insurance declaration. This gives the Examiner a chance to check your signature against your provisional driving licence. The Examiner will then ask you for your Photo identity. If you are excused from wearing a seat belt on medical grounds, you should show your exemption certificate. You could be asked whether you suffer from any physical disability that has not been declared on your application form. This is done to get an information update, since the form may have been filled in some months earlier. The examiner will now ask if you would like your instructor to accompany you on the test. When the formalities are over, the Examiner



will ask you to lead the way to your car, and identify it to the Examiner. On the way to the parking area the Examiner should introduce himself and ask you what name he should refer you as - Joe, Fred, Di, Babs that sort of thing.

**At the Parking area** and the Examiner knows that he is not asking you to read your own number plate the Examiner will select a vehicle at random and ask you to read the number plate out to him. If you get it right you will be asked to get yourself ready in your car. Get the number plate reading wrong twice, and the Examiner will measure out the statutory distance (20.5 metres or 67 feet) using an official tape. Get the reading wrong now and you fail the whole test. You can, wear glasses when taking the eyesight test. If you do, then you must wear the same glasses throughout the rest of the test. You will then be asked 2 '[Show me, tell me](#)' questions

**Now the Examiner will walk around your car.** He will take details of the make and model on his driving test report sheet. The Examiner will also check to see if the vehicle is roadworthy. He will check for no broken lights, the windscreen wipers are in place, the tyres comply with the legal requirements. Make sure you don't have a dirty windscreen, and the 'L' plates are properly displayed. If the Examiner is happy he will join you in the car.

The Examiner will tell you that he wishes you to follow the road ahead unless traffic signs direct otherwise, or unless he asks you to turn. You will be expected to know and act on all traffic signs and signals, as well as signals given by other drivers. Failure to do so and the section **Take prompt and appropriate action on all traffic signs/road markings/traffic lights/signals given by traffic controllers/other road users** is marking against you

Then he will ask you to **drive away when you are ready.**

**Take proper precautions before starting the engine** this means, making sure that the handbrake is on and the gear lever or selector ( If driving an automatic) is in neutral - you are then off, for a busy 35 minutes.



The Examiner will be marking your performance on his sheet. You have to avoid failure points if you are to pass your test. Throughout the test the Examiner will be looking for reasonably smooth use of the controls. So you are expected to **Make proper use of /accelerator/clutch/gears/foot**

**brake/handbrake/steering.**

During the whole test the Examiner will be building up a picture of your ability and common sense as a driver. The Examiner will expect you to suit your speed to the road and traffic conditions. This is marked in the **Make progress by/driving at a speed appropriate to the road and traffic conditions/avoiding undue hesitancy.** You have to choose a proper speed for general driving and when coming to corners, bends, junction, roundabouts etc. This will be marked in the **Exercise proper care in the use of speed section.**

Mirrors and signals have to be used correctly. The faults recorded in this section come under the heading **Make effective use of the mirrors well before signalling/changing direction/slowing down or stopping.**

The Examiner will be checking that signals are given in good time and that the correct signals are given. If not they will be marked in the **Give signals where necessary/correctly/in good time**

The Examiner will also be watching to see how you deal with other road users. **Show awareness and anticipation of the actions of pedestrians/cyclists/drivers. And** you need to know how to **Overtake/meet/cross the path of/other vehicles safely**

At junctions the Examiner will be watching to see that you apply the M.S.M routine. You have to know how to deal with different junctions- **Act properly at road junctions.** Dealing with other road users means you must **Allow adequate clearance to stationary vehicles**

Every test route includes a pedestrian crossing, so you have to **Take appropriate action at pedestrian crossing.**

## Driving Test Nightmare

**Did you know** An examiner does have the right to terminate a driving test if they feel the driver is dangerous.

The biggest cause of test failure is lack of preparation and practice. Over 100,000 people fail every year and we know and sympathise with how they must feel. However, from some of the million failures, there is a small number who do not complete the test at all, but have the test stopped by the examiner.

If an examiner decides it is not safe to continue, they can bring the test to an end. This is done for **their safety, your safety** and the **safety of other road users.**

The examiner understands how anxious you are during the test and what it is like to be tested.

