

# Learning to drive?

The essential guide to getting on the road safely

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## 1 Learning to drive

### Learning to drive is a life skill

You must be at least 17 to drive a car or ride a motorcycle, but if you receive Disability Living Allowance at the higher rate you can start driving at 16. You can ride a moped at 16.

Those who pass their driving test have had, on average, about 45 hours of professional training combined with 22 hours of private practice. Learners who combine professional instruction with private practice are also more successful on test.

To help you learn in a structured way, we have produced the *Driver's Record*. This helps you and your instructor keep a record of your progress. You need to learn both the theory and practical driving at the same time, especially as the theory test has a hazard perception part.

Recent surveys indicate that nine in ten learners who passed both theory and practical tests first time were taught by an instructor.

### Your driving instructor

If you are going to pay someone to teach you to drive, they must be an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) or hold a trainee licence. It is unlikely that anyone except an ADI would have the experience, knowledge and training to teach you properly. All ADIs must register with DSA. This means they

- pass challenging theory and practical tests
- reach and maintain a high standard of instruction
- undergo an enhanced criminal records check.



Anyone teaching you must display an identification certificate on their windscreen during lessons (green for a fully qualified ADI or pink for a trainee).

### Choosing your instructor

When choosing an instructor ask

- friends and relatives for recommendations. Choose an instructor who has a good reputation, is reliable and punctual and whose car suits you



- for their grade – 4 is satisfactory, 5 is a good overall standard and 6 is the highest. We check the standard of instruction of all ADIs regularly. You can always ask to see the instructor's grade report
- if they have signed up to the industry Code of Practice and are committed to Continuing Professional Development. Both schemes encourage high professional standards from instructors
- if they will sit in on your practical driving test with you, to help you understand how you performed.

## Tuition and practice

Take advice from your instructor who will be able to help you with all aspects of driving. How many lessons you need will vary for each person. Safe driving is a skill for life and a good instructor will match your lessons to your rate of learning.

You need to practise what you have learnt in your lessons and gain experience on all different types of road and in all driving conditions. The more you practise and increase your experience, the more confident you will become.

Get together with your instructor and the person who will be helping you to practise and discuss what you need to practise

- ask your instructor for private practice record sheets, or download these from [direct.gov.uk/driversrecord](http://direct.gov.uk/driversrecord)
- as you practise on different types of road and in different conditions, log your hours. This will help you to remember and measure the amount of practice you have had in the different conditions.

*The Official DSA Guide to Learning to Drive* includes advice for those helping you to gain experience and get the most out of private practice.

## 2 The theory test

### About the theory test

As a new learner driver, or rider, you must normally pass this test before booking a practical test. You won't have to if you're upgrading your licence within the same category, for example B1 to B.

Understanding driving theory, safety matters and current regulations is necessary before you take the practical test. We strongly recommend having practical lessons at the same time as preparing for the theory test.

The theory test has two parts, the multiple choice part and the hazard perception part. Some of the multiple choice questions are presented in the form of a case study. A case study shows a scenario on which five questions are based. The subject of the scenario focuses on real life examples and experiences that drivers might encounter when driving.

### Multiple choice part of the theory test

The topics covered in the multiple choice part include

- driver attitude and awareness
- traffic signs and regulations
- effects of alcohol, drugs and tiredness
- safety and environmental aspects of vehicles.

All the questions are based on official source material taken from the following books

- *The Official Highway Code* is essential reading. It explains the rules of the road and gives good advice about best driving practices
- *Know Your Traffic Signs* explains most traffic signs
- *The Official DSA Guide to Driving - the essential skills* explains best driving practice in more detail
- *The Official DSA Guide to Riding - the essential skills* explains best riding practice.

The theory test questions themselves, with explanations as to why the answers are correct, can all be found in *The Official DSA Theory Test for Car Drivers*, ISBN 9780115530678 and *The Official DSA Theory Test for Motorcyclists*, ISBN 9780115530722.

