



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW TO BE A TAXI DRIVER

DVA (v2.1)



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

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About this manual

This manual will help:

- you to understand what is expected of you as a taxi driver;
- offer guidance on professional driving taking into account the safety and comfort of your passengers;
- you to prepare for the taxi theory and practical tests; and
- set out the requirements for periodic training.

This manual does not contain all the information you require to operate as a professional taxi driver. It should be read in conjunction with the recommended reading list which is contained in [Appendix 4](#) at the back of this manual.

For information relating to the annual taxi **vehicle** test please go to [Taxi vehicle test](#) .

For further information on the services offered by DVA and the forms relating to the taxi process, go online at [Driving or operating taxis and buses](#) . The DVSA publications outlined in the recommended reading list can be purchased online at [Shop | Safe Driving for Life](#) or at any good book store.

Preparation

Reading this manual should help you appreciate and understand the principles of driving a taxi and how to be a safer and more competent driver on today's roads. Once qualified you have a responsibility as a professional driver to set an example to others and to ensure that all your passengers travel in comfort and arrive at their destination safely and efficiently.

If you decide, as part of your preparation to take some paid driving instruction, make sure the instructor you select is on DVA's approved driving instructor register.

This is only a guide; it should be seen as a small part of acquiring the skills and information that you require to be a professional taxi driver. You will also need to consider other factors such as:

- preparing well for the qualifying examinations;
- getting as much practice as possible; and
- adopting the right attitude to all aspects of the job.

Once you are successful and obtain your taxi licence you should take great pride in your driving and delivering a first class service to your customers / passengers. Adopting a professional approach will be seen and appreciated by other road users.

Remember, *Driving is a life skill.*

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THE DRIVER & VEHICLE STANDARDS AGENCY (DVSA) FOR



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Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this publication is accurate at the time of going to press.

The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) would like to thank The Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) for kindly granting permission to use extracts from their range of driving skills publications.

Section one

GETTING STARTED

This section covers

- A message from the deputy chief driving examiner
- Applying for a taxi driver licence
- Medical requirements
- Taxi operator licence
- Professional standards
- Periodic training
- Responsibility
- Attitude
- Passenger care
- Manual handling techniques
- Diet and driving ability

Message from the Deputy Chief Driving Examiner

This manual provides detailed professional guidance for the safe driving of taxis. As the driver of a public service vehicle, you must accept responsibility for the safety of your passengers. Whether you drive a standard motor car, taxi bus, wedding car or stretched limousine, each one of your passengers is relying on you to get them to their destination safely.

The starting point for a professional driver is having the correct attitude and approach to driving, together with a sound knowledge of safe, modern driving techniques. You should set an example by showing courtesy and consideration to other road users and make allowances by staying calm and ignore the mistakes and errors of other drivers. A professional driver will have a sound knowledge of driving theory, coupled with the ability to apply that theory in an expert manner.

This manual provides guidance on learning how to drive a taxi, and detailed information regarding periodic training, which is a process you must complete in order to retain your taxi licence.

In addition to studying this manual you should review the publications outlined in the recommended reading list at the back of this manual. This list includes *'The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills'*, which will help you to achieve a better understanding of the skills and attitudes that combine to make for higher driving standards.

Included in this manual is information to help you prepare for the theory and practical tests and information on your responsibilities once you have obtained your taxi licence. It also contains advice and information on the other aspects of being a professional taxi driver, including some information on the taxi vehicle test.

Put the information this manual contains into practice, and you should be able to reach the higher standards demanded. Having passed your test, you will have demonstrated the skills necessary to become a considerate, courteous professional taxi driver and, above all, to continue to follow the Agency's ethos of, 'safer vehicles & safer drivers'.

Deputy Chief Driving Examiner

Applying for a taxi driver licence

In order to drive as a professional taxi driver, you **MUST** first of all pass the theory and practical tests. Once you have successfully passed both the theory and practical tests you may then apply for a taxi driver's licence. A taxi driving licence is valid for 5 years from the date of issue.

Before applying for a taxi driver licence, you may wish to contact your doctor to confirm that you meet the Group 2 medical driving standards and you have an entitlement to work and reside in the United Kingdom.

Whilst convictions may not prevent you applying for a taxi driver licence you should be aware that DVA must be satisfied that you are a "Fit and Proper person" to hold a licence and any convictions depending on the sentence may affect its decision to grant you a licence.

You will also be required to have obtained a Northern Ireland driving licence number which may mean applying for a transfer of a current licence from another country including GB or applying for a temporary Northern Ireland driving licence number.

To be issued with a licence to drive a taxi you **MUST**:

- Have a right to reside and work in the UK as a taxi driver
- Have held a category B driving licence continuously for 3 years and hold a current Northern Ireland driving licence number
- Complete an online HMRC Tax check
- Meet Group 2 medical driving standards
- Successfully have completed the theory and practical taxi driver's test
- Set up a verified nidirect account to access DVA online
- Satisfy DVA that you meet its Fit and Proper person standards
- Make payment by debit/credit card.

Taxi driver licence applications should be submitted online through the DVA homepage a maximum of 16 weeks in advance of your requirement to hold a licence. Licences for applicants with medical conditions that need to be reviewed by DVA's medical advisors may take longer than 16 weeks depending on the medical tests that may be required. It is an offence for either first time or renewal applicants to drive a taxi without a current Taxi Driver Licence.

Note: *If, at the end of the process a Taxi Driver Licence is not issued, the Department **will not** issue a refund for any taxi driver theory or taxi driver practical tests already taken.*

Expired taxi licence

If your taxi driver licence has expired by **two years or more**, you will be required to take the qualifying tests – Theory test & Practical test. However, if you renew your taxi licence before it has lapsed for two years or more, you will be issued with a new taxi licence. The normal conditions which are relevant to all taxi licences will then apply subject to having completed the relevant periodic training ([See page 14](#)).

HMRC tax checks for Taxi Drivers

HMRC introduced a tax registration check for Northern Ireland taxi drivers.

Since 2 October 2023, if you need to renew your taxi driver licence or it expired less than 12 months ago, you will have to show that you pay tax on your income before you apply for your licence. To do this, you will need to complete a tax check online.

DVA will not be able to accept your taxi driver licence application until you've completed this check.

You can complete your tax check online at [Complete a tax check for a taxi, private hire or scrap metal licence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

You'll need:

- a Government Gateway user ID and password
- the date you first got your taxi driver licence (if you don't know the date you can give an estimated date or the date your last licence started from)
- the length of your most recent licence (this will be 5 years, unless you surrendered your licence, or it was revoked)
- to state how you pay tax on the income you earn from your licensed trade

HMRC manages these checks. If you are unable to complete the tax check online, please contact HMRC at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-a-tax-check-for-a-taxi-private-hire-or-scrap-metal-licence>, using the links in the section 'If you cannot carry out an online tax check'.

If this is the first time you're applying or your licence expired more than 12 months ago

You won't be asked to complete this check. However, when you apply to renew your licence in the future, we may ask you to confirm that you're aware of your tax obligations. This is confirmed on acceptance of the online declaration.

Display of your taxi badge

While a taxi is being used for public or private hire, excluding use in connection with a wedding or a funeral, the taxi driver **MUST** wear their badge. The badge is supplied by the Department and **MUST** be displayed in such a position and manner as to be plainly and distinctly visible on your person. Failure to do so is an offence.

The badge should not be defaced or mutilated in any way and cannot be transferred to any other taxi driver. You can apply for a duplicate taxi driver badge online.

Medical requirements

All new applicants and those renewing who are aged 45 or over, will be required to have a medical form (DLM1 TAXI) completed by their doctor (GP). If you are aged 65 or over, you must have this form completed by your doctor every year. The DLM1 TAXI form is issued by PTLD directly to the applicant and should be returned to PTLD once completed by your GP. Taxi Drivers must be able to meet the Group 2 medical driving standards.

If your medical condition changes or gets worse or your GP advises you not to drive you **MUST** notify the department as this may have a bearing on your fitness to drive. Your taxi driver's licence should be surrendered to the department immediately if advised not to drive.

There are certain medical conditions, depending on their severity and/or nature that may result in a taxi licence being refused or revoked, for example if you suffer or have suffered from:

- a heart attack or other heart complaint
- a mental disorder
- alcoholism
- epilepsy
- attacks of dizziness or fainting
- a stroke
- multiple sclerosis (MS)
- parkinson's or other nervous disorder
- angina (heart pain) while at rest or driving
- diabetes.

For more information about becoming a taxi driver and applying for a licence, visit [Driving or operating taxis and buses](#).

Details on how to apply online for a Taxi Driver Licence, have your Identity Assurance completed, create a NI Direct online account and how to link your application to your existing driving licence are available at the following link: [Apply for or renew a taxi driver licence](#)

Right to work Application

Applicants who are renewing their taxi driver licence for the first time after 1 December 2016 or who are a first time applicant will need to provide documentary evidence to prove their entitlement to reside and work in the UK.

Applicants will also have had to apply online and submit a criminal record check via Access NI [Apply for an AccessNI check](#) . Applicants who have resided outside the UK either during a current licence or at first application may have to provide a letter of Good Conduct from the relevant country.

In submitting the online application the customer will be required to pay the appropriate fee.

[Apply for or renew a taxi driver licence](#)

£105 Renewal Taxi Driver Licence

£145 First Time Taxi Driver Licence

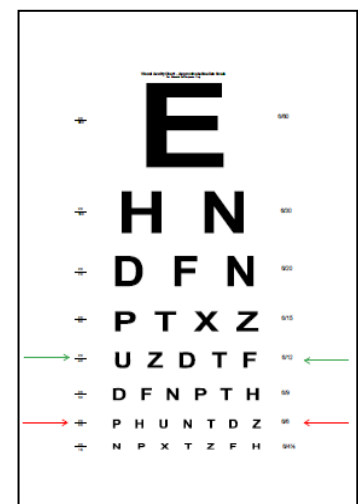
Once your application has been assessed, if you have declared any medical conditions or depending on your age, you may be asked to have a medical report completed by your GP for a further assessment of your medical condition. Depending on the information provided by your GP you may be referred to DVA's medical advisors for an independent medical decision on your fitness to drive a taxi. This referral may result in further medical investigations being required before a decision can be provided on your fitness to drive a taxi. Depending on the complexity of your medical condition the time taken to complete these further investigations may be lengthy and delay the provision of a medical decision from our medical advisors.

Eyesight

All drivers, regardless of vehicle category, **MUST** be able to read a number plate in good daylight at 20.5 metres (67 feet), or 20 metres (about 66 feet) if the narrow font letters have been used on the number plate. If glasses or contact lenses are needed to do this, then they **MUST** be worn when driving. In addition, any applicant for a taxi licence **MUST** have a visual acuity of at least:

- 6/7.5 in the better eye; and
- 6/60 in the other eye

when wearing glasses or contact lenses, if needed. There **MUST** also be normal vision in both eyes (defined as a 120° field) and no evidence of double vision (diplopia). Satisfactory uncorrected visual acuity is also a requirement.



All applicants **MUST** have an uncorrected visual acuity of at least 3/60 in each eye. This visual field requirement is the normal binocular field of vision. Your doctor or optician will use the standard Snellen test card to test your eyesight. If you only have eyesight in one eye you must declare this on the medical form (DLM1 TAXI).

A lower standard may apply to licence holders who held a taxi licence before 1 January 1983. For more information on the eyesight requirement or any other general medical condition, contact PTLTD at the address at the back of this manual.

Remember, if you require glasses or contact lenses to meet the eyesight requirement; always wear them whenever you are driving.

Medical examination and form DLM1 TAXI

Driving a taxi carries a serious responsibility towards all other road users so it's vital that you meet the detailed and specific Group 2 medical standards. Consult your doctor first if you have any doubts about your fitness. In any case, if this is your first application or you have an existing medical condition, a medical examination **MUST** be carried out by your doctor.

You'll be asked to have a DLM1 TAXI form completed if you are renewing your taxi drivers licence and you are aged 45 or over or have an existing medical condition. If you are aged 65 or over you **MUST** have this form completed by your doctor every year.

The DLM1 TAXI form should be completed by a doctor who knows you and is aware of your medical history. You should only complete the applicant consent and declaration and applicant details (section 9 on the form) when you are with your doctor at the time of the examination. Your doctor has to witness you doing this. The other sections on the form will be completed by your doctor.

The medical report will cover:

- vision
- nervous system
- diabetes mellitus
- psychiatric illness
- general health
- cardiac health
- medical practitioner details.

You should ensure you read sections C and D of the DLM1 TAXI form before you consult your doctor.

The medical examination is not available free under National Health Service (NHS) rules. Your doctor is entitled to charge the current fee for this medical examination, and you will be responsible for paying it.

The fee cannot be recovered from DVA, and it is not refundable if your application is refused. The completed form must be sent to Passenger Transport Licensing Division (PTLTD) immediately after the date your doctor signs it.

If you have had a DLM1 medical application form completed by your doctor for another vocational licence, provided it is dated within the last 4 months, the information on this can be accepted for taxi driver's application.

Change in health

It is your responsibility to notify PTLTD immediately if you have or have developed any serious illness or disability that could affect your ability to drive. You can notify PTLTD using the online system. Just log into your DVA account and using the licences tab click on the "View" of the taxi driver licence. On the Licence Details screen click the blue button "Update medical details". Complete the relevant details before submitting your application to PTLTD for processing.

Medical standards

You may be refused a taxi driver's licence if you suffer from any of the following:

- liability to epilepsy/seizure*
- diabetes requiring insulin (unless you held a licence on 1 April 1991 and we had knowledge of your condition)
- eyesight defects
- heart disorders
- persistent high blood pressure (see notes on form DLM1 TAXI)
- a stroke within the past year
- unconscious lapses within the last five years
- any disorder causing vertigo within the last year
- major brain surgery or severe head injury with serious continuing after-effects
- Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis or other chronic nervous disorders likely to affect the use of the limbs
- mental disorders
- alcohol/drug problems
- serious difficulty in communicating by telephone in an emergency.

*An applicant or licence-holder failing to meet the epilepsy, diabetes or eyesight regulations **MUST** by law be refused a licence.

Remember, a driver who remains seizure-free for at least 10 years (without anticonvulsant treatment within that time) may be eligible for a licence, but with restricted entitlement. Contact PTLTD for further information.

Taxi operator licence

General information about taxi operator licence

The Taxis Act 2008 make it a legal requirement for any person or organisation in Northern Ireland who is providing a taxi service to hold a Taxi Operator Licence (TOL) or be affiliated to a licensed taxi operator, subject to certain exemptions – (i.e. wedding and courtesy transport operators).

