



Private hire - hackney carriage assessment

All you need to know about the agency's taxi testing services





The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is committed to improving driving standards through its testing and assessment activities. All drivers must take responsibility for developing the correct attitude and approach towards safe and considerate driving. This combined with a sound knowledge of defensive driving will make our roads safer; a safer environment for all road users.

As a professional driver you have a special responsibility to ensure that your passengers have a safe, comfortable and enjoyable journey. You may have years of driving experience and will be able to demonstrate a good standard of driving on the taxi test.

The principles of good driving practice are set out in our official publication "*The official DSA guide to Driving - the essential skills*". Study them and by putting them into practice you can demonstrate to your passengers and other road users that you are a professional driver.

Transport is an essential part of modern life, but there are environmental consequences. I would encourage you to read the chapter 'Eco-safe driving and the environment' in the publication mentioned above. If you follow the advice set out you will become a more environmentally-friendly driver – your journeys will be more comfortable. This could considerably reduce your fuel bills and emissions that cause damage to the atmosphere.

There are millions of journeys made every year by Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. Consider taking on board good sound advice. This will ensure a service delivered by professional taxi drivers who take pride in their driving and the service they give to their customers.

Rosemary Thew

16 Clearance to obstructions

Allow plenty of room to pass stationary vehicles, obstructions and be prepared to slow down or stop. A door may open, a child may run out or a vehicle may pull out without warning.

17 Response to signs/signals

You should understand and be able to react to all traffic signs and road markings. You must act correctly at traffic lights, and check that the road is clear before proceeding when the green light shows. Obey signals given by police officers, traffic wardens and school crossing patrols. Look out for signals given by other road users, including people in charge of animals, and be ready to act accordingly.

18 Use of Speed

You should make safe, reasonable progress along the road bearing in mind the road, traffic and weather conditions and the road signs and speed limits. Make sure that you can stop safely, well within the distance you can see to be clear. Do not speed. Remember, as a new driver, your licence will be revoked if you accrue six or more penalty points during the first two years, and you will have to retake and pass both theory and practical tests.

19 Following distance

Always keep a safe distance between yourself and other vehicles. Remember, on wet or slippery roads it takes much longer to stop. When you stop in traffic queues leave sufficient space to pull out if the vehicle in front has problems.

20 Maintain progress

In order to pass your test you must show that you can drive at a realistic speed appropriate to the road and traffic conditions. You should approach all hazards at a safe, controlled speed, without being over cautious or interfering with the progress of other traffic. Always be ready to move away from junctions as soon as, it is safe and correct to do so, driving excessively slowly can create dangers for yourself and other drivers.

21 Junctions (including roundabouts)

You should be able to judge the correct speed of approach so that you can enter a junction safely and stop if necessary. Position your vehicle correctly. Use the correct lane - if you are turning right, keep as near to the centre of the road as is safe. Avoid cutting the corner when turning right. If turning left, keep over to the left and do not swing out. Watch out for cyclists and motorcyclists coming up on your left and pedestrians who are crossing, you must take effective observation before moving into a junction and make sure it is safe before proceeding.

22 Judgements

Only overtake when it is safe to do so. Allow enough room when you are overtaking another vehicle. Cyclists and motorcyclists need as much space as other vehicles; they can wobble or swerve suddenly. Do not cut in too quickly after overtaking. Take care when the width of the road is restricted or when the road narrows. If there is an obstruction on your side or not enough room for two vehicles to pass safely, be prepared to wait and let the approaching vehicles through.

When you turn right across the path of an approaching vehicle, make sure you can do so safely, other vehicles should not

have to stop, slow down or swerve to allow you to complete your turn.

23 Positioning

You should position your vehicle sensibly, normally well to the left. Keep clear of parked vehicles and position correctly for the direction that you intend to take. Where lanes are marked, keep to the middle of the lane and avoid straddling lane markings. Do not change lanes unless necessary.

24 Pedestrian Crossings

You should be able to recognise the different types of pedestrian crossing and show courtesy and consideration towards pedestrians. At all crossings you should slow down and stop if there is anyone on the crossing. At zebra crossings you should slow down and be prepared to stop if there is anyone waiting to cross. Give way to any pedestrians on a pelican crossing when the amber lights are flashing. You should give way to cyclists as well as pedestrians on a toucan crossing and act correctly at puffin crossings.

25 Position / Normal Stops

Choose a safe, legal and convenient place to stop, close to the edge of the road, where you will not obstruct the road and create a hazard. You should know how and where to stop without causing danger to other road users.

26 Planning

You must be aware of other road users at all times. You should always think and plan ahead so you can judge what other road users are going to do, predict how their actions will affect you and react in good time. Take particular care to consider the actions of the more vulnerable groups of road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. Anticipate road and traffic conditions, and act in good time, rather than reacting to them at the last moment.