These are available in book, CD-Rom format or as part of a pack.



Details of all publications mentioned can be found on [direct.gov.uk/motoringpublications](http://direct.gov.uk/motoringpublications)

or by calling the publishers and quoting 'DSA5'

Telephone 0870 241 4523

Hard of hearing 0870 240 3701

Email [dsa.merchandising@tso.co.uk](mailto:dsa.merchandising@tso.co.uk)

*These, and relevant products from other publishers, can also be purchased from bookshops or selected computer software retailers.*

The theory test consists of 50 multiple choice questions. Some of these questions are presented in a case study scenario. You select your answers by clicking the mouse.

- The screens are easy to read
- Only one question appears at a time. You'll be able to move backwards and forwards through the questions
- You can 'flag' questions that you want to look at again. It's easy to change your answer
- You will be alerted if more than one answer is needed.

The test is available as a voice-over in 20 languages as well as English. If you're deaf or have other hearing difficulties, it can also be delivered in BSL by an on-screen signer. In Wales, or the Welsh borders, you can take your test with Welsh text on screen or a Welsh voiceover.

Special arrangements can be made if you have special needs (including difficulties with reading). Visit [direct.gov.uk/theorytest](https://www.direct.gov.uk/theorytest) for further information and free practice tests.

### Hazard perception part of the theory test

The hazard perception part is introduced by a short tutorial video that explains how the test works and gives you the chance to see a sample clip. This will help you understand what you need to do.

You will be shown a series of driving scenes, seen from a driver's point of view. Each clip will contain one or more hazards filmed in a variety of different situations. You should respond by pressing the button as soon as you see a hazard developing.

To help you prepare for this part of the theory test, *The Official DSA Guide to Hazard Perception* DVD explains how to recognise and respond to hazards on the road.



At the end of the theory test you will be given a score for each part. To pass the multiple choice part you must answer at least 43 questions correctly, and for learner car drivers and motorcyclists the pass mark for the hazard perception part is 44 out of 75. You will need to pass both of these at the same sitting. If you fail one of the parts you will have to take the whole test again.

### Booking your theory test

The easiest way to book is through [direct.gov.uk/drivingtest](https://www.direct.gov.uk/drivingtest) alternatively, you can book over the phone.

Telephone	0300 200 1122
Hard of hearing	0300 200 1166
Welsh speakers	0300 200 1133

## 3 The practical test

### Are you ready for your practical test?

Only 43% of those taking their practical test actually pass, make sure you're one of them. Don't put in for your test too soon, wait until you're ready, it will save you time, money and disappointment. You need to pass your theory test before you can apply for your practical driving test. Your theory test certificate lasts for two years.

You'll be ready to take your practical test when you show that you've reached **Level 5** in all 24 key skills detailed on the Driver's Record, that is when you can drive consistently well, without prompting or guidance in all these skills.



The standard you need to reach to pass the practical driving test.



Full details of the skills covered on the *Driver's Record* and the standard required to pass the practical driving test can be found in *The Official DSA Guide to Learning to Drive*. This is available as a book or an interactive DVD called *Prepare for your Practical Driving Test*.



## Your practical test

The practical test is about 40 minutes long and includes

- an eyesight test - if you fail this your test cannot continue
- safety checks - you will be asked to describe and show how you would carry out various safety checks
- general driving - you must show that you can drive safely, putting *The Official Highway Code* into practice
- special exercises such as reversing round a corner, turning in the road, reverse parking (possibly in a car park). You may be asked to do an emergency stop
- driving on higher speed roads where possible.

## Booking your practical test

Before you book your practical test watch the 'Are you ready' clip on [youtube.com/dsagov](https://www.youtube.com/dsagov). Book your test in the same way as for a theory test. Visit [direct.gov.uk/practicaltest](https://www.direct.gov.uk/practicaltest)

## 4 Pass Plus

You shouldn't think that once you have passed your test and gained your full licence you are a good driver with nothing more to learn. Remember that

- newly qualified drivers are involved in more crashes than any other group of drivers
- one in five young, new drivers will have a crash which involves injury or death.