Anyone operating a taxi service, whilst not holding a Taxi Operator Licence will be liable to prosecution.

“Operating a taxi service” means, in the course of a business:

- to make provision for or in connection with, or otherwise to provide, a taxi to stand or ply for hire or reward or to carry passengers for hire or reward;
- to make any other provision for or in connection with, or otherwise to provide, a taxi to stand or ply for hire or reward or to carry passengers for hire or reward.

The purpose of operator licensing is to give the public confidence when they use a licensed taxi operator that they are dealing with a trustworthy and professional organisation with reliable drivers and safe vehicles.

Applying for an Operator licence

You should apply online 8 weeks in advance once you are satisfied that you can provide all the necessary documents to prove that you can operate a taxi licence business. The application fee is non-refundable. If your application for a TOL is successful, you will be required to complete your ‘Grant of Licence’ online and pay by card. The cost is based on the type of licence, the length of licence, and the number of vehicles in your business.

There are two types of operator’s licence:

- small operator – a maximum of two taxi vehicles available for use at any one time
- large operator – no restrictions on the number of taxi vehicles available for use at any one time.

Once an operator’s licence is granted, if you wish to change to either a small or large operator you must complete a new online application.

You have the option to apply for a 1, 3 or 5 year licence. Applications for licences should be made at least 8 weeks before a licence is required. Operating a business without a licence is an offence and starting operations in advance of getting a licence may prejudice the award of a licence in the future.

Further information is available at: [Apply for a taxi operator licence](#)

Right to Work in UK and Proof of Identity

From 1st December 2016 the Immigration Act 2016 amended the existing licensing regimes in the UK to seek to prevent illegal working in the taxi sector. For TOL applicants this means that they

must satisfy the Department that they have a right to work in the UK and must produce relevant documents to prove this. A list of all acceptable documents is available at:

[Evidence to support your right to work in the UK](#)

All first time applicants may be required to attend an interview in Coleraine and will be expected to produce all original identity documents to prove their right to work in the UK. Renewal applicants may be called for interview based on the information supplied at the time of application. PTLD will inform applicants where necessary.

Reporting new convictions

An operator must inform the Department, within 7 working days, if any person associated with the operator licence is convicted of any offence.

Action taken by the Department in respect of new convictions including fixed penalty notices being brought to its attention will depend on for example:

- the seriousness of the offence(s)
- whether the conviction was incurred in the course of the role as an operator
- any previous criminal history
- any earlier warnings
- promptness of advising the Department
- the relevance of the conviction(s) to an operator licence

When considering what action to take, the Department may consider revocation or suspension of an operator licence, a written warning or no further action. Incurring a criminal conviction would not automatically result in the revocation of a licence.

Once licensed, anyone providing a taxi service will be expected to demonstrate that they remain a fit and proper person to continue to trade as a taxi operator and they comply with other legal requirements connected with running their business. Failure to remain a fit and proper person may lead to the suspension or revocation of your operator licence and your taxi driver's licence.

A driver can only be affiliated to more than one taxi operator at any one time when the driver is employed in:

- Wedding transport
- Funeral transport and/or
- Education & Library Board contracted home to school transport

If the Department determines a licensed operator is no longer fit to be licensed or is not satisfied that the operator is providing a service which complies with taxi operator licensing, the Department can suspend, revoke or curtail the licence in the interest of the safety of the travelling public or take any other action which it considers appropriate.

Note: *These notes are intended as a source of advice and assistance. They are not a statement of the law and must not be relied upon as such. Although the Department will generally follow the procedures set out in these guidelines, every application and situation is treated on its own merits.*

For more information relating to the taxi operators licence click on the link below which will take you to the [Taxi Operator Handbook | Department for Infrastructure](#)

Professional standards

In order to drive a taxi or taxi bus safely you will need:

- a comprehensive knowledge of The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland, including the meaning of traffic signs and road markings (especially those that refer specifically to taxis);
- a thorough knowledge of the regulations that apply to your work;
- a high level of driving skill; and
- the ability to plan well ahead.

You must appreciate the differences between driving larger (taxi bus) and smaller (car) vehicles. Some of these aspects will be obvious from the moment you first start to drive a larger vehicle. Other features will only become apparent as you gain more experience.

As a professional driver, you have a responsibility to use your vehicle in a manner that is sympathetic to the environment. For more information, see section four, 'Environmental issues'.

Always apply the professional driving techniques described in this manual. You **MUST** never allow safety to be put at risk.

***Remember,** no risk is ever justified.*

Periodic training

All taxi licence holders, in order to retain their taxi licence, **MUST** complete periodic training.

The purpose of periodic training is to raise the standards of the taxi industry and to develop the current skills of taxi drivers. Benefits include improvements to road safety, a better understanding of the environmentally friendly driving techniques which aid a reduction in fuel consumption and exhaust emissions and to complement and enhance a taxi driver's professionalism.

Taxi drivers who obtained their taxi licence on or after 1st September 2015 **MUST** complete a **minimum of 35 hours** periodic training every five years in order to retain their taxi driver's licence. If you do not complete the training by the due date your taxi licence will not be renewed.

The training **MUST** be delivered by an approved training provider and the course **MUST** have been approved by DVA before it can be uploaded against each taxi driver's record.

If after five years, you have **not** completed the minimum 35 hours training your taxi licence will not be renewed.

These courses have a **MINIMUM** legal duration of **3 hours 30 minutes**. Any course which does not comply with the legislation cannot be attributed to periodic training and uploaded against a driver's record.

In addition, if a course exceeds the minimum period but falls short of the next acceptable time period of 7 hours, (i.e. any time between 3 hours 30 minutes and 7 hours) the extra time cannot be attributed towards an individual's periodic training record. Full details of the requirements for periodic training can be found via the Agency's website at [Taxi driver periodic training](#)

In order to fully comply with the periodic training requirement, one of the courses within each 35 hour period (or number of hours required at time of renewal) **MUST** be on 'Disability Awareness'. It **MUST** also be **at least 3 hours 30 minutes** in duration. A taxi licence will not be issued if you fail to include a course which is linked to this topic.

Periodic training applies to all taxi drivers regardless of when you obtained your taxi licence. Existing drivers who obtained their taxi licence prior to the introduction of the new regulations do not have to take the theory and practical tests unless their taxi licence has expired by two years or more. In such cases they will be required to take the taxi theory and practical tests.

Periodic training can be taken at any time within the five year period as one block of 35 hours or split into periods of **at least 3 hours 30 minutes**.

Further information on Periodic Training Centres and Training Courses, once they have been approved, are published on the Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training (JAUPT) website. For more information on the availability and type of taxi periodic training courses, go to the following web site or simply click on this link – www.jaupt.org.uk

Syllabus

The syllabus for taxi periodic training is divided up into three main headings:

Advanced training in rational driving based on safety regulations

Application of regulations

Health, road and environmental safety, service and logistics

These heading which follow similar lines to those for Driver CPC are further broken down into 14 sub-headings (see table). The reference numbers for taxi driver periodic training start at 4.1 to differentiate them from Driver CPC.

All approved training courses **MUST** fall into one or more of these headings and each course **MUST** last for a **MINIMUM** of **3 hours 30 minutes**.

	(Taxi Periodic Training)
4.1	Vehicle Systems (Transmission System) - Knowledge of the characteristics of the transmission system in order to make the best possible use of it
4.2	Vehicle Systems (Safety Controls) - Knowledge of the technical characteristics and operation of the safety controls in order to control the vehicle, minimise wear and tear and prevent disfunctioning
4.3	Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving - Ability to optimise fuel consumption: optimisation of fuel consumption by applying know how as regards points (4.1) & (4.2)
4.4	Customer Service / Disability Awareness - Ability to ensure passenger comfort and safety, be aware of the needs of your passengers including those with disabilities
4.5	Loading / Unloading - Ability to load the vehicle with due regard for safety rules and proper vehicle use
5.1	Legislation (including Taxi Regulations) - Knowledge of the social environment of road transport and the rules governing it
5.2	Regulations for Carriage of Passengers - Knowledge of the regulations governing the carriage of passengers
6.1	Health, Safety and Emergencies - Awareness of the risks of the road and of incidents at work including types of incidents specific to the taxi industry, road collision statistics and their causes
6.2	Prevention of Criminality and Trafficking - Ability to prevent criminality and trafficking in illegal immigrants
6.3	Personal Health and Wellbeing - Ability to prevent physical risks and enhance your health and wellbeing, including your physical fitness, posture while driving and manual handling
6.4	Physical / Mental Health and Wellbeing - Awareness of the importance of physical and mental ability and wellbeing including principles of healthy, balanced eating, effects of alcohol, drugs or any other substance likely to affect behaviour, symptoms, causes, effects of fatigue and stress, fundamental role of the basic work/rest cycle
6.5	First Aid - Ability to assess emergency situations including assessment of the situation, avoiding complications of an incident, summoning assistance, assisting casualties and giving first aid, reaction in the event of fire, evacuation of passengers, ensuring the safety of all passengers, reaction in the event of aggression; basic principles for the drafting of an incident report

6.6	Professional Driver and Company Issues - Ability to adopt behaviour to help enhance the image of the company
6.7	Economic Environment for the Carriage of Passengers - Knowledge of economic environment of the carriage of passengers by road

Responsibility

You must show responsibility towards all other road users, as well as to your passengers. If you act hastily you risk endangering others.

- Drive properly, and your passengers will arrive safely at their destination.
- Drive carelessly or dangerously, and you risk the safety of your passengers and other road users.

When a taxi is involved in a collision it is likely that it will be carrying passengers at the time and therefore there is greater potential for more people to be injured. As a professional driver you have a part to play in making sure road traffic incidents do not happen.

Human error is the main cause of most collisions on the road. High-quality training should help you to avoid making such errors and reduce your risk of being involved in road traffic incidents.

Sometimes incidents are caused by the mechanical failure of vehicle components. The way you drive can affect the life of these components. Drivers who demonstrate a high degree of expertise reduce the risk of incidents happening. So, be responsible for driving your vehicle safely and sensibly at all times.

Mobile phones and radio communication equipment

It is illegal to operate a hand-held mobile phone or similar device while driving. No driver should use a mobile communication device while in control of a moving vehicle. Never use a hand-held microphone or similar device while driving. You should always find a safe and convenient place to stop before using such equipment.

If your taxi is fitted with a communications radio or telephone, you should only use it while driving if it is fitted with a hands-free microphone. However, even using hands-free equipment is likely to distract your attention from the road. It is far safer not to use any such equipment or to try to tune the radio while driving.



Many companies consider the wearing of headphones or earpieces (including portable media players such as iPods) while driving to be a disciplinary offence.

Your professionalism is important – being seen using a mobile phone or other similar device while driving undermines the taxi company's image, and could also make your passengers feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Most operators will encourage drivers to keep a mobile on silent –

messages or missed calls should be checked when you are stopped in an appropriate place (not while in a queue of traffic or stopped at traffic lights).

You should be aware that if you do use a mobile phone while driving and you are caught by the police, you will be prosecuted and this could ultimately impact on your taxi licence.

Even using a hands-free system can divert your attention from the road. It is far safer not to use any such equipment until you've found a safe place to stop. If you have to use one in a genuine emergency, 'keep it short and simple' (KISS).

Any activity that reduces concentration while driving is dangerous. Be sensible, be professional and only listen to messages at safe and appropriate stops during your shift.

Attitude

No matter how good, how fast, how expensive or how efficient your vehicle is, it is you, **the driver**, who determines whether it is a safe means of transport. Driver skill and driver attitude are two key areas that determine your approach behind the wheel.

Having the right attitude while driving is one of the hardest things to teach a new driver and more importantly, get them to use. As a professional driver your attitude to other road users should set a good example for all to follow. A great deal of pleasure and enjoyment can be gained from demonstrating the correct skills and attitude. Apart from the reward of a nod or a smile of appreciation, you will get the added satisfaction of knowing you are making the roads much safer.

The qualities that make someone a good driver include:

- responsibility;
- concentration;
- anticipation;
- patience; and
- confidence.

The fact that you as a professional driver are on the road for longer periods of time means that you are in the public eye longer and therefore need to maintain the skills that go to make up the correct attitude, such as:

- Courtesy;
- Patience;
- Tolerance;
- Understanding; and
- Consideration.

The right attitude and behaviour are the key factors to being a good driver. Being a good driver does not mean you are a perfect driver; it is doubtful such a thing exists. Nevertheless you should strive at all times to reflect all the factors that set you as a professional driver above the rest.

Retaliation

Everyone makes mistakes or misjudgements at times, which may cause others to take avoiding action. How you react is important, in terms of the safe control of your vehicle and the safety and wellbeing of your passengers. In areas where there are side roads or parked vehicles obstructing your view, be particularly alert. If something happens that means you have to stop quickly, be tolerant, remain calm, try not to react and learn from the experience. You must resist the temptation to get upset or retaliate in order to 'teach someone a lesson'.

While your brain is processing strong emotions like anger and frustration, your attention can be taken away from what you are doing. As a result, concentration, anticipation and observation skills are likely to be much reduced. This could increase your likelihood of being involved in a road traffic incident. If appropriate, consider stopping and taking a short break.

Always drive:

- courteously;
- with anticipation;
- calmly, allowing for other road users' mistakes; and
- in full control of your vehicle.

You should not act aggressively as this could adversely affect the comfort and safety of your passengers, your professional standing and that of your company, and has the potential to lead to a loss of vehicle control.

Use of the horn

The horn on some vehicles can be quite powerful, horns and their use should be strictly confined to the guidance set out in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland, which states – it should only be used 'while your vehicle is moving and you need to warn other road users of your presence. Never use the horn aggressively. You **MUST NOT** use your horn:

- while stationary on the road; and
- while driving in a built up area between the hours of 11.30 pm and 7.00 am;

except when another road user poses a danger.'

Remember, your horn should **NOT** be used to indicate your arrival for a fare.

Use of headlights

There is only one official use of flashing headlights described in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland and that is: **to let other road users know that you are there.**

- Never repeatedly flash the headlights while driving directly behind another vehicle.
- To avoid dazzle, do not put headlights on full beam when behind another vehicle.
- Do not switch on auxiliary lights (such as front and rear fog lights) fitted to your vehicle unless weather conditions require them, and remember to switch them off when the conditions improve.

Misleading signals

Neither the horn nor the headlights should be used to rebuke or to intimidate another road user. By using flashing headlights or indicators, you may be misleading other road users. This in turn could lead to an incident.

Hazard warning lights

These lights can be used to warn others if:

- you are causing a temporary obstruction to traffic;
- you've broken down; or
- you become aware of an obstruction ahead when driving on a motorway.

