

MSM driver training course

Notes for guidance

Having completed your training, the following notes have been put together based upon the salient points that have been covered during your course. We hope you find them useful and that they will help you build on the skills you have acquired.

Pre-driving checks: P.O.W.D.E.R

(to be carried out at least weekly)

- Petrol/diesel** Make sure you have sufficient fuel for the journey.
- Oil levels** If there is insufficient oil in the engine, it will cause severe damage. To ensure an accurate reading, check when the engine is cold, on a level surface with the engine turned off.
- Water levels** Coolant should again be checked when the engine is cold. It's dangerous to remove the radiator cap if the engine is hot – the system is pressurised and can cause the coolant to gush out, possibly causing serious injury.
Check you have adequate windscreen washer fluid in the tank. Less water should be added to the fluid during winter to prevent Freezing.
- Damage** Look for anything that could effect legality or safety. Walk around the vehicle checking for signs of damage. Once you drive – you inherit the damage.
If you damage a vehicle, make sure you report it – where applicable.
- Electrics** Make sure all lights, indicators and horn work correctly. NB: test the horn off-road if stationary (this is a legal requirement).
- Rubber** Ensure tyres are to manufacturers recommended pressures (when they are cold). Correct tyre pressures are critical and are particularly relevant when travelling on wet or icy roads, cornering, heavy braking, or prolonged periods at high speed (motorways, etc). Also, when carrying heavier than normal loads.
Check for damage, cuts and excessive wear.
Look for cracks or wear on windscreen wiper blades should they not clear the screen properly.

These checks are vital to ensure the vehicle is fit for the road.

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The driving environment

The following four points are the foundation upon which good driving is built:

Concentration 100% concentration at all times. Generally, drivers can only concentrate for a maximum of around 20 to 30 minutes at a time on any one subject.

Observation Good all round observations are essential. Approximately 75% of information is gathered through the eyes, the remainder through the nose, ears and sense of touch or feel. Use scanning techniques to gather as much information about your driving environment as possible.

Anticipation A good driver anticipates the actions of other road users on the approach to hazards and takes action to deal with the predicted outcome. Failure to observe and anticipate correctly results in late, rushed actions.

Planning 'Failing to plan is planning to fail'. Based upon your observations, information gathering and your anticipation of the likely outcome - you can formulate a plan to deal with a situation. Hazards come in multiples - deal with first things first. Be flexible and prepared to change your plan.



The five phases of car control, the 'system'

Information (Take - Use - Give)

Take - a look all around and use the mirrors at the appropriate parts of the 'system'.

Use - information to deal with the hazard and decide what to do. Plan for the unexpected. If a new hazard arises consider re-running the system from an earlier phase.

Give - a signal if it benefits other road users (including pedestrians). Signals can be given using brake lights, indicators, horn, flashing headlamps, reversing lights, etc. Be careful not to give misleading signals. Be sure others know your intentions.

Position - your vehicle so that you can pass a hazard safely and smoothly. Take into account all types of other road users.

Speed - adjust your speed appropriate to the hazard. Use your accelerator and brake. You can slow down using your gears and engine compression in cases of slippery road conditions. Always remember that you must be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear.

Gear - once you have the right speed to pass the hazard, engage the correct gear for that speed. Avoid late braking and snatched gear changes.

Acceleration - when deciding upon the correct degree of acceleration to apply, in order to leave the hazard safely and smoothly, take into account your speed and that of other road users. Adjust your acceleration according to the circumstances.

Right position - Right Speed - Right Gear - at the right time - time to react

The same rules apply for cornering and will enable you to negotiate a bend or corner correctly. Basically, for right hand bends position to the left and, for left-hand bends, toward the centre line. Be aware of any risk of danger on your left and right.

Tyres and Tarmac (TNT)

When in stationary traffic, or coming to a stop behind another vehicle, ensure you can see the bottom of the back tyres of the vehicle in front of you (where they make contact on the road surface). This generally creates a space of about two metres between the vehicles. There are various good reasons for this:

- if you are 'shunted' from behind, you will have every chance that your car will not hit the vehicle in front
- should the car in front break down or stall, you will be able to move round them with ease. This can be an advantage if your car has a limited turning circle.
- if the car in front starts to roll back, you will have time to remind them by sounding your horn to alert them of your presence and enable them to stop.
- in built up areas, such as busy shopping areas or high streets, pedestrians will always walk between stationary vehicles - you will have created a safer gap for them to cross.
- allows you a better view of the road ahead.

Limit point

This is the furthest point along the road to which you have an uninterrupted view of the road surface.

It is at a point at which the two edges of the road appear to meet, or the apex of the road on a hillcrest.

Match your speed to the speed at which the limit point moves away from you (providing you can stop within the distance you can see to be clear).

- If it is moving away from you - you can accelerate.
- If it is standing still or coming towards you - you need to decelerate or brake.

This is a good aid to your observations on the approach to a corner or bend.

Speed limit identification

Where can you expect to see a change of speed limit?

- on a straight road as you approach a city, town or village
- if you turn left or right from a main road
- on the approach to or exit of roundabouts

Be observant - keep low until you know

- 30
- built up area, street lamps over 20' high and NO repeater signs
- 40 & 50
- built up area possible, street lamps over 20' high, MUST have repeater signs on lamp posts.
- 30, 40 & 50
- no street lamp, built up area, then MUST have repeater signs on poles or posts.

National speed limit for cars

- 60 on single carriageways
- 70 on dual carriageways/motorways

Clues to look for - no street lamps, no repeater signs and not a built up area.



Terms explained:

Anti-lock brakes (ABS): ABS or anti lock braking systems, are a great safety aid for drivers. They retain the ability to steer the vehicle during harsh or emergency braking. They do not enable you to stop in a shorter distance - in some circumstances they may extend that distance.

Aquaplaning: This is a serious loss of steering and braking control caused by a wedge of water building up between the front tyres and the road surface.

Camber: The convex slope across the road surface designed to assist drainage. Camber falls from the crown of the road to the edges. It has an affect on cornering, which differs according to whether the bend is to the right or left.

Micro climates: These are areas where landscape features cause either deep shade or exposed areas of the road. Beware of ice and side winds at these locations.

Motorway driving: When driving on the motorway it is important to remember that there is a lot of information to be gained that will help you, providing you know what to look for.

These are MSM's top tips:

- the marker posts on the left of the hard shoulder are 100 metres apart
- the number on the top of the post relates to the distance that post is from the start of the motorway
- If you breakdown quote the number from the marker post plus the motorway you are on and the direction you are travelling
- the emergency telephone boxes are one-mile apart and are orange in colour. These will dial you straight through to the motorway police
- if you do breakdown, get yourself and your passengers out. Exit by the left-hand door. Get up the embankment and stand behind the car - it's safer should something collide with your vehicle
- do not attempt even the most basic of repairs
- pay attention to the matrix warning signs situated in the central reservation or on the overhead gantries
- amber flashing lights on these signs are warnings but red means you MUST do something
- comply with the two-second rule

**REMEMBER - YOUR SAFETY IS IN YOUR HANDS
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