

Practical test for cars explained

Your driving test will start with an eyesight check and some vehicle safety questions. You will then start your practical driving test which will include some specific manoeuvres.

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, including when you are carrying out the set exercises. You can make up to 15 driving faults and still pass the test (16 or more results in failure). However, if you commit one serious or dangerous fault you will fail the test.

The practical driving test (car)

The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is now able to offer tests outside the normal test times at a number of test centres. This provides customers a wider range of appointments over an extended working day.

Practical tests are generally available at all permanent test centres. Saturday and weekday evening tests, subject to resources being available, are offered at a premium rate. Non premium rate tests are available at various times between 7.30 am and 3.27 pm Monday to Friday.

The driving test is straightforward and has been designed to see if you:

- can drive safely
- know The Highway Code and can demonstrate this through your driving
- [The Highway Code](#)

What will the test include?

The test will include an eyesight check (if you fail this, your test will not continue). The eyesight test requires you to read a number plate that is a certain distance away. For more information about the eyesight check please use the 'Driving eyesight requirements' link below.

After the eyesight test you will be asked two vehicle safety check questions. You will then be examined on your general driving and on two reversing exercises. The reversing exercises will be chosen from:

- reversing around a corner
- turning in the road
- reverse parking

You may also be asked to carry out an emergency stop exercise.

- [Driving eyesight requirements](#)

Vehicle safety questions

These are basic safety checks that a driver should carry out to ensure the vehicle is safe for use. Although some checks may involve the candidate in opening the bonnet to identify where fluid levels would be checked, pupils will not be asked to touch a hot engine or physically check fluid levels.

As vehicle technology advances, more and more vehicles are being equipped with electronic diagnostic systems, which inform the driver of the state of the engine fluid levels and tyre pressures. It will be acceptable for a candidate to refer to the vehicle information system (if fitted) when answering questions on fluid levels or tyre pressures.

You can find source material in the DSA publication 'The official guide to Driving - the essential skills' and 'The official DSA guide to learning to drive'. Advice and information on how to carry out vehicle safety checks can also be found in the manufacturer's handbook.

Candidates will be asked two questions, one 'show me' and one 'tell me'. One or both questions answered incorrectly will result in one driving fault being recorded.

- [Download 'vehicle safety questions for car tests' \(PDF, 13K\)](#)
- [Help with PDF files](#)

Vehicles you can't use at the practical test

If you plan to use your own vehicle at the practical driving test, there are some vehicles that can't be used for safety reasons.

You'll need to check that a recall or safety notice does not affect the vehicle.

- [List of makes and models affected](#)

What happens during the test?

During the driving test the examiner will give you directions which you should follow. Test routes are designed to be as uniform as possible and will include a range of typical road and traffic conditions. During the test, the examiner will ask you to carry out set exercises.

Throughout the test you should drive in the way your instructor has taught you. If you make a mistake, don't worry about it, it might be a less serious driving fault and may not affect your result. The examiner will be looking for an overall safe standard of driving.

You can make up to 15 driving faults and still pass the test (16 or more results in failure). However, if you commit one serious or dangerous fault you will fail the test. If at any time your examiner considers you to be a danger to other road users your test will be stopped.

You are allowed to take someone with you on the test, this person must be over 16 years old and cannot take any part in the test.

After the practical test

When the driving test is over, the examiner will tell you whether you passed or failed. You can request feedback on your test from the examiner, who will then go through your performance during the test.

If you pass...

If you pass and have a photocard driving licence issued after 1 March 2004 the examiner will ask you if you want your full driving licence issued to you automatically.

If you want to use this service, the examiner will take your old licence off you, scan the details and send them electronically to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). You will then be given a pass certificate to prove you passed your test. DVLA will then send you your new full licence by post within four weeks of you passing your practical test.

If you pass your test but do not want to use this automatic service, or have a licence issued before 1 March 2004, you will be given a pass certificate by the examiner. On the back of the pass certificate it tells you what you need to do next. This involves sending your licence and appropriate fee to DVLA who will then check your application and issue you with a new full licence.

If you fail...

If you fail the test you should ask the examiner for some feedback to help prepare yourself for your next test. Your driving report form will also show you where you made any mistakes. You can take another practical test 10 working days after your car or motorcycle test.

Driving test standards

All examiners are trained to carry out the test to the same standard, they do not have pass or fail quotas. So as long as you demonstrate the standard required you will pass your driving test.

Weather conditions/ mechanical problems etc

DSA do not conduct tests in bad light or in adverse weather conditions for the safety of the candidate and the examiner. We will arrange another appointment at no further cost, but compensation is not payable. Candidates should call the telephone number quoted on the appointment letter to check whether their test will go ahead.

If the driving test is not completed for reasons attributable to you or your vehicle, you will have to take another test at your own cost.

Pass Plus

The DSA recommends that new car drivers who have just passed their practical test consider taking Pass Plus. Pass Plus is a course of six extra modules taken with a driving instructor after passing your test.

For more information about Pass Plus please click on the link below.

- [Pass Plus website Opens new window](#)
- [About Pass Plus](#)

More useful links

- [Driving test fees](#)
- [Book a practical test online Opens new window](#)
- [Find my nearest driving test centre for cars Opens new window](#)

Provided by the Driving Standards Agency