Never use your hazard warning lights as an excuse to park illegally.

Speed

You can never justify driving too fast just because you have to reach a given location by a specific time. Do not be tempted to drive faster when you've fallen behind in your schedule and are trying to make up time. If an incident happens and you injure someone there is no possible defence for your actions.

Passenger care

Caring for your passengers is an important part of taxi driving. As the driver, you are responsible for the comfort and safety of your passengers as they get into and out of your vehicle as well as during the journey.

Your job is to convey your passengers to their destination:

- safely;
- comfortably;
- efficiently; and
- in a courteous manner.

It includes the care of your passengers as you pick them up and drop them off at their destination in a safe and convenient place.

Remember, you are the representative of your taxi company and how well you perform your role reflects on them.

Be aware of distractions from your passengers when you are driving.

- Your passengers may be talking among themselves, so make sure you are not distracted by their discussions.

- Your passengers may try to engage you in conversation, especially if they are not familiar with the area and are trying to obtain local information – be polite, but make sure that you are not distracted and that you can concentrate on your driving at all times.

Ask yourself the following:

- Do your passengers feel safe and comfortable during the journey? Are they getting a smooth ride? If they are not, you may need to adjust your driving style to enable them to have a pleasant journey; and
- Do they need assistance with getting in or out of your vehicle? Be aware of passengers with special needs, particularly when they are getting into or out of the vehicle.

To help your passengers, you should:

- when stationary, look directly at them when you speak to them; it can help you to communicate effectively; and
- make sure they are comfortably seated and their seat belt is fitted before you move away.

In the event of a breakdown, show consideration towards your passengers' safety and the completion of their journey. If possible arrange onward transportation through your depot.

Passenger seat belts

Passengers **MUST** wear seat belts where they are fitted.

- Adult passengers and children aged 14 and over are responsible for their own actions.
- You are responsible for ensuring that children under 14 years of age wear their seat belts.

It is unreasonable to expect the right child seat or booster to be available in a taxi unless a parent or carer has brought it with them. There is therefore a qualified exception, if child restraints are not available in a licensed taxi:

- a child under three years old may travel unrestrained but in the rear only – this is the only exemption for a child under three years old; and
- a child aged three years and above **MUST** use an adult belt in the rear seat only.

Any child up to 135 cm (approx 4 feet 5 inches) in a front seat of any vehicle **MUST** use the seat belts or child restraints available.

Regardless of the size or age of a passenger you must ensure they are correctly seated and their seat belt is fitted **before** moving off.

Dealing with lost property

While carrying passengers in your vehicle it is their responsibility to look after their personal possessions or property. However, if you find any property in your vehicle after the passenger has left, you should hand it in to the nearest police station as soon as possible.

Taxi operators are required to maintain a record of all lost property that is found in their taxis.



Customer care

Make sure you know how many seats your vehicle is licensed for and **DO NOT** exceed that number under any circumstances as you may be putting both your passengers and your safety at risk. If you are faced with a situation where you have more passengers than you are legally licensed to carry, you should offer your passengers the option of waiting for an alternative vehicle that can carry everyone or arrange to leave a passenger or passengers behind until alternative transport can be arranged. You cannot refuse to take at least some of the passengers as you have an obligation to complete the hire.

The number of seats your taxi is licensed for can be found on the taxi plates or labels issued at the time of licensing and should be attached to the vehicle.

Eliminate gaps from the kerb. Many passengers find it difficult to board or get out of a taxi if it pulls up too far away from the kerb. So where possible always pull up within a reasonable distance from the kerb.

When stationary, make eye contact and listen to each passenger. Looking directly at them when you speak is important, especially if they have hearing difficulties and need to lip-read.

Give passengers time to get seated and fit their seat belts before you move off. A few extra seconds at this point will add very little time to your journey but demonstrates good customer care.

Always make sure the doors are closed and secure before moving off. If your taxi (limo or taxi bus) has an open platform, you **MUST NOT** allow passengers to stand on the platform while the vehicle is moving. Anyone doing so would be at risk, especially if the driver has to brake suddenly or turn at a sharp corner.

Good customer care is important for maintaining the business. For example if you are delayed in any way it is important to try and make arrangements to let the customer know. They will appreciate being kept fully informed which may lessen their dissatisfaction on your arrival.

Drivers are the first point of contact with passengers. If you arrive late make sure that one of the first things you do is apologise. This may be the difference between receiving and not receiving a complaint.

Taxi operators are required to keep at each operating centre specified on their operator licence a detailed record containing particulars of any complaints made in respect of any taxi booking. The record also needs to hold details of any investigation that took place and any subsequent act that was taken.

Ultimately, and with a good standard of customer care always in mind, you should:

- acknowledge customers promptly and politely, and speak to them in a way that promotes confidence in your company;
- give customers information that's within your own limits of knowledge or authority;
- refer customers to other appropriate people if you do not have the knowledge to help them, or if their need goes beyond your responsibilities;
- follow approved procedures and policies for promoting good customer service;
- record, accurately and completely, (if required) information from customers that may affect the company; and
- identify and report, to the appropriate person, possible difficulties that could affect customers/passengers.

You will, no doubt, have to make pickups and drop offs at specific times. This can exert pressure on you to rush. Resist the temptation to hurry and do not become impatient. It is important that you adhere to the rules of the road including speed limits, and do not exceed the speed limits or take risks that would impact on others. It is not always possible to avoid running late. You should never compromise safety in order to adhere to a specific schedule or appointment time.

Your job is to deliver your passengers to their destinations safely, on time, efficiently and courteously. Caring for your passengers is as important a part of taxi driving as the individual driving skills. As the driver, you are responsible for your passengers.

Remember, *you are the representative of the company. How well you perform this role is a measure of your professionalism.*

Many companies have rules governing standards of behaviour required, of both you and your passengers. These are in addition to the more general statutory laws that drivers of taxis must obey. Make sure that you know the rules and enforce them when necessary.

Payment of fares

If a passenger refuses to pay their fare, you should not get into a situation where aggression or violence is allowed to develop. Where possible take the individual's name and address, note the reasons why they are refusing to make payment and pass this information onto your depot manager so he can take the necessary steps to address the issue. A passenger has a legal obligation to pay a fare providing no extenuating circumstances led to an increase in that fare which were not of their making.

Taxis taking children to school

Many taxi companies are responsible for transporting children to and from school during term time. A great deal of responsibility is placed on the driver to ensure that the child or children are properly restrained and do not interfere with or distract you while driving.

Examples of good practice include the following:

- consider the safety of yourself and other road users: the safety of school children and other members of the public must be your priority;
- avoid all physical contact with school children under any circumstances other than
 - genuine self-defence
 - a medical emergency
 - to prevent a serious offence or threat to safety;
- school children may not, in words or actions, be told to get out of the taxi or be refused transport;
- racist or other offensive or abusive language won't be tolerated or permitted from any taxi driver;
- do not make any threats; and
- drivers should not react to verbal abuse.

If there is a risk of a disruptive young person or young people causing damage to your vehicle or endangering the safety of all concerned, you should take the following steps:

- bring the taxi to a halt;
- ask them to calm down; and
- if the disruptive behaviour continues, call for help.

It is essential that you remain calm during any situation and avoid doing or saying anything that implies you are asking them to leave the vehicle. Act in a confident manner and keep your behaviour in proportion to the provocation. You should:

- think about your approach;
- be aware of warning signs and think ahead;
- show that you are willing to listen;
- avoid body language that could inflame the situation, such as pointing of fingers; and
- inform the school and your company of any persistent problems.

It has been found that using a dedicated driver for a particular school run enables a long-term relationship to develop between the driver and passengers. This helps reduce the need for young people to test the boundaries of what's acceptable.

Professional service

Courtesy and consideration are the hallmarks of a professional driver. You, your company and your profession will be on display every time you drive. Therefore, you should show a good example of skill, courtesy and tolerance. Be a credit to yourself, your company and your profession, and aim for the highest standards.

Commercial pressure

There is a lot of competition among taxi operators for passengers. Such competition helps to ensure that high-quality services are available. However, competition also means that operators need to have tight cost controls to ensure efficient and effective use of their resources. But cutting corners on safety is not acceptable and could be a recipe for disaster.

Remember, safety must be your priority:

- you must not drive a vehicle with a serious defect (check it and repair immediately);
- if you are delayed, do your best to make up time, but do not speed or take risks; and
- obstructing or racing another operator's vehicle is inexcusable.

Carriage of passengers with special needs

It is important that all taxi drivers recognise, understand and are responsive to the needs of people with disabilities. Attitudes can have a massive effect on the perception that a person with a disability has of public transport and a positive experience can make all the difference.

As a professional driver you should always be there to give assistance when it is needed, especially when your passenger has special needs. Whatever vehicle you drive, be ready to give assistance when an older passenger, or one who has limited mobility, is getting into or out of your vehicle.

Some taxis are fitted with special equipment to allow easy access for those who may otherwise find it difficult. If you have this equipment, make full use of it to improve your passenger's comfort. Special fittings can include:

- an intermediate step;
- a swivel seat; and
- a ramp and wheelchair fittings.

Intermediate step - It can be difficult for people with limited mobility to get into or out of some vehicles. This can be because of the position of the seats and the greater distance between the floor of the vehicle and the street or pavement.

Assess your passenger's needs, and if you think it might help, offer to provide the additional step for them as they get into or out of the taxi. Use the following procedure:

- if the step is not a permanent fixture, remove the step/s from the stowage compartment;
- ensure the door is fully open and secured;
- fit the step and ensure it is securely fixed before your passenger steps onto it; and
- once they are safely in, close the door and stow the step.

Swivel seat - A person with limited mobility might also find the swivel seat helpful. Often this will need to be used in conjunction with the intermediate step. As they get into your vehicle, you should:

- ensure the door is fully opened and secured;
- pull down the seat and swing it outwards until it is locked in position;

- help the person onto the seat (if necessary);
- swivel the seat back into the travelling position until it is locked in position; and
- offer to help secure the seat belt before closing the door.

Reverse the procedure once the journey is completed.

Ramp and wheelchair fittings - If you have the facility to carry wheelchairs you must ensure that you are able to correctly load and secure the wheelchair so that the passenger can be transported safely. A separate restraint for both the wheelchair and the passenger should be used.

Ramps or lifts should be lowered on request or manual ramps provided, and you must ensure that wheelchair users are correctly positioned within the wheelchair space.

Passengers in wheelchairs usually sit with their back to the direction of travel, and the chair brakes must also be applied.

To load the wheelchair user you should:

- prepare for your passenger. Fit the wheelchair restraint and make space available for the wheelchair. Ensure the door is fully opened and secured. Pull out the ramp and (if necessary) add an extension;
- push the wheelchair user into the vehicle, preferably using the handles and stow the ramp. If you need to let go of the wheelchair to stow the ramp, make sure you apply the wheelchair brakes;
- position the wheelchair so that it can be secured using the equipment provided by the vehicle manufacturer;
- ensure that all straps and belts that secure the wheelchair and its user are fastened according to the manufacturer's instructions; and
- close the door.

To unload the wheelchair at the end of the journey, you should:

- open the door fully and secure it;
- release the restraining straps and belts;
- pull out the ramp and fit the extension if it is needed. If you need to move the wheelchair to do this, make sure you apply the brakes before letting go of the wheelchair;
- wheel out the wheelchair. Walk backwards for the safety of your passenger and so that you can retain full control;
- remove the ramp and stow any equipment in the appropriate place; and
- close the door.

Any straps and/or securing devices that connect to the wheelchair, to prevent its movement while in transit, should be secured by you. If, however, the passenger prefers to do this themselves, then you must also inspect the fixings to make sure they are secured safely.

Occasionally, machinery such as boarding devices will break down, despite best efforts to service it. You won't have failed in your statutory duties if the boarding device breaks down and there is

no other means of assisting the passenger. In circumstances such as this you can refuse to carry a wheelchair passenger.

You can also refuse to carry out any particular duty, if it is considered unreasonable to do so, on the grounds that it might risk the health and safety of the person with a disability, other passengers, yourself or the security of your vehicle.

Disability Discrimination

From 25 January 2010 there have been new duties placed on those transport providers who operate trains, buses, coaches, taxis, rental vehicles and breakdown recovery vehicles.

The regulations (The Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009) make it unlawful for transport providers to treat disabled people less favourably than those without a disability. They require transport providers to make reasonable adjustments to their policies, procedures and practices to ensure that disabled people do not find it impossible or unreasonably difficult to access their services. The extent to which the duties apply depends on the type of vehicle used.

It is illegal for taxi operators to:

- discriminate against people with disabilities; for example, by refusing to allow someone to board a vehicle simply because they have special needs;
- treat people with disabilities less favourably; for example, by charging them more for a service; and
- fail to make a reasonable adjustment to the way they provide that service; for example, by ensuring that any ramp or lift is in working order.

What can you do to assist?

- Ensure that all facilities such as lifts, ramps, etc are present and in working order before going on duty;
- pull up as close to the kerb as possible – this will assist all passengers; and
- avoid sudden braking and acceleration.

When dealing with passengers who have disabilities remember:

- that some passengers won't be able to see or hear your vehicle approaching – be on the lookout for them;
- that people with disabilities are not all the same, so do not make assumptions or generalisations;
- to give less mobile passengers time to get seated and fit their seat belt before moving off; and
- to avoid being patronising.

Some passengers with special needs can be identified very obviously. A person carrying a white stick, a long white cane or accompanied by a guide dog is visually impaired. If the stick has a red ring or red and white checks painted on it, or the dog has a red and white harness, they also have impaired hearing.

It is also easy to see that someone with crutches, a walking frame or any other aid to movement has a disability – perhaps only temporarily. Showing a little consideration goes a long way with most people – whether they have special needs or not.

Try to imagine what assistance you would like if you were in the position of a person with mobility difficulties. Be patient and considerate. Always respect their wishes: disabled people want to retain their independence. If someone tells you they can manage – let them. But be prepared to offer help if they appear to need it, or ask for it. You will have your own problems to cope with – such as busy traffic conditions, inconsiderate behaviour by other road users – but you should do your best to offer courtesy and a smooth ride to those with special needs.

Also, think about the everyday problems faced by people trying to manage with children, pushchairs or shopping trolleys. Allow time for pushchairs to be stowed away securely and in the correct place. This will prevent them being thrown forward in the event of an incident.

Blind and partially sighted people

There are around 360,000 people registered as blind or partially sighted in the UK. Only a small proportion are totally blind, but you may not be able to tell by their appearance. Visually impaired people may depend on their local taxi service for mobility.

