

Driving Tests

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The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is responsible for conducting driving tests in Great Britain for cars, motorcycles, lorries, buses and other vehicles.

1.Booking the tests.

You can book tests online or you can book a test appointment by phoning the DSA between 8am and 4pm weekdays and pay by credit or debit card. Application forms can be posted with cheque or postal order payment. The Theory Test must be passed before the Practical Test can be taken.

Theory Test Booking Line. Tel: 0300 200 1122 Web:
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/learning-to-drive>

2. The Driving Theory test.

Since January 2000, theory tests have been delivered using a touch screen computer. Candidates sit at individual booths. The 50 questions appear one at a time on a computer screen and candidates select their multiple choice answers by touching the screen. Candidates can also work through a practice session for up to 15 minutes to get used to the system before starting their test. We recommend that you take full advantage of the practice session.

During the test, the screen shows which of the 50 questions you are doing, and how much time you have remaining. You can change your answers. A review screen tells you how many questions you have completed, any incomplete answers (i.e. not enough choices marked) and which questions you have 'flagged' to return to later.

Candidates receive their test results, and feedback information about errors within 30 minutes of finishing the test. You will not be told about specific questions which were wrong, but only the subject area where errors occurred.

From January 2012 the driving theory test will no longer use pre-published questions in a move to stop candidates from learning answers by heart.

Until now all the questions used in the driving theory test have been published. These changes will mean that learner drivers and riders gain a better understanding of driving theory because they can no longer rely on simply learning which options are correct for individual questions. The familiar Theory Test books and software still offer revision questions for candidates to test themselves and assess their progress. They now also have exercises so learners can practise applying their knowledge on each topic to case studies. There are also new sections of revision support for motorcyclists.

3. Hazard perception test.

From 14 November 2002, the Theory test was extended to also include a hazard test. Candidates are shown a number of moving video clips filmed from a car. Each clip contains one or more developing hazards. Candidates are asked to indicate as soon as they see a hazard developing which may result in the driver taking some action, such as changing speed or direction. The sooner a response is made the higher the score. Beware of clicking too soon as this may not be registered by the system.

4. Special arrangements.

Theory Test.

The system has the option for dyslexic candidates to listen to the test being read in English through a headset. Voice-overs in 20 other languages are available.

Dyslexic candidates can also apply to have up to double the standard 57 minutes. In practice very few candidates find that they need extra time as the standard time is generous. However some candidates may benefit from the reassurance of having extra time, even if it is not used. In order to book extra time you will need to provide evidence of dyslexic difficulties.

You need to request any special arrangements on the online form when you apply for the test. However if you forget to request the voice-over and headset, you could ask for this when you check in at the test centre.

You may be asked for evidence of dyslexia: a letter or report from a professional should explain your reading ability, i.e. a teacher, a psychologist, or Local Dyslexia Association officer. The DSA has also agreed to accept the report from our online screening test [Spot Your Potential](#), linked to the top of the [BDA Home Page](#). You will have to phone again for a test date after the report has been processed.

Some people with dyslexia may have significant difficulties with comprehension and need someone to explain the question in a different way, known as an Oral Language Modifier. It may be possible to book this accommodation also online.

Anxious Candidates.

Where a candidate is likely to experience significant anxiety in a strange environment and situation, it may be possible to arrange a prior visit to the test centre. In extreme cases, it can be arranged for the test to be taken in the candidate's home.

Contact Customer Care: Tel: 0300 200 1122 Email: customercare@pearson.com

Practical Test.

For the practical test, you would be entitled to ask for accommodations which would help you personally, such as the examiner indicating left and right with hand gestures rather than relying solely on left/right verbal instructions.

Additionally, you can also ask for the exit numbers on roundabouts to be given.

It would be advisable to discuss with your instructor what accommodations it would be appropriate to ask for, particularly when it comes to the Independent Driving section. You can advise the examiner which independent drive you want to do.

Your instructor can perform mock testing of the three types of independent test to determine which is best for you.

- . Following diagrams (up to three sets).
- . Following road signs to a specific location (maybe one location and then a second one).
- . A combination of 1 and 2.