They are frequently checked themselves by a senior examiner so they will always try to give you the benefit of the doubt. However, sometimes the examiner will feel they are not safe, so they terminate the test. They will do this by stopping you in a safe place and telling you that the test is being terminated and that you have failed the test. They will explain why they have done this and will hand you the fail sheet. (Your instructor will help to interpret the points and advise you on correcting them).

When the examiner has terminated the test, they have to get back to the test centre. They can not drive the learner car back themselves due to insurance reasons. So you will be given two options.

**You** can wait in the car until the examiner has walked back to the test centre where he will give directions to your instructor to where you are, or,

**You** can lock the car up and walk back to the test centre with the examiner to meet your instructor.

Did you have enough lessons? Your Instructor will use the faults relating to your failure to improve your performance before you take another test.

## 10 THINGS TO DO ON THE DAY OF YOUR TEST

1. **Think positively.** As soon as you get up in the morning, tell yourself that you are going to get through the day calmly.
2. **Make sure you eat a good breakfast.** Even though you may be nervous and have lost your appetite eating breakfast is very important. Research has shown that your brain needs food to concentrate, so give yourself some food for thought!
3. **Dress comfortably** Make yourself feel good.
4. **Arrive in plenty of time** You should be present in the test centre at least ten minutes before the appointed time of your test. If you are late the test will be cancelled, and the fee will be forfeited.
5. **Just before the test** Relax by taking a few slow deep breaths. Clench and then relax your muscles to relieve tension.
6. **Remember** that some nervousness is normal and that it can improve your performance.
7. **Listen carefully to the examiner's instructions** Act on them in good time, and ask for them to be repeated if necessary.
8. **Give the examiner** a beautifully smooth drive, one that both of you can enjoy. The examiner just wants to see what you would normally do - nothing that you do not already know.
9. **If you make a decision** that you think could be misjudged by the examiner, explain your reasons while you drive.
10. **If you come across a new situation** Hold back and assess it carefully before you decide to proceed - and be prepared to change your decision if necessary.

### Good Luck.

We are sure you can do it.

After all, about 32 million people hold a licence in the UK.

**So should you!**

The Examiner will ask you to stop at various places during the driving test. Whenever you stop, you should do so in a safe place. The Examiner will not trap you by asking you to stop in an illegal place, but you have to **Select a safe position for normal stops**. It will be after one of these "stops" when the Examiner will ask you to do one of the many special exercises. **In one in three tests** you will be required to **Stop the vehicle in emergency/promptly/under control/making proper use of brakes**. The Examiner will explain to you that you have to stop the vehicle in an emergency. He will show you what he intends to do in order for you to stop quickly at his request. You need to stop the vehicle 'under control' which means you should apply a constant firm pressure to the brake pedal, holding it just short of the point at which the wheels lock. Don't leave putting the clutch down too long, or you'll stall the engine. When stopped apply the handbrake, and put the gear lever into neutral. Move off again when told. Don't forget the M.S.M. routine.

You will be asked to do 1 of the following 4 manoeuvres:-

- **Reverse into a limited opening either to the right or left/under control/with due regard for other road users.** How to do:- [The Reverse around the corner](#)
- **Turn round by means of forward and reverse gears/under control/with due regard for other road users.** How to do:- [The Turn in the Road](#)
- **Reverse park in reverse gear/under control/with due regard for other road users.** How to do:- [Reverse Parking](#)
- **Reverse into a parking bay at the driving test car park.** How to do:- [Bay Parking](#)

**Right that's all over its back to the test Centre.** The moment of truth. The Examiner faces you and tells you that the test is over. Then "I'm pleased to tell you that you have passed" or "I'm sorry you haven't passed". Either way, you will receive a certificate. The PASS certificate has to be signed and sent to the DVLC in Swansea, together with your provisional licence which is surrendered when a "Full" licence is issued.

Less welcome is the alternative 'Statement of Failure' form, on which the Examiner will have marked with a '\', 'X' or a 'D' or a 'XX'

- '\', means a minor fault, which does not result in an automatic failure. **However, if you comment more than 15 of these minor driving faults you will FAIL.**
- 'X' means a major fault, and a fail.
- 'D' means a Dangerous fault, and a fail
- 'XX' also means Dangerous fault. This will be used to replace a 'D' when the results are computerised.