People who are deaf , have hearing loss or tinnitus

It is common courtesy to look at people when you speak to them. Just doing that will allow most people who are deaf have hearing loss or tinnitus to understand you. Good communication also saves time.

Physical disabilities

People with arthritis, stiff joints, artificial limbs or conditions such as multiple sclerosis will often put up with extra pain (and the impatience of others) rather than ask for extra consideration. For them, courtesy and a smooth ride are important.

Lifts and ramps

Make sure that you are thoroughly trained in the safe use of wheelchair lifts, ramps and securing devices. If you drive a vehicle fitted with this equipment, never let untrained people operate it. Watch out for the safety of others at all times.

Some taxis are equipped with hydraulic systems that lower and raise the ramp for wheelchair users. These improve access for disabled and older passengers and it is essential that you are thoroughly trained in the use of such devices and are aware of the principles of safe operation.

Learning disabilities

Passengers with learning disabilities may appear fit and active, but they may also find taxi travel a special problem and a challenge. It may be hard for them to understand other people or to make themselves understood. Also, any unexpected problems can sometimes produce a sense of panic.

Those with learning disabilities are increasingly being encouraged to go out to work, to go shopping or visit friends. With patience and understanding you can contribute towards their confidence and sense of achievement.

Manual handling techniques

As a taxi driver you may be called upon to load various items of luggage which could be various shapes and sizes and of differing weights.

More than a third of all injuries reported each year which lasted for more than 3 days are caused by poor manual handling techniques – the transporting or supporting of loads by hand or by bodily force. This impacts on your company's ability to deliver an effective service and a loss of income for both you and your employer.

To reduce the risk of an injury of this nature, you should ensure that you adopt the correct lifting techniques which are set out in the following sections.

Good techniques for lifting

Here are some practical tips to remember when lifting a load:

Think before lifting/handling - Plan the lift. Can you use handling aids? Where are you going to place the load? Will you need any help with the load? Remove any obstruction beforehand.

Keep the load close to your waist - Keep the load close to your body for as long as possible while lifting. Keep the heaviest side of the load next to your body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards your body before attempting to lift it.

Adopt a stable position - Your feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground). Be prepared to move your feet during the lift to maintain stability. Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear, which may make this difficult.

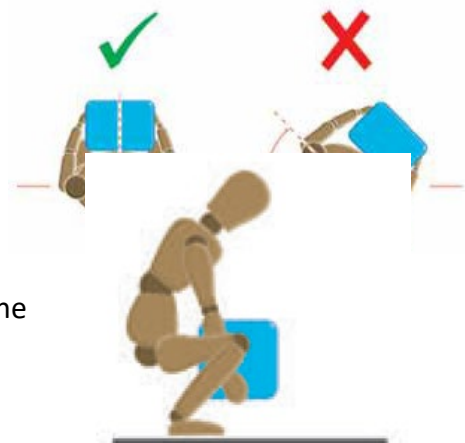


Get a good hold - Where possible, hug the load closely to your body. This may be better than gripping it tightly with hands only.

Start in a good posture - At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).

Avoid twisting or leaning sideways, especially while your back is bent - Keep your shoulders level and facing in the same direction as your hips. Turning by moving your feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.

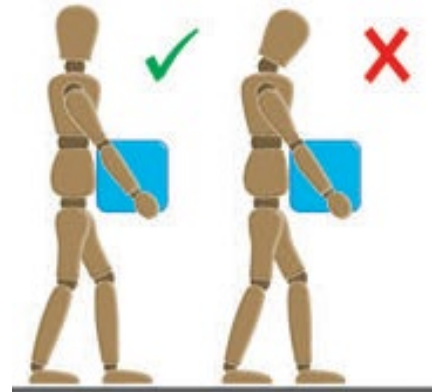
Keep your head up when handling - Look ahead, not down at the load, once you are holding it securely.



Move smoothly - Do not jerk or snatch the load as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury.

Do not lift or handle more than you can easily manage - There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. If in doubt, seek advice or get help.

Put down, then adjust - If precise positioning of the load is necessary, put it down first, then slide it into the desired position. Avoid lifting a heavy load with a straight back and slightly bent knees. This can lead to injury and result in time off and a loss of earnings.



Ergonomic considerations

How comfortable you are when driving is as important as manual handling. Remember that you may be spending considerable time in the same restricted position – what's comfortable for five minutes may feel very different after 90 minutes. You should check for, and make, any adjustments necessary before you start any journey, especially if you are to drive an unfamiliar vehicle for the first time. Never adjust your seat while the vehicle is moving.

Before starting the vehicle, you should carefully check the driver's seat to ensure that:

- the seat feels comfortable for you and is locked in position;
- the angle of the seat back provides suitable support for good posture;
- the head restraint is in the correct position for your safety and comfort;
- you can reach all the controls without straining or overreaching in any way;
- you can see the road ahead clearly – the seat or steering wheel may also be adjustable for height or angle;
- the mirrors are correctly adjusted to meet your particular requirements; and
- the seat belt is comfortable and in the right position across your body.

Diet and driving ability

The medical standards that apply to taxi drivers are higher than for car drivers. Many common conditions in middle age, such as heart disease and diabetes, are linked to poor eating habits. A sensible approach to food, fluid and caffeine intake can benefit your driving performance and safety in the short term and improve your health in the longer term. This will reduce the risk of an early end to your time working as a driver, either from death or disability, or from withdrawal of your driving licence on medical grounds.

Long-term health effects from bad eating habits

One of the key factors for ensuring long-term general good health is a well-balanced diet. A pattern of poor eating habits will increase your risk of developing serious long-term health problems in middle age, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease. These diseases will increase your risk of sudden incapacity at the wheel, as well as making you more likely to develop serious illness at other times and increase your probability of an early death.

Other factors such as smoking and lack of exercise also increase these risks. The development of these serious diseases takes many years and your dietary habits in earlier years will contribute to your risk of disease when you are between 40 and 70 years of age.

The following are the main ways in which your diet can contribute to future serious ill-health.

- **Excessive calorie intake from any source, but commonly from sugars and fat** - This can lead to obesity; not only does this impair your physical performance but it is also linked to an increased risk of late-onset diabetes, raised blood pressure and heart disease.
- **Intake of saturated fats** - These are usually the hard fats in butter and lard rather than in liquids such as sunflower and olive oil. Packaged foods will normally give information on the levels present. High levels of intake are associated with an increased risk of arterial disease, leading to a heart attack or stroke.
- **Salt** - While your body needs salt in small amounts, most western diets contain far more than is essential and this can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

It is not always easy to detect the presence of these undesirable components in food. Savoury pies may be very high in both salt and saturated fat but these are hidden by the taste and texture of the pie. Cakes, while tasting sweet, also contain large amounts of fat, which is not apparent.

Soft drinks, when they do not use non-sugar sweeteners, often contain very large amounts of sugar which is hidden by the acidity of other ingredients. Labelling allows you to identify ingredients and to make choices that will help you avoid those which are undesirable.

Proteins are essential components of diet but are not needed in vast quantities by adults, although their presence makes for slow digestion and prolonged satisfaction after eating. However, care is needed to ensure that you do not eat excessive amounts of foods such as eggs and cheese.

Protein-based foods should be included as part of a healthy eating plan. However, eating them in large quantities can add extra unnecessary fat or salt to your diet, which can contribute to an increase in cholesterol levels. Recommended protein portion sizes vary according to sources, but a general approximation of a single portion would be any one of the following:

- 4 oz (100 g) meat, fish or poultry;
- approximately 1 oz (30 g) of hard cheese or nuts; and
- two whole eggs.

Many traditional ways of serving proteins, such as frying, battering and cooking in pies and puddings can add unnecessary calories. Any fats added should be unsaturated ones, such as sunflower and olive oils or products such as spreads manufactured from them.

Fibre in fruit, vegetables and unrefined cereals also prolongs post-meal satisfaction and may to an extent be protective against several forms of ill-health. There is a recommendation that five portions of fruit/vegetables/salad should be eaten each day. Eating five portions a day will help towards a healthy balanced diet and contribute to your long-term health.

Diet and performance while driving

Concentration, and therefore safe driving, will be improved by regular, light, balanced meals, timed to fit into rest breaks rather than continuous snacking while on the move. Regular meals are preferable to snacks when trying to control diet as, with the exception of fruit, most snack foods are high in sugar, fat or salt.

Meals based around protein-containing foods (such as meat, fish, eggs, cheese, peas or beans) and slowly digested calories (such as bread, rice, pasta and vegetables) will keep you satisfied and prevent hunger for longer than those high in sugar which give an immediate energy boost.

When driving through the night or on late evening or early-morning shifts you need to consider the following points:

- an additional meal is desirable at the start and in the middle of the period of work;
- at the start of night work, after a period when night-time sleep would be customary, digestion is likely to be less efficient and you may need to adjust the amount and type of food eaten to take account of any feelings of discomfort;
- if it is not possible to find a meal other than one containing a high fat content or quick-release calories, it may be better to prepare your own food in advance; and
- take care to balance your eating patterns for the rest of the day to avoid an excessive intake of calories.

Fluid intake

Your fluid requirements will depend, in part, on the temperature of your cab and the physical demands of your job during loading and unloading. You should carry water in case of delays on the journey, especially in summer.

Water is the ideal drink; it quenches thirst for longer than drinks such as tea and coffee, which increase urine production. The only advantage of bottled waters over tap water in developed countries is their convenience. A large amount of hidden sugar and hence calories can be consumed in bottled and canned drinks that are not marked as low in calories or sugar.

The amount of caffeine in purchased hot drinks is very variable. Caffeine from coffee, and to a lesser extent from tea, does not reduce sleepiness; it masks sleepiness and can only prolong alertness for an hour or so, usually with a rebound increase in tiredness and sleepiness afterwards. Tea and coffee without sugar provide fluid and caffeine with few calories, although large amounts of caffeine can cause jitteriness and anxiety.

Branded caffeine-containing soft drinks provide a more reliable source, but usually also contain a lot of sugar, so try to go for sugar-free or artificially sweetened options. Caffeine-rich drinks should only be considered as a short-term emergency countermeasure rather than as a way to prolong the amount of time at the wheel.

In addition to what's already mentioned on alcohol and driving elsewhere, do not drink alcohol when driving as it will seriously affect your ability to drive by decreasing your judgement, as well as being illegal.

Remember, if you are feeling sleepy, stop driving and sleep; don't rely on caffeine.

Section two

YOUR VEHICLE

This section covers

- Forces at work
- Maintaining control
- Vehicle sympathy
- Seat belts
- Types of taxi
- Vehicle maintenance

Forces at work

You should understand something of the various forces that act on a vehicle and its passengers. The effects of these forces can seriously undermine your control, so it is important to be aware of them and to act appropriately.

A vehicle travelling in a straight line under gentle acceleration is relatively stable.

Forces are applied to a vehicle when it:

- accelerates;
- brakes; or
- changes direction.

Depending on how violent or sudden the changes are, the greater the forces will be. Sudden, excessive or badly timed steering, braking and acceleration will introduce forces that can result in a loss of stability and control particularly if your vehicle is laden with passengers and their luggage.

Steering should always be:

- planned;
- smooth;
- controlled; and
- accurate.

Braking should always be:

- progressive;
- correctly timed;
- smooth; and
- sensitive.

Acceleration should always be:

- progressive;
- used to best economic advantage;
- well planned; and
- considerate.

Most of the forces described here act on a vehicle in motion. If you disregard them you will probably lose control, so allow for them in your driving.

Driving new or unfamiliar vehicles

Before driving any vehicle, you should be familiar with all its controls and operating systems. This is especially important if it is:

- a new vehicle;
- a type which you haven't driven before; and/or
- one with which you are not familiar.

Friction

The resistance between two surfaces rubbing together is called friction. A tyre's grip on a road surface depends on friction, and is essential when:

- moving away/accelerating;
- turning/changing direction; and/or
- braking/slowing down.

The amount of grip will depend on:

- the weight of the vehicle;
- the vehicle's speed;
- the condition of the tyre tread;
- the tyre pressure;
- the type and condition of the road surface;
 - loose
 - smooth
 - anti-skid
- the weather conditions;
- any other material present on the road;
 - mud
 - wet leaves
 - diesel spillage
 - other slippery spillages
 - inset metal rails
- whether the vehicle is braking or steering sharply; and/or
- the condition of steering and suspension components.

Sudden acceleration or braking can lead to loss of grip between the tyre tread and the road surface. Under these conditions the vehicle may:

- lose traction (wheel spin);
- break away on a turn (skid);
- not stop safely (skid); or
- overturn.

The same will happen when changing into a lower gear if you are travelling too fast or if the clutch is suddenly released, because the braking effect will only be applied to the driven wheels.

Gravity

When a vehicle is stationary on level ground the only force acting upon it is the downward pull of gravity (ignoring wind forces, etc). On an uphill gradient the effects of gravity particularly if you are carrying passengers will be much greater so that:

- more engine power is needed to move the vehicle forward and upward; and
- less braking effort is needed and the vehicle will stop in a shorter distance.

On a downhill gradient the effects of gravity will tend to:

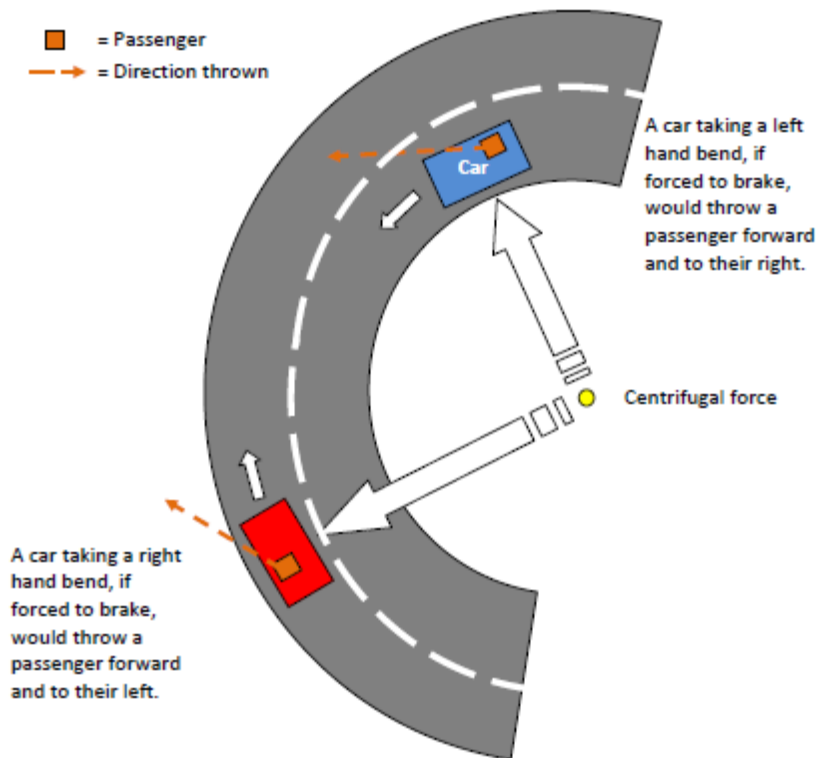
- make the vehicle's speed increase relative to its weight;
- require more braking effort to slow down or stop the vehicle; and
- increase stopping distances.