The driving test is not a memory test: you are allowed to ask the examiner to remind you which way you are required to go on the independent section of the test. So, if you have forgotten, ask them in plenty of time so you can perform the turn with time to do your mirror, signal, position, speed, look.

Remember that if you go the wrong way by mistake, you will not be penalised for it.

If you became stressed, you could ask for the test to be stopped for a

few minutes while you regain your composure.

The examiner may even stop the independent section and continue the test with normal direction instructions. Again you will not be penalised.

If you do not feel comfortable with talking to the examiner regarding your needs, you can have your driving instructor talk for you. Your instructor can even call the test centre beforehand to advise the test centre of your needs. This prepares the examiner regarding the independent drive section and they will then have a test route suitable for you independent test section needs.

Remember that the examiner may occasionally forget to use hand directions. They are happy for you to remind them, so don't worry if you have to.

5. Dyslexic drivers.

Throughout the individual's 'journey' in learning to drive, aspects of dyslexia should be positively looked for in order to provide the required support. Many adults do not know they are dyslexic as it was not identified when they were at school.

Research and comments by Rod Nicholson were interpreted as suggesting that dyslexics were bad drivers. This is not correct as Prof Nicholson explained. It takes some dyslexics longer to develop automaticity in tasks such as driving. They may have to concentrate harder. They may not be able to talk with a passenger at the same time as driving.

Other dyslexic difficulties which may impact on learning to drive include:

- Weak short term and working memory (holding on to and applying information).

- Auditory processing: taking on board what is being said quickly.

- Difficulty with focusing, easily distracted.

- Difficulty identifying left from right.

- Visual distraction, visual memory issues.

- Slower processing speed in the brain.

- Sequencing problems: getting information in the right order.

Dyslexia and learning to drive.

The deficits of dyslexia may have a significant effect on learning but with appropriate teaching, this can be mitigated. It may take the dyslexic learner longer to learn to drive, and they may need more than one

attempt to pass the practical test.

The key is to use multi sensory learning and to ensure that new information or skills are heavily embedded. For example, if someone has poor visual memory, then use their auditory or tactile memory to compensate. They are likely to need lots of reinforcement to embed learning from the short term memory but most dyslexic people have excellent long term memories so they need to be able to make use of this.

General tips.

Make sure the learner is not overloaded with instructions as this causes real problems for those with a weaker working memory; little and often is a good mantra.

Watch out for those with weak spatial awareness or lack of recognition of left and right: – use hand gestures to indicate direction. When it comes to the test, the candidate should ask the examiner to use these gestures, and remind them if they forget.

For helping an individual to memorise something, get them to suggest a memory peg such as a rhyme or a picture they can visualise, or something very zany; all this helps make the memory more memorable.

6. Driving Tuition: Practical Tips.

Consider learning on and taking the test in an automatic car. This means that the dyslexic driver can concentrate on other aspects of driving rather than struggle with getting automaticity on a manual car. The dyslexic driver can learn to use a manually geared car once all the other aspects of road awareness are secure.

The learner should explain any particular difficulties or preferences to the driving instructor and ways of instruction which may be helpful.

Before the lesson begins, discuss what the lesson will cover.

Do not give too many instructions at once: give only one at a time if possible.

Use coloured stickers on the dashboard to indicate left and right.

Use hand movements to indicate which way to turn.

Practice off-road or on quiet roads as much as possible so that the dyslexic learner is not distracted by other road users, while getting to grips with basic car handling.

Use the same route for a while until the driver feels more confident: add new routes a few at a time.

If possible, use a driving simulator before attempting to drive on roads and for hazard training.

Make sure the Examiner knows that the candidate is dyslexic and may have special requirements for left/right instructions.

It is not unusual to fail the test more than twice: be prepared for several attempts.

Spacial Awareness, Reversing and Parking.

Dyslexic people often find it difficult to envisage space, so overall strategy is don't think: feel small, smooth movements of the wheel, rather than spinning the steering wheel.

Hold the wheel as if handlebars: this avoids frantic spinning and oversteering.

