



Learn to Drive Getting Started





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1. Introduction

- What This Guide Is

A simple, beginner-friendly overview of everything a new learner driver should know before starting lessons.

Tone: friendly and practical.

- Who It's For

Anyone considering learning to drive or preparing for their first few lessons.

- How It Helps

It removes guesswork and gives you confidence by explaining the full journey step-by-step.



2. Applying for a Provisional Licence (step-by-step)

• Why you need it

A provisional licence is legally required before you can drive on UK roads and take tests.

• How to apply (step-by-step)

- 1. Go to the official GOV.UK website and search for ‘apply for a provisional driving licence’.**
- 2. Create or log in to your GOV.UK Verify account if prompted (have ID ready).**
- 3. Complete the online form with your personal details exactly as shown on official documents.**
- 4. Provide your National Insurance number if you have one.**
- 5. Upload/provide ID (passport is easiest) or choose the paper D1 form from the Post Office if you prefer.**
- 6. Pay the fee (currently £34 online — check GOV.UK for updates).**
- 7. Submit and note the reference number; expect the licence to arrive by post.**

Average processing times & common mistakes

- Typical online processing: about 1 week; paper applications (D1) can take 3 weeks or more.**
- Common mistakes: mismatched name or address, incorrect ID, forgetting NI number, or using an old passport. Double-check details before submitting.**



3. Understanding the Costs of Learning to Drive

- Typical lesson cost

Expect to pay between £35-£50 per hour
pricing; prices vary by area and
instructor.

- How many lessons do learners usually
need?

Many learners take between 30–50 hours
of lessons plus private practice, but this
varies widely.

- Ways to save money

Block-book lessons to get discounts,
practise privately with a qualified
supervising driver, choose smarter
scheduling (off-peak) and compare
instructors.



4. Choosing a Driving Instructor or School

• Questions to ask when you contact an instructor

- Are you a fully qualified ADI? What is your badge number?**
 - ADI status ensures the instructor is DVSA-approved and insured to teach.**
 - Do you offer manual and/or automatic lessons?**
 - Decide early whether you want to learn manual (more transferable) or automatic.**
 - What is your hourly rate and do you offer block-booking discounts?**
 - Clarifies cost and whether discounts are available.**
 - What's your pass rate (approx.) and how do you structure lessons?**
 - Pass rate gives a rough indicator of effectiveness; structure helps you understand learning progression.**
 - How will you track progress and communicate homework/practice tasks?**
 - Ensures your learning is organised and measurable.**
 - Independent instructor vs driving school**
- Independent instructors often provide a personalised approach; driving schools may offer more structure and availability. Compare prices, flexibility and reviews.**



5. Getting Started With Lessons

- What happens in your first few lessons
 - Licence and eyesight checks; introduction to car layout and controls.
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 - The instructor verifies your eligibility and covers basic safety checks.
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 - Cockpit drill (mirrors, seat, steering), basic manoeuvring and moving off/stopping.
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 - Foundation skills taught carefully to avoid early bad habits.
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 - Simple road positioning and observation on quiet roads.
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 - Builds confidence before moving to busier traffic.



- Rules for supervising drivers (if you plan private practice)
- Supervisor must be 21 or over and have held a full driving licence for at least 3 years.
- This is the legal standard to ensure supervisors have adequate experience.
- The vehicle must be taxed, MOT'd (if required), insured for learner drivers, and display L-plates.
- Proper documentation and insurance protect you and the supervisor.
- Supervisor should be calm, patient and ideally have some planned practice activities.
- A structured approach reduces risk and increases learning value.
-
- How to choose safe first practice areas
- Start in quiet residential streets, empty car parks, or industrial estates outside working hours.
- Low-traffic locations let you practise without pressure.
- Gradually move to busier roads, small junctions and roundabouts as confidence grows.
- Progressive exposure ensures steady learning without overwhelm.
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6. Car Controls & Basic Skills

Simple interior controls

- **Left foot: Clutch (manual cars) — used for changing gears.**
- **Right foot: Brake (left) and Accelerator (right).**
- **Steering wheel: Centre for directional control and indicators on stalks.**
- **Gear lever: Typically between seats — first gear top-left (manual).**
- **Handbrake: Between seat.**
- **Mirrors: Rear-view (centre) and two wing mirrors (sides).**
-