The vehicle's centre of gravity is the point around which all of its weight is balanced. But violent steering, acceleration or braking shifts the centre of gravity and places excessive forces on the vehicle's tyres and suspension, and on the passengers. Heavy braking while cornering can bring components very close to their design limits and will be uncomfortable for passengers. Catching a kerb or raised drain cover with a tyre under such conditions could result in a blow-out and the vehicle going out of control or even overturning.

Cornering force

When a vehicle takes a curved path at a bend the forces acting upon it tend to cause it to continue on the original, straight course. This is known as cornering force. If a vehicle takes a bend too fast, cornering force will cause the passengers to be thrown towards the outside of the bend.

Depending on your direction of travel, on a right hand bend you will be thrown forwards and to the left and on a left hand bend, forwards and to the right – The vehicle may even skid, especially if the road surface is at all slippery. Do not take a bend too fast; this could cause passenger discomfort and may cause a loss of control.



Inertia and momentum

It requires force to begin to move a vehicle from rest, even on a flat road, but it takes relatively little power to keep it rolling at a constant speed. Resistance to change in a vehicle's state of motion is called inertia, and the force that keeps the vehicle rolling is called momentum.

Modern vehicles have engines with a high power output to:

- give good acceleration; and
- overcome inertia.

Passengers are also affected by these forces. In order to avoid harsh braking, look and plan well ahead so that you can take early action. Sudden braking will cause passengers to be thrown forward towards the front of the vehicle. Equally, sudden acceleration can cause passengers to be thrown backwards towards the rear of the vehicle. Both situations are dangerous and could cause injury. Therefore, all acceleration and braking should be smooth and controlled and as progressive as possible. The main advantages of progressive braking and acceleration are improved passenger comfort and safety, lower fuel consumption and reduced tyre wear resulting in a significant reduction in running costs.

Kinetic energy

The energy that's stored up in the vehicle and its passengers when travelling is known as kinetic energy. This is converted into heat at the brake pads and discs when braking occurs. Continuous use of the brakes results in them becoming over heated and losing their effectiveness (especially on long downhill gradients). This effect is known as 'brake fade'. More effort is needed to stop a

fully laden vehicle than an unladen one travelling at a similar speed. It is important, therefore, to avoid harsh braking. Plan ahead and take early action.

Maintaining control

You can't alter the severity of a bend or change the weight of the vehicle and its passengers. Similarly, you can't alter the design and performance characteristics of your vehicle and its components. But you do have control over the speed of your vehicle and hence the forces acting upon it. If you ask too much of your tyres by turning and braking at the same time, you will lose some of the available power and grip. When the tyres slide or lift you will no longer be in full control of the vehicle. To keep control you should ensure that all braking is:

- controlled;
- in good time; and
- made when travelling in a straight line, wherever possible.

Reduce speed in good time by braking, if necessary, before negotiating:

- bends;
- roundabouts; and/or
- corners.

Avoid braking and turning at the same time, unless manoeuvring at low speed. Reduce your speed first and look well ahead to assess the situation and plan what you need to do.

When making short stops, particularly on hills, always apply the parking brake when the vehicle comes to a standstill. If your vehicle has automatic transmission, you should apply the footbrake before you engage 'D'. This will stop the vehicle creeping forward or rolling back, which could be dangerous, especially if there are other road users close behind, or pedestrians in the area.

Vehicle sympathy

There are many different types of vehicles and each type will require specific handling. Adapt your driving to suit the vehicle and develop what's known as 'vehicle sympathy'.

For example, drivers need to take corners slowly in order to keep their passengers comfortable. Yet it is difficult to define what 'slowly' means for all vehicles on all occasions. A safe, comfortable speed will depend on the sharpness of the corner and any other hazards there might be. The vehicle's design might dictate when the speed is comfortable.

The implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act means more vehicles will have wheelchair users travelling on them, so their comfort must be considered.

Seat belts

Seat belts and child restraints

You **MUST** wear a seat belt in cars, vans and other goods vehicles if one is fitted (see table below). Adults and children aged 14 years and over **MUST** use a seatbelt where fitted, when travelling in a taxi. There are very specific arrangements for children under the age of 14 and over or under a specific height when travelling in taxis. These are outlined in the table below.

Make sure you are fully aware of these requirements and how they relate to you and your passengers.

Seat belt requirements

This table summarises the main legal requirements for wearing seatbelts in cars, vans and other goods vehicles.

	<i>Front seat</i>	<i>Rear seat</i>	<i>Who is responsible ?</i>
Driver	Seat belt MUST be worn if fitted		Driver
Child under 3 years of age	Correct child restraint MUST be worn	Correct child restraint MUST be used. If one is not available in a taxi the child may travel unrestrained	Driver
Child from 3 rd birthday up to 1.35 metres (approx 4ft 5 inches) in height (or 12 th birthday, whichever they reach first)	Correct child restraint MUST be worn	Correct child restraint MUST be used where seat belts fitted. MUST use adult if correct child restraint is not available in a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle, or for reasons of unexpected necessity over a short distance, or if two occupied restraints prevent fitment of a third.	Driver
Child over 1.35 metres in height or 12 or 13 years	Seat belt MUST be worn if available	Seat belt MUST be worn if available	Driver
Adult passengers aged 14 and over	Seat belt MUST be worn if available	Seat belt MUST be worn if available	Passenger
<i>Source: The Highway Code for Northern Ireland</i>			

The driver **MUST** ensure that all children under 14 years of age in cars (including taxis), vans and other goods vehicles wear seat belts or sit in an approved child restraint where required (see table above). If a child is less than 1.35 metres (approximately 4 feet 5 inches) tall, a baby seat, child seat, booster seat or booster cushion suitable for the child's weight and fitted to the manufacturer's instructions **MUST** be used.

A rear-facing baby seat **MUST NOT** be fitted into a seat protected by an active frontal airbag, as in a crash it can cause serious injury or death to the child. If a rear-facing baby seat does have to be positioned in the front passenger seat the passenger airbag (if fitted) **MUST** be deactivated.

If your vehicle is fitted with forward and rearward fixed seats, any passenger using these seats **MUST** wear their seat belt.

Children in taxis

Drivers, who are carrying children in taxis, should also ensure that:

- children should get into the vehicle through the door nearest the kerb;
- child restraints are properly fitted to manufacturer's instructions;
- the child safety door locks, where fitted, are used when children are in the vehicle; and
- children are kept under control.

Types of taxi

A taxi is generally defined as:

- a motor vehicle licensed to transport passengers in return for payment of a fare; and
- does not have more than 8 passenger seats.

In a class B taxi where a dedicated wheelchair space is provided (space not fitted with a fold down passenger seat, and suitable for a wheelchair passenger only) then this space is counted as part of the passenger capacity.

There are four taxi licence classes. These are explained in the table below.

There is a designated Belfast Zone that restricts Class A permitted use on certain days and at certain times. This is an area of approximately two miles radius from Belfast City Centre.

- Belfast taxi zone map – Department for Infrastructure (DfI) website [Belfast taxi zone map - December 2015](#)

<i>Classes</i>	<i>How the taxi can be used</i>
Class A	These taxis will have: • a roof sign, coloured yellow to both the front and back • taxi plates on the front and back of roof signs • signs in the front windscreen and both rear passenger windows • a taximeter and printer fitted • a taximeter fare card prominently displayed Outside the Belfast Zone, these taxis can be

hailed, pre-booked, and stand at taxi stands.

Within the Belfast Zone, these taxis can be pre-booked, and can be hailed from midnight until 6.00 am every Friday and Saturday night, and on public holidays.

Class B

These taxis will have:

- a roof sign, coloured white to the front and yellow to the back
- taxi plates with a wheelchair accessible logo on the front and back of roof signs
- signs in the front windscreen and both rear passenger windows
- a taximeter and printer fitted
- a taximeter fare card prominently displayed

These taxis will be wheelchair accessible and can be hailed, pre-booked, and stand at taxi stands.

Class C

Class C taxis can only be used on a pre-booked basis, booked at an operating centre and must carry details of their booking in the taxi during the journey.

They cannot be hailed and cannot be used on taxi ranks.

Examples of Class C taxis are vehicles used for chauffeur services, weddings, funerals, and courtesy transport.

These taxis must not display a roof sign or advertise as a taxi service, but must display a sign in the front windscreen.

Class D

These taxis are licensed to operate along set routes and are permitted to charge the passengers separate fares. Taxis operating this service can only do so under a [Department for Infrastructure permit](#)

These taxis can also be pre-booked for executive or tour services; they can also provide services under contract for the

education and health authorities.

Class D taxis do not need to display roof signs, but must display internal signs on the front windscreen and rear windows.

Taxi vehicle licence test

A new taxi vehicle licence test has replaced the PSV test. For more information click on this link - [Taxi vehicle test](#)

You must apply for your Taxi Vehicle Licence online <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/taxi-vehicle-licensing>. When you receive notification your online application has been cleared, you will receive a message advising you how to pay and arrange the vehicle test. You need to ensure that you have all details completed and you are the registered keeper of the vehicle with DVLA Swansea, or can show proof of having recently purchased the vehicle. Failure to produce these will delay your test. If you are applying for Class A or B taxi your vehicle must have a taxi meter test completed before an appointment can be given.

The taxi vehicle licence test process

You must:

- Provide proof of valid insurance at the beginning of the test, otherwise the vehicle will fail;
- when the vehicle passes the test, DfI will issue either a new style taxi plate and/or an internal taxi sign (depending on what class of licence has been applied for); and
- Class A and B taxis must also have a new style roof sign and an approved taximeter which has a printing facility.



Passenger and general safety

Never:

- move off until your passengers are seated with their seat belts fitted;
- allow passengers to board or alight from the vehicle, unless the parking brake is applied;
- operate the doors while the vehicle is in motion; or
- allow more passengers to be carried than the vehicle is designed for, or the law allows.

Sudden faults

Occasionally, faults occur that can't be anticipated. It is important to take immediate action to correct these in the interests of safety for your passengers as well as yourself. For example, if

you begin to smell fuel or exhaust fumes in the vehicle while travelling, or if a passenger reports such odours, you **MUST** stop immediately and call the emergency services. Do not try to fix it yourself.

Towing trailers

Considerable care is needed when towing a trailer, especially when reversing. Extensive training and practice are strongly recommended. When you tow a trailer make sure that:

- you know and comply with the speed limits that apply to vehicles towing trailers; and
- you do not carry passengers in the trailer.

Any unattended trailer is a road hazard, especially at night or in poor visibility, such as foggy conditions.

When uncoupling a trailer, select a suitable site. It should be safe and on firm and level ground. Make sure that you apply the trailer parking brake (handbrake) before commencing the uncoupling procedure. Further advice is contained in, *'The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills'*.

Vehicle maintenance

Preventative maintenance

It is important to keep your vehicle well maintained; breaking down while on the road can have road safety implications. Follow manufacturer's guidelines for service intervals. In addition to this, being aware of components wearing out or requiring replacement will help prevent costly breakdowns for your company.

The vehicle handbook will explain what work or maintenance can be carried out by the driver. Workshop manuals are also available for detailed technical advice.

Neglecting the maintenance of vital controls and fluids such as brakes, steering and lubricants is dangerous; they need to be checked regularly. Having your vehicle serviced according to its maintenance schedule helps the engine work more efficiently, thereby saving fuel and reducing the effect on the environment by cutting emissions. Causing excessive smoke is an offence, and also contributes to the possibility of causing an incident or collision. If you notice thick black smoke coming from the exhaust, stop in a safe place and get help.

Ensuring that daily walk-round checks are carried out will enable you to find any defects that could become a problem and cause the vehicle to break down or be driven while illegal.

The time taken to complete a thorough check will be less than that required to organise repair or replacement while out on the road. Checks need to be made before you start up the vehicle or begin a journey. The consequences are too great to risk driving a vehicle with defective parts. It makes sense therefore to have any defects repaired before going on duty.

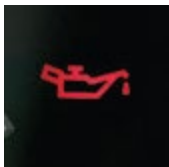
Failure to maintain your vehicle in a roadworthy condition could lead to the suspension or revocation of your operator licence and your taxi driver's licence, so it is in your best interest to ensure that your vehicle is checked regularly and serviced at the appropriate intervals.

Vehicle checks

You should first of all check your vehicle to make sure it is safe and ready for the road. This includes checking your instrument panel for any illuminated warning lights which may not have gone out after starting the engine. There are many different types of warning lights so make sure you familiarise yourself with the warning lights on your vehicle.

Manufacturers try to maintain consistency with the images used but it is important that you are aware of the meaning of the lights and the possible action you have to take.

Below are some examples of the types of warning lights you might see:



Oil Pressure



Airbag



Seat Belt



Brake Condition



Particulate Filter



Doors Open

Some warning lights if they remain on must be checked out immediately – Oil, Seatbelt, and Airbag etc. If possible you should stop somewhere safe and convenient and try to find the cause. You should also check your vehicle's handbook for further information.

Others such as the Particulate Filter warning light advise that action is required, but not necessarily immediately. If this light is illuminated it means that the particulate filter is upwards of 45% blocked with the soot residue from the burnt fuel from the engine.

Depending on the make and model of your vehicle there are a number of actions you can take to extinguish this light. One such example is to drive your vehicle for a short time on higher than normal speed roads, such as a motorway, where the exhaust temperature can be raised sufficiently to burn off the residue which should extinguish the light. You should however consult your vehicle's handbook for the appropriate action for your type of vehicle.

Everyday checks

Make a habit of checking daily that:

- the windscreen, windows, light lenses, front and rear number plates and mirrors are clean;

- all lights (including brake lights and indicators) are working; replace any dead bulbs immediately (it is a good idea to carry spare fuses and bulbs); and
- the brakes are working; **do not drive with faulty brakes.**

Periodic checks

These checks are both for safety and good vehicle maintenance. Check and top up if necessary:

- engine oil (not too much as over filling will create excessive pressure and damage the engine);
- water level in the radiator or expansion tank;
- brake fluid level;
- battery; top up with distilled water if necessary (some batteries are maintenance-free and do not need topping up); and
- windscreen and rear window washer bottles.

