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PA55 CBs

A little advice and encouragement for all the brave souls ready to become an accompanying driver!

The following are some of the common issues, methods being used in lessons, and general advice from previous "volunteers" and their experiences.

It has the intention to help keep you safe, give the learner maximum benefit from your trips out, and answer some common questions which may occur. You are a qualified and experienced driver, this is purely to help you avoid some of the common errors and misconceptions!

The Rules and Regs.

You must be Over 21 years of age having held a full car licence for 3 or more years.

You are also the driver. ALL driving rules apply to you **as well as** the learner, and so do the penalties! You must not be over the alcohol limit, use a mobile phone, sleep, etc. So they are not a cheap taxi back from the pub! Sorry!

The Learner must possess a provisional Cat B licence and be insured on the car (you don't have to be, but it can help get you out of sticky situations!), which must be displaying L plates clearly at front and rear. **NOT** in the windows but attached to the vehicle, and visible to cars NOT helicopters!(By law L-Plates should be removed when the Learner is not driving. Not doing so can incur a penalty.) Learner drivers are permitted to drive on all roads EXCEPT motorways. They can carry passengers, but these can result in increased stress and distractions so be selective.

Some common errors.

Many of these are purely due to the evolution of cars and roads since you learnt to drive.

The speed limit on dual carriageways is 70mph.

Block changing of the gears (4 to 2, 3 to 1, 3 to 5 etc) is recommended and generally expected. Why should you not work through the gears? Modern-day disk brakes work better than older-style drum brakes and can be relied on, so the saying goes "Brake to slow, Gears to go".

Indicating is not required to "overtake" a parked car, as long as your road position is adequate to provide a clear signal of your intention. The same goes for leaving the kerb, if no-one is going to benefit from the signal – why give one? (And more importantly, if a signal is a Question, then you

have to look properly to make the decision!).

Road position – You are used to sitting on the Right-hand side so it WILL generally look close to the kerb. If you genuinely think that they are wrongly positioned then position the car in your normal driving position from the drivers seat, get into the passenger seat and see where the kerb sits in the window. This will give you added confidence when driving! This is the same system the Learner will use when driving. (Should be an equal distance from the kerb and the centre line)

The system of car control used by Driving Standards Agency (**DSA**) examiners and DSA Approved Driving Instructors (**ADI**). This is something that the Learner will be used to using, and may well help you feel safer on the approach to junctions.

MS PSL (This is an extension of the good old **Mirror – Signal – Manoeuvre (MSM)** routine)
Mirror - Mirrors should be checked on change of speed (Centre) and direction (Left/Right).
Signal - Indicators, Brake Lights, Reverse Lights. Is a signal required?

Position - Where in the road? What is it telling others?

Speed - What speed? Which gear? (No Coasting, Engage the Clutch!)

Look - What for? Why?

The Learner SHOULD be able to talk you through this.

Ask Questions, and encourage the Learner to Commentary drive

If you are wondering "Have they seen it?" "Why are they not slowing down?"

ASK! Don't just tell them. If you have spotted it early enough try to say

"What are you going to do about the?" or "Talk me though your routine"

You and I both know 99% of driving is Observation & Planning, help them develop this by seeing if they see what you see.

If they do something wrong always ask Why? Sometimes you will be surprised at the answer! And it helps you explain why they are wrong (A common error is to “exchange views” on this when driving, if in doubt stop and discuss it).

If you are driving encourage them to join in, ask you why, tell you what they can see ahead, “back seat commentary driving” you might say!

Save yourself time and money!

Sounds good doesn't it? And it is simple!

EVERY trip out should be driven as if it was a driving test or lesson. Don't let the bad habits creep in and we won't have to spend time breaking them.

Crossing hands over, coasting, NOT checking the blind spot before moving off EVERY time, skipping mirror checks are the common ones. It's never just a quick drive, it's a short practice for the test.

Pull over randomly.

The test route consists of 40 mins, 2 or 3 manoeuvres and 6-8 random stops (hills, pulling away at an angle, selecting a stopping place) It is the drivers responsibility to pick a stopping place that is a Safe Convenient And Legal Position (SCALP), so don't spoon feed them or make it too easy.

DSA test routes are available on their website (www.dsa.gov.uk – but much easier to Google DSA and the Test Centre Location). Why not download them and get familiar with what may be expected. Remember Turning in the Road and Reverse corners often result in you turning back on yourself, saves you getting confused and lost!

Not sure? Want advice? Worried about something?

Call me! I am here to help the Learner get through their test, that means helping you as well. So call, text, or email. I will get back to you as soon as I can either with an answer, or to arrange a time that we can meet and talk it through. If you have any serious concerns we may be able to, with the Learners agreement, arrange for you to come out on a lesson to see what we are doing. I welcome feedback on your observations, pupils often develop habits they don't do on lessons and we can then work together to correct these rather than let them continue.

The Tests

The Learner IS aware of the following, what is required of them, when to do it etc. But any help getting the ball moving is GREATLY received!

Theory Test - Average waiting list 2 - 4 weeks - You cannot apply for the Practical until the Theory has been passed. Therefore my advice is **BOOK IT NOW!** Figure out how long it will take to learn and pass, then go onto the DSA website and book it ASAP. If you are organised - on their 17th Birthday is perfect!

For advice on learning materials give me a call

Practical Test - Average waiting list 6-12 weeks - Once the Theory is passed I will advise you on when to book the Practical test. Most often ASAP, on the understanding that we will push it back if the Learner is not ready (Normally decided using a Mock Test). I don't like to hang about, but I don't want candidates to take their test before they are ready, for their sake and mine!

The cost of the Practical test is a payment to the DSA. It does not cover my time and Car hire. A test day will equate to the same cost as a 3 hour lesson. This includes preparation time, travelling time, and the test itself. While the test route is approximately 40 mins, the whole process can take 50 - 70 mins.

A final note.

I am often asked how long it will take to pass, a question that I cannot honestly answer. I promise to give the best advice for the Learner, and limit the time and cost of learning to a minimum. But every pupil is different, and taking a test before you are ready is an expensive exercise.

I am also often told that parents passed after 5-10 hours practice.

I would point out that this was when the road were quieter, safer, and tests are now DEFINATELY harder! Not a bad thing if it is keeping people safe. The DSA recently surveyed PASSING candidates, they averaged a total of 56 hours of professional tuition - this didn't include private practice! It may be less, but it gives you an idea of the commitment involved. You don't want your son, daughter or loved one to be a danger to themselves or others once on the road. Neither do I, so work with me to ensure they get the best start in driving for life.

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