Common early mistakes and how to avoid them

- **Stalling the car when moving off — practice clutch control and take a slow approach.**
- **Smooth clutch release reduces stalls and builds confidence.**
- **Forgetting mirrors before manoeuvring — use a routine: Mirrors–Signal–Manoeuvre (MSM).**
- **MSM becomes automatic with repetition and prevents surprises.**
- **Poor steering control — practice slow-speed turns and hand position (both hands on wheel).**
- **Controlled steering improves accuracy and safety.**



7. Building Core Driving Skills (beginner → intermediate milestones)

Beginner milestones

- Confidently perform cockpit checks, move off and stop, and change gear smoothly (manual).
- These skills are the essential starting point for safe, independent driving.
- Use mirrors regularly and indicate correctly on quiet roads.
- Observation habits begin early and remain critical throughout driving.

Intermediate milestones

- Negotiating junctions, roundabouts and busy single-carriageway roads confidently.
- Explanation: You begin to apply basic skills in more complex scenarios.
- Reversing around a corner and controlled bay/parallel parking.
- Explanation: Spatial awareness and reference points are developed here.



8. Hazard Perception

• Types of hazards

- Potential hazards — things that could develop into a risk (e.g., parked car with door open).
- Spotting potential hazards early allows you to slow and prepare.
- Developing hazards — hazards that are unfolding (e.g., pedestrian stepping into the road).
- You must respond with appropriate speed and steering adjustments.
- Immediate hazards — require quick, decisive action (e.g., vehicle pulling out in front).
- Emergency responses like braking or steering are needed.
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• Practice resources

- Official DVSA hazard perception clips (search on GOV.UK / DVSA resources).
- These are the gold standard for practice as they replicate the test format.
- Recommended apps and websites — many offer mock hazard tests and scoring feedback.
- Mix official and high-quality third-party tools to build familiarity and timing.



9. Theory Test Preparation

- **Study the Highway Code**

The Highway Code is the foundation for both the theory test and safe driving.

- **Multiple-choice and hazard practice**

Use the DVSA official app and third-party apps to vary practice sources and question styles.

- **Recommended study schedule**

- **Short daily sessions (20–30 minutes) focused on question banks and hazard clips.**
- **Small, regular study beats long, infrequent cramming**



10. Booking and Taking the Theory Test

• How to book (step-by-step)

1. Go to GOV.UK and find the 'book a theory test' page.
2. Enter your provisional licence details and choose a test centre and date.
3. Pay the fee and note your confirmation reference.
4. On the day: bring your provisional licence and arrive early.

• Common reasons for failing the theory test

- Insufficient hazard perception timing, poor multiple-choice scores, misreading questions, or panic on the test day.
- Explanation: Regular practice and mock tests reduce these risks.





11. Preparing for the Practical Test

- Driving test checklist (what to practice beforehand)

- Show Me / Tell Me questions (car safety checks) — practice answers until automatic.
- These are a short element but often overlooked.
- Manoeuvres and independent driving — practice in test-like conditions. Simulate the examiner's instructions and sat-nav guidance.
- Observation, lane discipline and junction approaches — polish these habits.
- Consistency is what examiners reward.
 - Managing nerves

Use mock tests, breathing techniques, and get a good night's sleep before the test.





13. What Happens on the Day of Your Driving Test

Arrival & ID Check

You should arrive 10 minutes before your test time.

Bring your provisional licence – without it, the test cannot go ahead.

Common issues:

- Arriving too early (test centres discourage waiting more than 10 minutes).

The Eyesight Check

You must read a number plate from 20 metres (new-style plates) or 20.5 metres (old-style plates).

Common reasons for failing:

- Not practising beforehand.
- Wearing outdated glasses or lenses.
- Forgetting glasses/contact lenses that you declared you need for driving.

'Show Me, Tell Me' Questions

You'll be asked:

- 1 "Tell me" question before the drive (explain how you'd check or operate something).
- 1 "Show me" question during the drive (demonstrate a control while driving).
- Typical topics include lights, brakes, washers, demisters, or checking tyre pressure.