You should also check tyres and make sure they are:

- legal; they must have the correct tread depth and be free of dangerous cuts and defects; and
- at the right pressure.

How often you make the checks depends on how much you drive. Consult your vehicle handbook. If you drive a lot, you may need to do these every day.

Some of these checks are required by law, for example, ensuring that your front and rear number plates (registration mark) are clean, not obscured and are easily distinguishable. Others are good practice and to ensure safety for you and other road users.

Basic maintenance

Further information about basic maintenance can be found at [‘Appendix 3’](#).

Regular servicing

Have your vehicle regularly serviced. The vehicle handbook will tell you when servicing is recommended. Having your vehicle serviced according to its maintenance schedule helps the engine work more efficiently, so saving fuel and reducing the effect on the environment by cutting emissions.

Always refer to the handbook for your individual vehicle before carrying out any maintenance tasks and follow any safety guidance it may contain.

Drivers should wear gloves when checking oil levels, fuel caps, etc to help eliminate the risk of infections or conditions such as dermatitis or eczema. Your hands remain clean, preventing the transfer of these substances onto other parts of the vehicle, including the vehicle controls and preserves a smart appearance for customers.

Tyres

All tyres on your vehicle and any trailer must be in good condition. They need to be checked at least once a week for damage or wear and to ensure that they are at the correct pressure. Follow manufacturer's recommendations for the correct pressure required. Neglecting tyre pressures is a major cause of tyre failure: check your tyre pressures when the tyres are cold; that is, before the vehicle is used.

The life of a tyre will depend upon the load, inflation pressure and the speed at which the vehicle is driven. Under inflated tyres will increase wear of the outer edges of the tread area of the tyre. Over-inflated tyres will distort the tread and increase wear in the centre of the tread area of the tyre.

Radial ply tyres have textile cords arranged radially across the tyre almost at right angles to the width of the tread. The tyre walls are quite supple and a rubber-covered steel mesh belt, which runs around the tyre underneath the tread rubber, braces the tread area. The belt keeps the tread in flat contact with the road to improve traction and grip. Energy-saving tyres have a reduced rolling resistance so they contribute to better fuel economy.

Tyres should be checked regularly for damage or bulges, tread wear, and correct pressure. Any serious fault such as a lump or bulge in the tyre wall, exposed ply or cord, or deep cuts more than one inch (25 mm) long will make that tyre illegal.

Keeping tyres correctly inflated will help prevent failure and also improve fuel consumption: using radial ply tyres can improve fuel consumption by 5–10%.

The tread depth of tyres used on cars, taxi buses and limousines (under 3,500kg MAM) **MUST** be at least 1.6 mm across the centre three quarters of the breadth of the tread, and in a continuous band around the entire circumference.

Check wheels and tyres for balance to avoid uneven wear. When a wheel and tyre rotate they are subject to centrifugal forces. If the mass of the wheel and tyre is dispersed uniformly then the wheel is balanced. Balance weights are used to rectify any imbalance.

Changing a wheel

As a driver you may have to change a wheel. The following information may be useful:

- Never attempt to change a wheel by yourself on a motorway, dual carriageway or in a busy location.
- Be aware of the danger of other traffic.
- Ensure the vehicle is parked on level, firm ground and that no passengers remain in the vehicle during the procedure.
- The jack or lifting device should be suitable for the height and weight of the vehicle.
- When re-fitting the wheel, fully tighten the wheel nuts.

Note: *that wheel nuts may need retightening after a short distance.*

Braking system

There are two braking systems fitted to cars:

- the service brake ('footbrake'); and
- the parking brake ('handbrake').

The service brake (footbrake):

- is the principal braking system used;
- is operated by the foot control;
- is used to control the speed of the vehicle and to bring it to a halt safely; and
- may incorporate an anti-lock braking system (ABS).

The parking brake (handbrake):

- is usually a hand control. It must be a mechanical device; an electro mechanical parking brake is also acceptable. Should normally only be used when the vehicle is stationary; and
- must always be set when the vehicle is left unattended. The minimum legal braking performance permitted for each system is
 - service brake – 50/58% efficiency depending on year of manufacture
 - parking brake – 16% efficiency.

Anti-lock braking systems

Some vehicles are fitted with anti-lock braking systems (ABS). Wheel-speed sensors in these systems detect the moment during braking when a wheel is about to lock. Just before this happens the system reduces the braking effort and then rapidly re-applies it.

This action may happen many times a second to maintain brake performance. Preventing the wheels from locking means that the vehicle's steering and stability is also maintained, leading to safer stopping. But remember, ABS is only a driver aid. It does not remove the need for good driving practices, such as anticipating events and assessing road and weather conditions.

Anti-lock braking systems are commonly used on vehicles. It is important to ensure that an ABS is functioning before setting off on a journey. The satisfactory operation of the ABS can be checked from a warning signal on the dashboard. The way the warning light operates varies between manufacturers, but with all types the light comes on with the ignition. It should go out no later than when the vehicle has reached a road speed of about 10 km/h (6 mph).

Note: ABS is the registered trade mark of Bosch (Germany) for Antiblockier system.

Inspection and maintenance

You are not expected to be a mechanic; however, some braking system checks are your responsibility. Before starting a journey, check the brake system warning lights.

Hydraulic brakes

With hydraulic brakes, if the brake pedal travel increases or reduces, this could indicate a system malfunction.

You should check the brake fluid level (and the brake fluid warning light, if fitted) as part of your daily check.

Before you move off, press the brake pedal to get a feel for it. If it is too hard, it suggests a loss of vacuum or that the vacuum pump is faulty. If the brake pedal gives too little resistance and goes down too far, it suggests a loss of fluid or that it is badly out of adjustment. If the brake pedal feels spongy, it suggests that there is air in the brake system.

If there are any problems, you should get the system checked by a qualified mechanic before moving off.

In addition test the brakes every day as you set out. Choose a safe place to do this. If you hear any strange noises or the vehicle pulls to one side, consult a qualified mechanic immediately.

Controls

Before each journey make sure that all warning systems are working. ABS warning signals will operate as soon as the ignition is switched on. Never start a journey with a defective warning device or when a warning is showing. If the warning operates when you are travelling, stop as soon as you can do so safely and seek expert assistance

Power-assisted steering

To reduce the effort required and the amount that the driver has to turn the steering wheel, modern vehicles are fitted with a power-assisted steering (PAS) system.

PAS reduces the driver's efforts when turning. However, it only operates when the engine is running. If the system fails or develops a fault while driving you can still retain control of the steering, but much greater effort is needed to turn the steering wheel. Movement at the steering wheel may also be felt as a series of jerks.

Do not attempt to drive a vehicle fitted with PAS:

- without the engine running – that is, coasting; and/or
- if the system is faulty.

If a fault develops while travelling, stop as soon as you can safely do so and seek expert assistance.

Please refer to the tables at the back of this publication ([Appendix 3](#)) which give a brief guide to fault finding and potential remedies.

Taximeters and printers

A taximeter is a device fitted into a taxi which records a distance and where necessary a 'waiting time' that is chargeable and will translate this into a fare to be paid in Pounds Sterling. A taximeter **MUST** have the facility to print a customer receipt.

A taxi fitted with a taximeter must display a 'fares board' in a conspicuous place, so passengers can see the regulated fares and increment rates.

Installation

Since 31 May 2016, it is a legal requirement for all Class A and B taxis to have an approved taximeter and printer fitted. If you do not have these fitted you need to take immediate action.

The action you need to take can be found on the NI Direct web site under 'Taximeters and printers' or click on the following link – [Assessing an application for a taxi vehicle licence](#)

A list of the approved taximeters and printers is available by following this link - [DfI approved taximeter and printer list](#)

Sealing the taximeter

If your current (old style) PSV licence is valid after 31 May 2016, you do not need your taximeter sealed until you apply for a new taxi licence.

To have your taximeter tested and sealed, you will need to apply to DVA using [DVA Online](#)

This test can be carried out at any DVA Test Centre.

Maintenance of meters

It is your responsibility as a taxi driver to ensure that your taximeter is working and complies with the legal requirements. Taximeters are checked and sealed during the vehicle's annual inspection to ensure that they are set with the correct regulated fare. The meter is sealed to ensure that the setting and calibration cannot be tampered with. It is an offence to tamper with a taximeter.

If a taximeter becomes defective, including a broken seal it **MUST** be reported to the Department and immediate steps should be taken to have the meter repaired or replaced. You should contact DVA to arrange an appointment to have the meter checked and resealed. A taximeter **MUST** be checked and if necessary resealed every 12 months.

Roof sign requirements

A roof sign is required before a vehicle is submitted for its test. The following table sets out the requirements for each class of taxi.

<i>Taxi class</i>	<i>Display requirements</i>
Class A	Taxi plates supplied by the Department must be displayed on a new style roof sign
Class B	Taxi plates supplied by the Department must be displayed on a new style roof sign
Class C	Taxis must display a small internal sign supplied by the Department. They cannot display roof signs or advertise as a taxi service
Class D	Taxis must display an internal sign supplied by the Department. They do not have to display roof signs.

Classes A and B

All Class A and B taxis require a roof sign, including London Style taxis. They shall:

- be a minimum of 125mm high;
- be capable of holding a plate 119mm high and 176mm wide which;
 - can be fixed to the nearside front and nearside rear of the roof sign so that it is not projecting higher, lower or longer than the roof sign; and
 - can be readily removed without damage to the roof sign, plate or vehicle component;
- be fitted so as not to cause danger to anyone;
- be mounted centrally and positioned transversely when viewed from the front of the vehicle;
- not overhang the roof or measure less than 750mm across but may occupy the breadth of the roof;
- not project more than 250mm above the highest part of the roof;
- be illuminated internally during the hours of darkness to show a steady light to the front and rear;
- be fused at source against electrical short circuits; and
- not cause dazzle or discomfort to other road users.

In Class A taxis:

- the front of the roof sign shall have a yellow background and in clear and legible black letters, display the name or trading name of the licensed operator or the word 'Taxi'; and
- the rear of the roof sign shall have a yellow background and in clear and legible black letters, display a telephone number or the word 'Taxi'.

In Class B taxis:

- the front of the roof sign shall have a white background and in clear and legible black letters, display the name or trading name of the licensed operator or the word 'Taxi';
- the rear of the roof sign shall have a yellow background and in clear and legible black letters, display a telephone number or the word 'Taxi'; and
- the roof sign must display a wheelchair logo which shall be:
 - coloured black and printed onto the roof sign or on another transparent material which can be illuminated from behind; and
 - 125mm wide and 125mm tall, and be placed at the offside front and offside rear of the roof sign so that it is not projecting higher, lower and longer than the roof sign.

Taxi plates / license

Taxi plates are unique to each vehicle and re-issued annually following successful completion of the vehicle's annual inspection (Taxi (Vehicle) Licence Test). If you change your vehicle at any time, the plates **MUST** be returned to the department within 14 days of the change. Failure to do so is an offence. The replacement vehicle **MUST** be subject to a vehicle test and on successful completion, a new set of plates and electronic licence specific to that vehicle, will be issued.

Additional information

More information on the new taxi licence test requirements, including information on grandfather rights and M1 type approval, is available on NI Direct or by clicking on this link: [Taxi Vehicle Test](#)

Taxi fare

A maximum fare structure is in place for Class A and Class B taxis. Taximeters must be installed with an approved tariff programme to operate within this.

The Fare Card can be accessed at clicking on the follow link: [Taxi fares](#)

This Fare Card **MUST** be prominently displayed inside your vehicle. It can be downloaded by clicking on the following link: [Fare card](#)

Section three

LIMITS AND REGULATIONS

This section covers

- Basic knowledge
- Environmental issues
- Driving time and rest periods
- Other issues
- Your health and conduct
- Your law concerning your vehicle
- Your driving
- Anti-theft measures

Basic knowledge

The passenger transport industry is subject to a wide range of regulations and requirements relating to:

- drivers;
- operators;
- companies;
- vehicles; and
- passengers.

The first thing you will need to know about is your vehicle. The various aspects to consider are its:

- type;
- size;
- weight;
- length;
- seating capacity;
- condition;
- road worthiness; and
- annual inspection.

Type

There are currently four classes of taxi in Northern Ireland: A, B, C, and D. The taxi class determines how that taxi can be used.

This link has information on each class and what they can do: [Taxis and their services](#)

Weight

There are a number of factors which need to be considered when driving a vehicle which is fully laden. Below is a representative table outlining the potential weight difference between a fully laden and an unladen taxi bus. The unladen weight, depending on the make and model of your taxi bus could range from 1,000kgs (1 tonne) to 2,500kgs (2.5 tonnes). You must ensure you are fully aware of the weight limits of your vehicle.

Type	Weight	
Taxi bus		
Unladen Weight	<i>Tonnes (2.5)</i>	<i>Kg (2,500)</i>
8 Passengers	0.53	533
8 Cases	0.17	176
50 litres of fuel	0.05	50
Total	3.25	3,259

In this example the weight difference between an unladen and a fully laden taxi bus could be more than 700kg / 0.70 tonnes. The loading and distribution of passengers and their luggage can make your vehicle less stable. It could adversely affect the axle weights. The weight of your vehicle will also have a bearing on the overall stopping distance of your vehicle – the heavier it is the longer the distance it will need to stop.

Length

You need to know the length of your vehicle, so that you can judge the space you need on the road.

You will also need to know these dimensions to comply with regulations that affect your vehicle.

Other than traffic-calmed zones, places where there are restrictions on vehicle length are comparatively rare. Examples are:

- road tunnels;
- level crossings; and
- ferries.



To be suitable for use as a taxi the vehicle **MUST** be at least 3.96 metres (13 Feet) in length. There is no maximum length currently so if you drive a stretched limousine or a novelty type vehicle which is longer than the standard taxi vehicle you need to be aware of the difficulties these vehicles may present when dropping off passengers in a housing area etc. In addition, specific road layouts may also present a problem which may alter how you deal with them.

At some level crossings for example, you may need to phone for permission to cross.

When turning right across a dual carriageway you may have to wait until both sides of the carriageway are clear before you can emerge.

When driving long vehicles you must be careful when:

- turning left or right;
- negotiating roundabouts or mini-roundabouts;
- emerging from premises or exits;
- overtaking;
- parking, especially in lay-bys;
- driving on narrow roads where there are passing places; and
- negotiating level crossings.

Be aware of the amount of space you need to turn (the turning circle) and the way that your vehicle overhangs kerbs and verges (the swept area). Take great care when turning, to ensure that any overhang on your vehicle does not come into contact with pedestrians, traffic lights, street furniture, posts or fences.