The *Pass Plus* course covers night and all-weather driving, town and rural roads, dual carriageways and motorways. Once the course is completed you could save money by getting lower insurance premiums from one of the companies involved in the scheme. Visit [direct.gov.uk/passplus](https://www.direct.gov.uk/passplus).

## 5 Additional information for motorcyclists

All learner motorcyclists (and learner moped riders) must complete a Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) course and hold a valid CBT certificate before riding on the road with L-plates.

Car drivers can use a full licence as a provisional motorcycle licence, but only if they have successfully completed a CBT course and hold a valid CBT completion certificate. No learner rider is exempt from CBT.

Details about CBT and the motorcycle practical test can be found in *The Official DSA Guide to Learning to Ride*.

CBT courses can only be taken with an approved training organisation

- details can be obtained from motorcycle dealers, local council road safety officers or telephoning CBT enquiries on 0115 936 6547
- make sure you have read and understood *The Official Highway Code* before taking your CBT course
- the certificate lasts for two years.

The practical motorcycle test includes an off-road and a separate on-road test. It must be taken on a solo machine (unless you are disabled). Candidates with disabilities may take a test with a sidecar, but the licence will be limited to combination driving only.

Most candidates will need to pass a theory test for motorcyclists before booking their practical test.

Newly qualified car drivers who wish to validate the moped riding entitlement on their full car licence will need to take a CBT course. The certificate obtained on completion of the course will remain valid indefinitely for the purpose of riding a moped on a full car licence.



## 6 Driving Standards Agency

Our primary aim is to promote road safety in Great Britain by improving driving standards. We set the standards for theory and practical driving tests. We are the only organisation authorised to test learner drivers and motorcyclists.

We recognise and value our customers. We will treat all our customers with respect, and deliver our services in an objective, polite, and fair way.

We aim to

- provide fair tests to the same standard nationwide, in an acceptable timescale
- provide a national network of suitably equipped centres in convenient locations
- run an efficient, user-friendly service to book tests
- tell you your test results promptly
- deal with complaints fairly and efficiently
- provide value for money
- work closely with business and trade associations to improve services to the public.

As a Trading Fund, we are required to cover our costs from the driving test fee. Examiners do not have a set number of people they will pass or fail. If you achieve the standard needed, you will pass your test.

### Service standards

DSA publishes service standards for

- national average maximum waiting times for practical tests
- postal and telephone application handling
- keeping test appointments and issuing results of tests
- fairness of practical driving tests
- correspondence handling
- customer satisfaction with the overall level of service provided.

Full details of our service standards, our policy for refunding out of pocket expenses, our complaints procedure and how to contact us are contained in our leaflet *Customer Service - a guide to our service standards*. These are available at test centres or at [direct.gov.uk/motoringleaflets](http://direct.gov.uk/motoringleaflets).

## The Driving Standards Agency

New driver information:  
[direct.gov.uk/drivingtest](http://direct.gov.uk/drivingtest)

Watch our videos: [youtube.com/dsagov](http://youtube.com/dsagov)

Follow us: [twitter.com/DSAGovuk](http://twitter.com/DSAGovuk)

Join our Facebook Page:  
[facebook.com/learningtodrive](http://facebook.com/learningtodrive)

Telephone: 0300 200 1122

### Pass Plus

Website: [direct.gov.uk/passplus](http://direct.gov.uk/passplus)

Phone: 0115 936 6554

## Directgov

Directgov is the place to find all government motoring information and services. From logbooks to licensing, and from driving tests to vehicle tax, go to [direct.gov.uk/motoring](http://direct.gov.uk/motoring)

Go to [direct.gov.uk/motoringpublications](http://direct.gov.uk/motoringpublications) to buy official products to help you prepare for your tests and stay safe on the road.



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