The Driving Section

This lasts around 40 minutes and includes:

- Normal driving
- Hill starts
- Pulling over safely
- Following directions (from the examiner or sat nav)

Common mistakes:

- Not checking mirrors frequently enough
- Misjudging gaps at junctions
- Driving too cautiously or too fast for conditions

Manoeuvre (1 of 3)

You'll perform ONE of these:

- Parallel park
- Bay park (forward or reverse)
- Pull up on the right, reverse, and rejoin traffic

Independent Driving

Around 20 minutes, following either:

- A sat-nav route (most common), or
- Traffic signs
- Test Result

At the end, you'll discuss your result inside the car.

- 0–15 driver faults = pass
- 1 serious or dangerous fault = fail



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13. After You Pass: Getting Your Full Licence & Updating Insurance

How to Get Your Full Licence

If the examiner has your photocard and details, your licence is processed automatically.

If not, you may need to apply online using your pass certificate number.

Processing time:

Usually 1–3 weeks, but you can legally drive immediately if your insurance allows it.

Why You Must Update Your Insurance Immediately

Once you pass, you're no longer a learner — your cover must reflect this.

If you continue driving on learner insurance, it's invalid, even if it's the same car.

How to Update It

- 1. Contact your insurer the same day.**
- 2. Tell them you've passed and need your policy changed to a full licence holder.**
- 3. Ask for the new premium before confirming.**
- 4. You'll usually receive updated documents by email instantly.**

Common mistakes:

- Forgetting to update insurance before driving home**
- Assuming the car owner's insurance automatically covers you (it does not)**

Getting Your Licence Card

Your new full licence will be posted out once processed.

You don't need to stop driving as long as:

- You passed today**
- You have valid insurance**
- There's no medical disclosure issue**



14.Choosing Your First Car

Choosing your first car is exciting, but it can be overwhelming.

Here is the essential guidance a new driver actually needs.

Set a realistic budget

Think about more than just the upfront cost – include insurance, fuel, tax, MOT, servicing, and potential repairs.

Insurance for new drivers is often higher than the car's value, so budgeting correctly prevents surprises.

Prioritise low insurance groups

Insurance groups run from 1–50.

Look for cars in groups 1–10, as they are cheaper to insure and generally have smaller engines (1.0–1.2L), making them ideal for new drivers.

Popular low-insurance beginner cars include:

- **Ford Fiesta (small engines) – Reliable, widely available parts.**
- **Vauxhall Corsa – Cheap to run and insure.**
- **Toyota Yaris – Known for reliability and low running costs.**
- **Volkswagen Polo (1.0L models) – Sturdy build quality.**

Choose the right size and power

Avoid large or powerful cars for your first year.

Smaller cars are easier to manoeuvre, cheaper to fuel, and often cheaper to repair.



Manual or automatic?

- **Manual – Usually cheaper to buy, more choice, slightly more to learn.**
- **Automatic – Easier to drive, but can be more expensive to insure and purchase.**
- **Choose the transmission you passed your test in unless you already have a plan to transition.**

•

Consider reliability and maintenance costs

Before buying any car, check:

- **MOT history (government website)**
- **Common issues for that model**
- **Service history (ideally full)**

A cheap car becomes expensive quickly if it needs frequent repairs.

Petrol vs hybrid vs electric

For new drivers, petrol is typically cheapest and simplest.

Hybrids and EVs can save fuel costs but are expensive upfront and repairs can be costly.



Check safety ratings

Look at the Euro NCAP safety rating.

A 4- or 5-star rating means the car has modern safety features — valuable for inexperienced drivers.

Test drive and inspect the car

Always check:

- **Controls are easy to reach**
- **Clutch feels consistent (manual)**
- **No warning lights**
- **Brakes feel firm**
- **All electronics work**
- **Smooth acceleration with no rattles**
- **If you're unsure, bring someone knowledgeable.**
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Avoid modified cars

Modified exhausts, suspension, tinted lights, or engine upgrades can:

- **Increase insurance dramatically**
- **Affect reliability**
- **Lead to MOT failures**

Always choose a stock, well-maintained car.