You must be particularly aware of the risk of grounding when driving an exceptionally long vehicle with low ground clearance; for example, limousines which have the potential to ground some traffic calming measures or on a hump bridge, and you should look out for appropriate traffic warning signs.

Seating capacity

In the majority of cases taxi drivers will drive standard saloon or hatch back vehicles with 3 or 4 passenger seats. However in some case you may be driving larger vehicles such as limousines, taxi buses and novelty type vehicles which have a seating capacity greater than 4 but not exceeding 8 excluding the driver.

A taxi, according to the PSV Condition of Fitness Regulations, is defined as a public service vehicle seating not more than eight passengers in addition to the driver. You are therefore committing an offence if you exceed this number.

These larger vehicles will have very different handling characteristics. It is important that you are aware of, and understand, the limits relating to any vehicle you drive, including the limits regarding seating capacity.

The seating capacity for a taxi is determined at the time of its annual vehicle inspection. Once a taxi has passed this inspection a plate confirming the seating capacity will be issued.

This **MUST** be displayed on your vehicle in the approved format and in the approved position so that passengers, enforcement officers and the PSNI can confirm the legal number of passengers your taxi is authorised to carry.

Failure to adhere to the seating capacity for your vehicle may result in prosecution and could impact on your taxi licence. It is important that you adhere to the maximum seating capacity for your vehicle and in the unlikely event that you arrive at a pick up and the number of passengers exceeds the number you are legally allowed to carry, you should try to make alternative arrangements (i.e. arrange an additional vehicle for one or more of the passengers), but under no circumstance should you carry any additional passengers.

Annual inspection

The majority of vehicles used on our roads today must go through an annual inspection. A taxi is no exception and must be presented for inspection every year from new. This inspection is of a similar type to your private car but additional rules apply. (For more information on a taxi annual inspection click on this link: [Taxi Vehicle Test](#))

One of these additional rules relates to the production of evidence of taxi vehicle insurance. This can be a cover note of the actual insurance policy. In either case this must be produced at the time of the inspection and comply with all the legal requirements and cover the policy holder (taxi driver) to carry passengers for hire and reward. If your vehicle passes the test a notification letter will be issued. Your vehicle licence will be issued electronically and taxi plates will be forwarded to you by post within five working days.

Environmental issues

Vehicle designers and maintenance staff all have a part in helping to reduce the effects that vehicles have on the environment. You can also help. You should be aware of the effects your vehicle, and the way in which it is driven and operated, can have on the environment around you.

The taxi industry has a major role to play in limiting the effect drivers and their vehicles have on the environment. For example, a badly maintained or poorly driven taxi can cause unnecessary pollution.

There are many things **you** can do to help:

- Follow manufacturer's recommendations for servicing;
- If you do your own maintenance, make sure you take your old oil which should be in a suitable container, batteries and used tyres to a garage or local authority site for recycling or safe disposal. It is illegal and harmful to pour oil down a drain and if you get it on your skin it can cause major skin problems;
- Make regular checks of your vehicle and ensure that any defects are reported and sorted out;
- Check excessive exhaust smoke (the public are encouraged to report vehicles emitting excessive fumes);
- Check uneven running;
- Check brake faults, which can cause drag;
- Have correct tyre pressures;



- Make sure filters are changed regularly; and
- Check suspension system faults, which may result in road damage.

Always drive with fuel economy in mind. Operators keep careful checks on vehicle running costs, and fuel economy is a key factor for profitability as well as reducing waste.

You should:

- plan routes to avoid congestion;
- anticipate well ahead;
- avoid the need to make up time;
- avoid over-revving;
- drive smoothly. This can reduce fuel consumption by up to 15%. Avoid rapid acceleration as this leads to greater fuel consumption, and increased wear and tear;
- avoid using the air-conditioning continuously as this increases fuel consumption by about 15%;
- consider the use of cruise control where fitted, as this will help reduce fuel costs;
- brake in good time (all braking wastes energy in the form of heat)
- make good use of regenerative retarders (possibly fitted to novelty vehicles). This is a braking system which allows the use of the vehicle's drive motor, or motors, to convert the vehicle's kinetic energy into electrical energy during deceleration; and
- switch off your engine when stationary for some time, especially where noise and exhaust fumes cause annoyance.

Select for economy and low emissions

Consider the following points:

- Vehicles with automatic transmission use about 10% more fuel than those with manual transmission;
- Use ultra-low sulphur fuel, such as city diesel, as it reduces harmful emissions;
- When replacing tyres, consider buying energy-saving types. These have reduced rolling resistance, and they increase fuel efficiency and also improve grip on the road.

Members of the public are encouraged to report any vehicle emitting excessive exhaust fumes.

Further information and publications can be found on the Energy Saving Trust's website or clicking on this link: [Energy Saving Trust](#)

Traffic management

Continuous research has resulted in new methods of helping the environment by easing traffic flow.

Traffic flow

Strict parking rules in major cities and towns help the traffic flow, as does the introduction of bus lanes which permit the use of the lane by certain taxis.

Speed reductions

Traffic-calming measures, including road humps and chicanes, help to keep vehicle speeds low in sensitive areas. Drive slowly over road humps and do not speed up between them. There are an increasing number of areas with a 20 mph (32 km/h) speed limit in force.

When crossing road humps, the discomfort experienced by passengers can increase substantially as speeds increase from 15 mph towards 20 mph. Try to minimise this discomfort, by reducing speed in good time and adopt an appropriate speed when driving over the humps.

Suspension / tyres

Bumping over kerbs, verges and pavements damages your vehicle and can also affect underground utilities. Repairs can be costly.

Damage to your vehicle's tyres, which may not be immediately obvious, can also be the result of poor driving and bad suspension. Subsequent tyre failure may have serious consequences, for you and your passengers. Make sure that you drive responsibly and with due care.

Fuels

Take care to avoid spillages when you refuel your vehicle. Diesel fuel is slippery and can be very dangerous if stepped on (especially in garage areas). On the road it can create a serious risk to other road users, especially motorcyclists. It is a legal requirement that you check all filler caps are properly closed and secure before driving off.

Exhaust emissions

Fuel combustion produces carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, and transport accounts for about one fifth of the carbon dioxide we produce in this country. Catalytic converters on petrol engines help reduce these exhaust gases. The road worthiness tests for taxis (PSV's) now include a strict exhaust emission test to ensure that all vehicles are operating efficiently and causing less air pollution.

If you are driving a vehicle that's emitting lots of exhaust smoke, you are breaking the law and risk being reported. If you become aware of excessive exhaust smoke from your vehicle, you should take steps to have the problem dealt with as soon as possible.

Diesel engines

These engines are more fuel-efficient than petrol engines. Although they produce higher levels of some pollutants (nitrogen oxides and particulates), they produce less carbon dioxide (a global warming gas). They also emit less carbon monoxide and fewer hydrocarbons.

Alternative fuels

To improve exhaust emissions even further, ultra-low sulphur diesel or city diesel fuels can be used. These have been formulated so that the sulphur content is very low. Sulphur is the main cause of particulates in exhaust emissions and it also produces acidic gases. The lower the content of sulphur in fuel, the less damage to the environment.

Electricity

Trials have been taking place with electric vehicles for a number of years, but it is only recently that advances have been made in overcoming the problems of battery size and capacity.

Fuel cells

These operate like rechargeable batteries and produce little or no pollutants, but have greater range and improved performance than most battery electric vehicles.

Compressed natural gas (CNG)

While there are improvements in the quality of exhaust emissions produced, some of the technical disadvantages relate to the size and design of the fuel tanks required.

Hybrid vehicles

These offer the advantages of electricity without the need for large batteries. The combination of an electric motor and battery with an internal combustion engine gives increased fuel efficiency and greatly reduced emissions.

Hydrogen

This is another possible fuel source for road vehicles that's being studied. However, technical problems include storage of this highly inflammable gas.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)

This consists mainly of methane, produced during petrol refining. Vehicles can run on LPG alone or both LPG and petrol (known as dual fuel). Benefits include low cost, lower emissions and reduced wear and tear to engine and exhaust systems. Disadvantages include cold start problems and valve-seat wear.

Methane

Because of the naturally occurring renewable sources of this fuel, it is also being considered as a possible alternative to diesel oil, which is a finite resource.

Solar power

Needing only daylight to function, solar vehicles are small, light, slow and silent. They produce no emissions at all; however, they are very expensive as yet and improvements are needed so they can store energy for use in the dark.

Audible warning systems

Some vehicles are fitted with systems which warn people that the vehicle is reversing, such as:

- beepers;
- horns; and / or
- voice warning devices.

These **MUST NOT** be allowed to operate on a road subject to a 30 mph speed limit between 11.30 pm and 7.00 am. Remember, using an audible warning device does not take away the need to practise good all round effective observation. Get someone to guide you if you can't see

all around when reversing. Some vehicles have more blind spots than others depending on their construction so always check carefully.

Also, take care when setting vehicle alarm systems. There are restrictions on the length of time that the warning may sound. Environmental health officers are empowered to enter vehicles and disable the system if a nuisance is caused.

Driving time and rest periods

This manual offers recommendations as to working hours and the required duration of breaks for taxi drivers. Taxi drivers should not work for more than an average of ten hours per day. The usual break should be 30 minutes for a shift of between six and nine hours.

For shifts lasting more than nine hours, breaks should be at least 45 minutes. For shifts lasting twelve hours, a minimum of two breaks of 60 minutes each are recommended. Drivers should take at least 11 hours off in between shifts.

Rest periods

It is recommended that during your period of driving (shift) that you build into your shift rest periods. On long journeys, try to plan them to coincide with a stop at service areas or know rest areas. This is especially important at night, when a long journey can make you more tired than usual.

If you eat a large meal immediately before driving, the combined effects of a warm driving compartment, boring stretches of road, especially at night, can soon cause the onset of drowsiness. Falling asleep at the wheel can happen so easily; do not let it happen to you.

Unless it is an emergency, it is against the law to stop anywhere on the motorway, including the hard shoulder and slip roads, for a rest. Tiredness is foreseeable and is not considered to be an emergency.

If you start to feel even slightly tired, open the windows, turn the heating down and get off the motorway at the next junction. Even if you are not scheduled to stop, it is preferable to falling asleep at the wheel.

When you reach a service or rest area have a hot drink, wash your face (to refresh yourself) and walk round in the fresh air before driving on. As previously stated, the most effective countermeasures to sleepiness are caffeine drinks and a short nap or doze (about 15 minutes).

The combination of caffeine followed by a nap is particularly effective. This is because caffeine takes 20–30 minutes to be absorbed and act on the brain, hence the opportunity for a nap. However, this should be considered as a temporary measure only.

Other issues

Security

In order to discourage crime and increase passenger confidence you should carry out basic security checks on your vehicle and be aware of security issues at all times. Much of what's written about security is based on good housekeeping practices such as locking doors, windows, etc. Suggestions for good practice are given below, but you should also make sure that you follow any security measures given by your taxi operator.

Searching your vehicle

If you use your vehicle for private use as well as professional, search your vehicle at the start of your shift as items may have been left behind by family and friends. Search it again after dropping off your passenger. This will ensure that nothing has been concealed or left behind and increase the potential of being able to return the item there and then or at least be able to identify who has left it behind. Checks should include underneath seats and any storage areas used by the passengers during the journey including the boot area.

If property has been left behind and you are unable to identify or return it to the owner, in the first instance this should be handed into the local Police station or into your depot who then should forward it to the local Police station as soon as possible.

Securing your vehicle

When you are stopped and leave the vehicle unattended, e.g. during a comfort break, make sure that all doors are locked and, if appropriate, windows secured. See section on Anti-theft measures on page 72.

Your passengers

Various regulations and guidance cover how you should deal with passengers and their behaviour. These include:

- the conduct of drivers;
- the number of passengers carried;
- the carriage of school children;
- the carriage and consumption of alcohol in your vehicle;
- smoking;
- passengers causing danger or offence by their behaviour or condition;
- passengers who refuse to pay the fare; and
- the carriage or use of dangerous, noxious or illegal substances by passengers.

In addition to the legal obligations and restrictions, most operators require that specific rules must be followed. It is in your own interest to read and comply with them. You may risk dismissal if you do not.

Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) enforcement officers

DVA officers are extra eyes and ears on our roads. They are a highly trained and highly visible service, enforcing various aspects of road safety including taxi enforcement.



Enforcement officers wear a full uniform, including a high-visibility yellow jacket, and drive a high-visibility vehicle with yellow and black chequered markings.



Every enforcement officer will also have a unique identification number and photographic identity card. They'll normally patrol in pairs i.e. two enforcement officers to a vehicle.

Powers of enforcement officers

Like the police, DVA enforcement officers have the powers **to stop all vehicles** on all types of roads including motorways. It is an offence not to comply with the directions given by an enforcement officer. Refer to The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland - Rule 107.

DVA enforcement officers have the power to caution you and issue you with an on the spot fine and a fixed penalty notice for certain offences, which includes any breaches in the legal requirements which apply to taxi drivers.

If asked to do so you **MUST** produce your driving licence and / or your taxi driver's licence to an authorised / enforcement officer on demand or at least within 7 days. Failure to do so is an offence and could lead to the suspension or revocation of your taxi licence.

Roadside checks

Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have the power to stop any vehicle while on the public road to carry out spot checks of a vehicle's condition etc. Where serious defects are found, the vehicle is prohibited from further use until the defects are rectified.

DVA officers may be accompanied by staff from other departments or agencies. For example, staff from a local authority environmental health department, who would check the vehicle and its exhaust emissions. They have the power to prosecute the driver and/or the operator if excess emissions are found.

Department for Work and Pensions staff would be checking for benefit fraud. HM Revenue and Customs staff can carry out a variety of checks during a roadside stop, which include checking for the correct type of fuel being used, and the type and legality of drivers etc.

Officers should be carrying identification. If you are asked to leave your vehicle by an official who is not in uniform, you should ask to see a warrant card. The officer is likely to be a police or enforcement officer but, in the interests of safety and security, you should not assume this.

Prohibitions

A DVA enforcement officer can prohibit a passenger-carrying vehicle that's being used illegally or in contravention of the rules and regulations governing the taxi industry.

A DVA enforcement officer issues a prohibition in respect of the vehicle when an offence or a defect relating either to the vehicle or to the driver is found. This could take place either at the roadside or where the vehicle is parked. Most prohibitions come into force immediately but some, issued in respect of less serious roadworthiness defects, are delayed so that they may come into force up to 10 days from the date of the offence being found.