27 Ancillary Controls

You should understand the function of all the controls and switches, especially those that have a bearing on road safety. These include indicators, lights, windscreen wipers, demisters and heaters. You should be able to find these controls and operate them correctly when necessary, without looking down. You may now use www.dsa.gov.uk to re-book your practical driving test online.

28 Health Declaration

You must declare any change to your health status since you last applied for a licence. It is a criminal offence for you (or anyone else) to make a false statement in order for you to obtain a driving licence and can lead to prosecution.

1a Eyesight Test

At the start of the test the examiner asked you to read a vehicle registration number. If you required glasses or contact lenses, you must wear them whenever you drive. If you had problems with the eyesight test, perhaps you should consider consulting an optician.

1b Highway Code Safety

If you didn't need to take a separate theory test, for example to obtain a licence for a tractor or other specialist vehicle, you will have been asked questions on the Highway Code and other related motoring matters.

You will have also been asked to identify some traffic signs. If you had difficulty with these questions make sure that you study properly by reading as wide a range of publications as you can to increase your understanding. If you have already passed a theory test you will not have been asked Highway Code questions at the practical test stage; but you should still have a thorough knowledge of it.

Safety questions (if applicable) - you should know the location of, and be able to operate, safety components such as fire extinguisher, fuel cut-off switch and emergency door.

On taxi tests, you will additionally be asked 'Cabology' questions (General questions relating to taxis and taxi driving)

2 Controlled stop

You will need to be able to display a high level of skill in bringing your vehicle to a stop, safely, promptly and under full control avoiding locking the wheels. Remember that in wet weather it can take twice as long to stop safely.

3, 4 and 5 Reverse exercises

You will need to display the ability to control the vehicle safely whilst reversing to the left, right, when parking on the road or into a parking bay.

You must take good effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre and show consideration to other road users.

6 Turn in the road

You will need to display the low speed control and observation skills necessary to carry out this exercise safely with due regard for other road users and pedestrians.

7 Vehicle Checks

You will need to display to the examiner a basic knowledge of the fundamental safety checks applicable to your vehicle, for example safe fluid levels, lighting and tyre checks.

8 Taxi manoeuvre

You must be able to display the ability to turn your car around by whatever means available, making sure you take effective, all round observation showing consideration to other road users and pedestrians.

You should control your vehicle smoothly making proper use of the clutch, accelerator, brakes and steering. You should not use a driveway or allow your vehicle to mount the pavement as this could damage your vehicle.

9 Taxi wheelchair

You should be able to securely erect wheelchair ramps, safely install the wheelchair and an imaginary wheelchair occupant into your vehicle, ensuring the wheelchair and its occupant are secured in readiness for the journey then reverse the entire process.

10 Vehicle & trailer combinations (uncoupling / re-coupling)

You will need to demonstrate the skills necessary when uncoupling and re-coupling your vehicle, driving the towing vehicle to a designated position prior to re-coupling safely.

11 Precautions

Before you start the engine make sure that you are comfortably seated and all controls can be safely operated.

12 Control

This section covers, where appropriate, the safe and controlled use of accelerator, clutch, gears, footbrake, parking brake, and steering. Additional specific control elements apply to the drivers of different vehicle categories.

Always try and use the vehicle controls as smoothly as possible. This means less wear and tear on your vehicle and a smoother ride for your passengers. Make proper use of your accelerator and clutch to make a smooth start. Always depress the clutch just before you stop. Select the correct gear to match the road and traffic conditions. Change gear in good time but not too soon before a hazard. Do not allow the vehicle to coast by running on in neutral or with the clutch depressed.

There should be no need to look down at the gear lever when changing gear. Use the footbrake smoothly and progressively. Brake in plenty of time for any hazard. Make full use of the parking brake whenever it would help you to prevent the vehicle rolling backwards or forwards, and if you are parking. Steer the vehicle as smoothly as possible.

Avoid harsh steering, or steering too early or too late as it may cause you to hit the kerb or swing out towards another road user. If you are riding a motorcycle slowly, maintain a straight line and do not allow the machine to wobble towards other vehicles.

13 Move off

You will need to demonstrate your ability to move off smoothly and safely on the level, on a gradient and at an angle taking the correct precautionary observations.

14 Use of mirrors - Rear observations

Use all the mirrors fitted to your vehicle safely and effectively. You must always check carefully before signalling, changing direction or changing speed. Use the Mirrors Signal Manoeuvre (MSM) routine effectively.

15 Signals

You must signal clearly to let others know what you intend to do. You should only use the signals shown in the Highway Code if it would help other road users (including pedestrians).

Always signal in good time and ensure that the signal has been cancelled after the manoeuvre has been completed. Do not beckon to pedestrians to cross the road.