15. Understanding Car Insurance (for New Drivers)

Third Party Only (TPO)

Covers only other people if you're at fault.

Cheapest, but offers little protection — not recommended for new drivers.

Third Party, Fire & Theft (TPFT)

Covers third-party damage, plus your car if it's stolen or catches fire.

A middle-ground option but still limited.

Fully Comprehensive

Covers you and others, regardless of blame.

Often the best value for new drivers due to added protection.

Tips to Reduce Costs

- Add a named experienced driver (not as a "front").
- Choose a car with a low insurance group.
- Consider telematics/black box policies.
- Keep car modifications minimal or none



16. Car Maintenance Checklist

Weekly

- Tyre pressures
- Use garage air machines or a portable inflator. Check when cold.
- Windscreen washer fluid
- Top up before long journeys.
- General visual inspection
- Look for leaks, flat tyres, or warning lights.

Monthly

- Oil level
- Check dipstick when engine is cool. Wipe, reinsert, then read the level.
- Coolant level
- Should be between MIN and MAX when engine is cold.
- Lights check
- Walk around car: indicators, brake lights, reverse lights, headlights.

Every 6–12 Months

- Service the car
- Prevents breakdowns and prolongs engine life.
- Check brake pads
- Listen for squeaking or grinding — a sign of wear.



17. Staying Safe After You Pass (Defensive Driving & Conditions)

Defensive Driving Basics

- Keep a safe following distance
- The 2-second rule in dry conditions; double in rain.
- Expect mistakes from others
- Never assume another driver has seen you.
- Plan ahead
- Scan far ahead to anticipate hazards.

Driving in the Rain

- Slow down and increase distance.
- Avoid sudden steering/braking.
- Watch for standing water to prevent aquaplaning.
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Driving at Night

- Use dipped headlights.
- Avoid looking directly at oncoming lights.
- Clean your glass regularly to reduce glare.
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Driving in Winter

- Clear all windows before setting off.
- Drive gently – controls are less responsive on ice.
- Keep a winter kit in the car (blanket, scraper, gloves).



19. Optional Add-Ons for New Drivers (Useful but Not Essential)

- **Pass Plus**

A post-test training course covering motorways, rural roads, night driving, and more.

Some insurers offer discounts, although savings vary.

- **Advanced Driver Courses**

Such as IAM RoadSmart or RoSPA.

Improves confidence, smoothness, and hazard anticipation.

- **Breakdown Cover**

Options include roadside assistance, recovery, and home start.

Vital for avoiding long waits if your car won't start or breaks down.

- **Gap Insurance (for new cars)**

Covers difference between insurance payout and the car's purchase price.

Useful if you buy a brand-new or nearly new vehicle.

- **Dashcam**

Front + rear camera setups offer better protection.

Evidence can help settle claims fast



Essential Kit for New Drivers

Recommended Items to Keep in Your Car

- **Phone mount – for safe legal sat-nav use.**
- **Keeps your phone secure and prevents illegal handheld use.**
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- **Breakdown kit**
- **Usually includes a warning triangle, hi-vis vest, and basic tools.**
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- **Tyre pressure gauge & inflator**
- **Helps maintain correct tyre pressures, improving safety and fuel economy.**
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- **Dashcam**
- **Provides evidence in case of incidents and can lower insurance premiums.**
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- **First aid kit**
- **Useful for minor injuries and emergencies.**



Final Words of Advice for New Drivers

- Keep learning, even after passing

Passing the test means you're safe enough to start — not that you're finished.

Driving experience builds over time.

- Build confidence gradually

Don't jump straight into difficult motorway drives or busy cities.

Practice in familiar areas first.

- Stay calm under pressure

Everyone makes mistakes — even experienced drivers.

What matters is how safely you recover.

- Keep your car maintained

A well-looked-after car is a safer car.

Never ignore warning lights or strange noises.

- Only drive when fully fit and alert

Avoid driving when tired, stressed, emotional, or unwell.

Your concentration is the biggest factor in staying safe.

Drive Safe and enjoy the journey