Practise steering by wheeling a bike along a curved line, e.g. uncoiled garden hose.

Reverse slowly: "heel/toe" pace.

Pause between movements to do observations: this helps keep control.

Use side mirror (tilt down slightly) to look at kerb, whilst checking rear mirror.

Look over shoulder towards the kerb, if going towards the kerb: turn away when going away from the kerb rather than trying to remember left/right.

Talk movements out aloud when practising.

For further advice see <http://www.ultimatedrivinginstructor.com>

7. Independent Driving Section.

Following discussions between the BDA and the DSA, examiners will offer adjustments to dyslexic candidates. These will depend on the particular difficulties the dyslexic person has, as all are different. So examiners will be asking the candidate what adjustments they require. These will include:

Asking the person's preference for verbal directions or for following signs during the independent driving section.

Showing a simple diagram before the independent driving section; this will be reproduced on cream vellum paper which cuts down on visual distraction.

If helpful, adding visual clues to the diagram, such as a supermarket or petrol station on route, or telling the candidate the number of the exit point on roundabouts (for example, 'It's the third exit').

Using landmarks such as 'take the first left, it's just past the cinema'.

Continuing to give directions singly throughout the driving test, and for the independent driving section, giving no more than two directions at a time.

Indicating with hand gestures to accompany verbal directions for left and right.

Examiners are there to assess the person's ability to drive safely – not their ability to remember directions. If the candidate needs to check with the examiner that they are going the right way, they can do so.

Examiners ask all candidates if they would like to take their driving instructor, or the person who has accompanied them, with them on their driving test. For someone with dyslexia it may really help having someone there in the car to calm their nerves (dyslexic difficulties can become very pronounced under stress).

DSA has confirmed that driving examiners conduct thousands of driving tests every year and are very experienced and skilled in dealing with candidates with all sorts of special needs. They are also very aware that people can be nervous and will make every effort to put all candidates at ease.

8.Resources and Publications.

The Official DSA Theory Test for Car Drivers DVD-ROM. This DVD-ROM contains every official theory test revision question plus the official DSA explanations of the answers and practice case studies. It is the closest experience to the actual test, with loads of extra help to understand the theory and a helpful voiceover option. Includes a digital version of The Official Highway Code with downloadable audio.

The Official DSA Theory Test for Car Drivers and The Official Highway Code. The only official theory test book for car drivers. It contains every official theory test revision question, explanations of the answers to help you understand the theory and practice case studies. Includes The Official Highway Code and a free eBook download for thorough test preparation.

The Official DSA Guide to Hazard Perception DVD. The only official interactive DVD for all learner drivers and motorcyclists. Includes official

DSA video clips to help you prepare fully for your theory and practical tests.

Driving Standards Agency (DSA) online official Theory Practice Tests. Official revision questions covering a variety of topics relating to road safety. As in the real test, these tests use a mix of 50 multiple choice questions to test your overall knowledge.

Road Code. A Highway Code for Younger Road Users has been written with the needs of young people in mind, and contains the latest and best guidance on cycling proficiency, the GREEN CROSS CODE and general "ROAD-CODE".

The Official Highway Code. The Official Highway Code is essential reading for all new and experienced road users: pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists as well as motorcyclists and drivers.

The Official Highway Code Interactive CD-ROM. This fully searchable, interactive CD-ROM features quizzes and games to help bring The Highway Code to life and provide a thorough understanding of road safety and best practice. Includes a helpful voiceover option.

Official DSA publications including books, DVD-ROMS, DVDs and downloads are available from The Stationery Office (TSO) and from all good high street and online book stores.

Stationery Office.

Tel: 0870 243 0123 Email: dsa.merchandising@tso.co.uk Web: <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/dsa>

The DSA has launched its first **iPhone apps**: Theory Test for Car Drivers Kit, for theory test revision. It also has 10 hazard perception clips for the pupil to watch and practice. Available from the [iTunes Store](#)

Driving Test Success by Focus Software highly recommended by driving instructors experienced in candidates with specific learning difficulties. Available from Amazon. Also in some high street retailers.

L of a way 2 Pass, by Diane Hall, available on Amazon.