You will also be given another application form to apply for your next test!

### Data Protection Act

At this point the Examiner will ask you if you would like an explanation of any faults that you have occurred.

If you say "Yes", a debriefing will follow when the Examiner has asked you if you want your Instructor to hear the debriefing with you.

If you allow your Instructor to listen to a debriefing then it should be made clear to you, by the Examiner, that the information is privileged to you under the Data Protection Act and you have

the right to exclude your Instructor from the privileged information passed from the Examiner to you. If you agree to your Instructor listening to the Examiners' debriefing you waive your protective rights under the Data Protection Act. The Examiner will make this clear to you. Even if your Instructor accompanies you on your Driving Test you retain the right to exclude your Instructor from the debriefing that the Examiner gives at the end of your Test. In other words, you may ask your Instructor to leave the car before the debriefing begins. If you decide to listen to the Examiner's debriefing without your Instructor present then you may run the risk of not fully understanding the Examiners wording.

Even if you haven't passed, you will have learned a great deal. You can build on these skills in order to pass next time. Decide on what steps you can take to improve your technique and ask your instructor for advice.

**There is no magic formula for passing your driving test - but here's some advice that will certainly be helpful.**

- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Make sure you eat a good breakfast. Even though you may be nervous and have lost your appetite eating breakfast is very important. Research has shown that your brain needs food to concentrate, so give yourself some food for thought!
- Dress comfortably - make yourself feel good.
- Have confidence in your ability.
- Arrive in plenty of time You should be present in the test centre at least ten minutes before the appointed time of your test. If you are late the test will be cancelled, and the fee will be forfeited.
- Listen carefully to the examiner's instructions, act on them in good time, and ask for them to be repeated if necessary.
- Give the examiner a beautifully smooth drive, one that both of you can enjoy.
- The examiner just wants to see what you would normally do - nothing that you do not already know.
- If you make a decision that you think could be misjudged by the examiner, explain your reasons while you drive.
- If you come across a new situation, hold back and assess it carefully before you decide to proceed - and be prepared to change your decision if necessary. Remember, "If in doubt, WAIT it out".

**Show the examiner that you deserve to have those L plates removed.**

## 15 Ways to Overcome Your Test Nerves

1. **Don't rush it** Get as much practice as you can and only apply for your test when you feel confident that you are safe. If you're worried about the theory test, ask friends and family to test you to familiarise yourself with the questions and have a go at our mock [» theory test](#)
2. **Book the first available driving test of the day.** If you take your test early in the morning you will have less time to worry about it.
3. **Don't tell your friends the test date.** If everyone knows you are going for the test, you create the additional stress of trying to live up to your friends expectations. It's OK to let your Mum and Dad know, we are sure they will give you all the support you need.
4. **Don't listen to 'horror stories'.** There are many stories about failed tests. Some may even be true. Just concentrate on your performance.
5. **Get the timing right.** Take the test at the right time. Try to book the test so it does not coincide with other stressful events (just prior to school exams or in the middle of wedding preparations etc).
6. **Go to the right test centre.** No good going to a test centre were your friends have all failed. This will only lose you confidence. Go to the centre were they all pass!
7. **In your last two lessons.** Ask your instructor to concentrate on the manoeuvres you find most difficult.
8. **Do a practice run.** We use the term '*Mock Test*'. The instructor should be very realistic and the student must take it reasonably serious.
9. **Practice in your head** It's been proven that you can improve your ability to perform coordinated tasks by imagining doing them.
10. **Examiners are only human.** Your test is one of possibly eight on the examiners sheet that day. Don't try to please him/her.
11. **You do not need to be perfect.** Concentrate on the essentials. If you make a mistake, keep calm and concentrate on your driving. The mistake may not result in failure.
12. **Don't worry about silence in the car.** It can be daunting sitting beside a stranger, who seems to just grunt: 'turn right, turn left'. Avoid thinking the examiner doesn't like you. If there is a little chit-chat, be happy, but don't expect it.
13. **You will pass.** Both instructor and pupil must be convinced that the result will be a pass. An attitude 'lets have a go at it' may produce a pass, but is exhausting on the nerves.
14. **Don't take pills to calm your nerves.** This only slows your reaction and performance.
15. **Get a good night's sleep** before the test.