The length of the delay will be decided on the road safety risk of the defect. In all cases the fault or defect has to be rectified before the prohibition is lifted, therefore a prohibition issued in respect of a construction and use offence will only be lifted following an inspection of the vehicle. In many cases relating to more serious roadworthiness offences, that will mean a full inspection of the vehicle at a DVA vehicle testing centre.

Production of taxi vehicle licence

A DVA enforcement officer may require you to produce your taxi vehicle licence. If you do not have this at the time of the roadside check, the Enforcement Officer may instruct you to produce it to an office of the department for inspection within **10 days**. If this request is made by a Police Officer, the taxi vehicle licence **MUST** be produced to a police station within **5 days**.



Conditions attached to vehicle licence

A taxi vehicle licence is valid for one year and is issued once your vehicle has successfully completed its annual inspection. A full list of the conditions attached to your taxi vehicle licence is included in the Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

Your health and conduct

There are regulations that govern:

- your health and conduct while driving;
- your vehicle;
- your driving performance;
- your passengers; and
- health and safety issues that relate to both you and your passengers.

Failure to observe the regulations could result in prosecution which may in turn affect your taxi licence.

The DVSA publication '*The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills*', which is included in the recommended reading list at '[Appendix 4](#)', gives very useful information about best driving practice. This is in addition to the specialist advice available for taxi drivers given in this publication.

It is essential that you know and keep up to date with the regulations as ignorance of the regulations is no excuse.

Companies can suffer substantial downtime and staff may need time to recover, which leads to more vehicles off the road and lost business. Road safety is of paramount importance and it is the responsibility of all drivers to try to reduce the numbers of incidents on the road.

Health issues

Even simple illnesses may affect your reactions when driving. You should be on your guard against the effects of:

- flu symptoms;
- hay fever;
- a common cold; and
- tiredness.

Fatigue and mental ability

Much research into the effects of fatigue and sleep-related vehicle incidents (SRVIs) has been undertaken on behalf of the Department for Transport. This research has shown that about 40% of SRVIs are probably work-related. These incidents are more likely to result in serious injury than the average road incident because they often involve running off the road or into the back of another vehicle, and are worsened by the high speed of impact (i.e. no braking beforehand).

There is a particular risk when driving between 2.00 am and 7.00 am because this is when the body clock is in a daily trough. There is another, smaller trough between about 2.00 pm and 4.00 pm.

It has been shown that SRVIs are more evident in male drivers up to 30 years of age who often deny or ignore that they are suffering the effects of sleep loss or sleepiness. It has been shown that sleepy drivers are normally aware of their sleepiness. However, there is always the possibility that drivers who are already mildly sleepy, because of previous sleep disturbance or insufficient sleep, are more vulnerable to any additional sleep loss and perhaps may not easily perceive an increase in sleepiness.

If you begin to feel sleepy, stop in a safe place before you get to the stage of fighting sleep. Sleep can ensue more rapidly than you would imagine.

The most effective countermeasures to sleepiness are caffeine and a short nap or doze (about 15 minutes). The combination of caffeine (in the form of a caffeinated drink; for example, two cups of caffeinated coffee) followed by a nap is particularly effective. This is because caffeine takes 20–30 minutes to be absorbed and act on the brain, hence the opportunity for a nap. However, this should be considered as a temporary measure only.

Fatigue can lead to reduced concentration and can also impair your reaction time. To avoid fatigue, it is important to take proper rest before starting duty and to take adequate rest breaks during driving and between duty periods. Always take planned rest breaks and, if necessary, take more rest than that which is recommended.

Do not drive for too long without taking a break. Your concentration will be much better if you plan regular stops for rest and refreshment. It is recommended that you take a break of at least 15 minutes after every two hours of driving. This is especially important at night.

Stress

Driving regularly and at times constantly in heavy traffic can be quite stressful. Stress affects people in different ways. It can build up over time and cause various mental and physical symptoms. Mental symptoms include:

- anger;
- depression;
- anxiety;
- changes in behaviour;
- food cravings;
- lack of appetite;
- frequent crying;
- feeling tired; and
- difficulty in concentrating.

Physical symptoms include:

- chest pains
- constipation or diarrhoea
- cramps or muscle spasms
- dizziness
- fainting spells
- nail-biting
- nervous twitches
- pins and needles
- feeling restless
- increased sweating
- breathlessness
- muscular aches
- difficulty with sleeping.



Becoming over-stressed may cause you to make poor and potentially dangerous decisions while driving. In the longer term stress can also result in the development of more serious medical problems including high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

Falling asleep

Falling asleep while driving accounts for a significant proportion of vehicle incidents, particularly under monotonous driving conditions. Incidents where vehicles:

- left the road; or
- collided with broken-down vehicles, police patrol officers or other people on the hard shoulder of motorways,

have now been attributed to the problem of drivers falling asleep at the wheel.

Be on your guard against boredom on comparatively empty roads or motorways, especially at night. Always:

- take planned rest breaks;
- keep fresh air circulating around the driving area;
- avoid allowing the driving area to become too warm;
- avoid driving if you are not 100% fit; and
- avoid driving after a heavy meal.

Stop at the next lay-by or pull off the motorway at the next exit and take a break, if you start to feel tired. As a professional driver you must make sure you are always fit for duty, alert and able to concentrate for the whole of your shift.

Modern vehicles with power-assisted steering, cruise control and automatic transmission etc are less demanding to drive, but road and traffic conditions require your full **concentrate at all times**.

Alcohol

It is an offence to drive with:

- a breath alcohol level in excess of 35 microgrammes (μg) per 100 millilitres (ml); or
- a blood alcohol level in excess of 80 milligrammes (mg) per 100 millilitres (ml).



Be aware that alcohol may remain in the body for around 24–48 hours. Your ability to react and judge situations quickly may be reduced, and the effects will still be evident the next morning so you could still fail a breath test.

Your body tissues actually need up to 48 hours to recover, although your breath/blood alcohol levels may appear normal after 24 hours. The only safe limit, ever, is a zero limit.

The police can ask you to perform a breath test if they suspect you've been drinking. This includes if your driving seems erratic or if you've been involved in a collision. Failure to give a breath sample is an offence. Drink driving offences will result in a mandatory disqualification from driving. If you are convicted of a drink driving offence while driving an ordinary motor vehicle, a driving ban will result in you also losing your taxi entitlement.

Remember, don't drink if you are going to drive.

If you are disqualified and you are found to be two and a half times over the legal limit, you will then have to satisfy DVA's medical branch that you do not have an alcohol problem before your licence can be returned.

Drugs

You mustn't take any of the following drugs, classified as banned substances, while driving:

- amphetamines (eg diet pills);
- barbiturates (sleeping pills);
- benzodiazepine (tranquilizers);
- cannabis;
- cocaine;
- heroin;
- methaqualone (sleeping pills);
- methylamphetamines (MDMA);
- morphine/codeine;
- phencyclidine ('angel dust'); and
- propoxyphene.



Check whether any medication will cause drowsiness

Unlike alcohol (the effects of which last for about 24–48 hours), many of the effects of drugs will remain in the body for up to 72 hours.

Off-the-shelf remedies, even everyday cold or flu remedies can cause drowsiness. Read the label of any medicines carefully. If in doubt, consult either your doctor or pharmacist. If still in doubt, **do not drive**.

If you are being prescribed any medication by your doctor, make sure you tell them that you intend to drive and that you are a professional driver.

Smoking in your vehicle

Legislation was introduced in April 2007 in Northern Ireland concerning smoking in certain vehicles, this includes smoking in taxis.

The law requires:

- any enclosed vehicle used by members of the public, including taxis, to be smoke-free. This means that neither the driver nor the passenger can smoke in a taxi; and
- taxi vehicles **MUST** be smoke-free **AT ALL TIMES** even if there are no passengers in the vehicle or if the vehicle is being driven by a person other than the registered owner/driver, or when the vehicle is being used for personal business by either the registered owner/driver or any other person.



Therefore, you **MUST NOT** smoke in public transport vehicles or in vehicles used for work purposes. You **MUST** also display, in a prominent position, no-smoking signs and ensure that you are aware of, and adhere to, all the legal restrictions relating to the type of vehicle you drive.

Failure to comply with the legislation can be reported to the Environmental Health Department who will carry out an investigation and any taxi driver who fails to prevent someone smoking in their vehicle can be prosecuted and fined up to a maximum of £2,500.

Anyone found smoking in a taxi can be issued with a £50 fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted and face a fine of up to a maximum of £1,000.

Failure to display the correct signage can result in a fixed penalty notice of £200 and if prosecuted carries a fine of up to £1,000.

Further information can be found at [Smoking Regulations in Northern Ireland](#) or [NHS - Quit Smoking](#)

Other safety issues

A wide range of activities are covered by the health and safety regulations. These include:

- limits on the weight of objects that should be lifted manually (for example, loading suitcases); and
- safe operating procedures in the event of emergencies or breakdowns.

Safe working practices

Vehicle maintenance and repair work is not normally your responsibility. However, drivers are responsible for the condition of their vehicles when use on the road.

You should be able to recognise faults with your vehicle and if your employer uses defect reports, these should be filled in correctly or the person responsible for recording faults should be informed. You may have to carry out minor emergency repairs on the road, when conditions dictate, but do not attempt anything beyond that. You should not do any work on engines or any other vehicle components unless you are fully trained or supervised.

The professional driving standards described in this manual apply to all taxi drivers. You should always take care and do all you can to avoid incidents at work. Companies can experience substantial downtime because staff need time off to recover. This results in more vehicles off the road, and lost business.

Personal safety

Even if the activities involved in your job have no requirement for such things we would recommend that you carry a fluorescent and reflective high-visibility jacket or vest to maximise your visibility if you need to change a wheel during the night or you break down.

Personal safety awareness

Consider your personal safety throughout any journey. Be aware of what's going on around you during breaks or when locking and unlocking your vehicle, etc. Proceed with caution – watch for anything unusual such as people who seem to be loitering or taking an interest in your activities. Follow any instructions given by your operator, stay aware and stay safe.

Diffusing an awkward situation

You must always ensure your own safety. Be alert at all times to the possibility of an awkward situation developing. If one does, do not refuse help from customers but do not try to force their involvement.

Drivers should stay in their vehicles, unless there is no alternative, as this gives some physical protection and control of the vehicle. You are also within easy reach of the radio if you need to call for assistance.

If you are already out of your vehicle when a situation develops, and physical violence seems like a possibility, your body language can be important both to protect you and to help calm things down. You could benefit by:

- standing at a 45-degree angle to the aggressor. This presents less of a target area which helps protect you; you also appear physically smaller and less threatening;
- keeping your hands raised and open towards the aggressor. This helps signal non-aggression but also allows you to deflect a blow;
- tilting your head slightly back and to one side, which lessens the effect of any impact; and
- keeping your body weight on the back foot, which increases the distance between you.

If you are confronted by an angry passenger, take nothing that's said personally. Accept that people do get angry on occasions and, as a company representative, you will be the focus of this anger. They do not have the right to vent that anger at you, but you still need to be able to handle the situation correctly.

Do not aggravate any situation by losing your temper in return. You need to appear calm while being assertive in a positive and very specific way, using three main steps. The order in which these occur can be important in resolving a situation successfully. You should be:

Calming - Focus on what the other person is saying. Listen and encourage them to keep talking. Often all they want is to be heard. Avoid prolonged eye contact, finger pointing or standing too close, all of which can seem intimidating.

Assuring - Once calm, the aggressor needs to feel you've listened. Repeat the main points of their argument back to them to confirm this. Show some understanding of their situation. Avoid any body contact as this can be misinterpreted.

Controlling - This is partly about offering a solution or a way out which is mutually acceptable. But think about what you are saying and how you say it. A raised voice could change the message you are trying to give from polite to threatening. Avoid sarcasm, or hot phrases such as 'So what?', 'I do not care', 'Whatever', as these can instantly give the wrong message.

Once the atmosphere has calmed down, try to explain the current situation, perhaps apologise for a gap in service provided or confusion over fares. Suggest they write to your company's office (have a phone number or address available). This will normally help, as it lets the aggressor know you've listened and provided an alternative course of action they can pursue.

The law concerning your vehicle

The law relating to vehicles is extensive. Manufacturers, operators and drivers must all obey specific regulations. The manufacturer is responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is built to comply with the Construction and Use Regulations.

You, the driver, are responsible for making sure that your vehicle:

- continues to comply with those regulations;
- meets all current requirements and new regulations as they are introduced;
- is tested as required;
- displays all required markings, signs, discs and certificates; and
- is in a serviceable condition, including equipment, fittings and fixtures.

In addition, the taxi operator (if they are the owner/registered keeper of the vehicle) should not cause or permit a vehicle to be operated in any way other than the law allows.

You, the driver, also have a legal responsibility for:

- taking all reasonable precautions to ensure that legal requirements are met before driving any vehicle;
- checking that the vehicle is fully roadworthy and free from significant defects before driving it;
- ensuring that any equipment, fittings or fixtures required are present and serviceable;
- not driving the vehicle if any fault develops that would make it illegal to be driven; and
- ensuring that all actions taken while in charge of the vehicle are lawful.

Failure to comply with these requirements may lead to prosecution and the possible revocation of your taxi licence.

You should consider whether it would be illegal to drive the vehicle if anything that should by law be fitted to or carried on the vehicle is not in place or in a serviceable condition.

Similarly, if something is fitted to the vehicle which is not required by law but is:

- unserviceable;
- in a dangerous condition; and/or
- not fitted so as to comply with the regulations;

you should consider its legal status. For example, your vehicle is not required by law to have spot or front fog lights. However, if they are fitted they must be positioned correctly.



If a vehicle has to be taken off the road this can result in loss of revenue. The taxi operator may not have a replacement vehicle therefore passengers may have to find an alternative taxi service or other means of transport. This could have long-term effects on the business.

Daily safety check

A daily walk-round check (including items that need to be checked from inside the vehicle) **MUST** be undertaken and should cover:

- brakes (fluids, ABS warning lights, pedal);
- lights and indicators;
- bodywork;
- tyres;
- windscreen wipers and washers;
- horn;
- fuel tanks/caps;
- mirrors;
- speedometer;
- number plates;
- reflectors and reflective plates;
- exhaust system;
- seat belts; and
- taxi plates/roof sign.

Any defects **MUST** be repaired. Make sure you know the defect reporting procedure (if applicable).

You should also make sure your vehicle is washed and cleaned regularly, both inside and out, particularly in winter, to ensure that windows, lights and mirrors are clean. This improves road safety and also presents an enhanced company image. Additionally, it will make it easier to identify defects during the daily safety checks.

Remember, this list is not exhaustive. There may be other checks you need to make, depending on the type of vehicle you are driving.

Cockpit drill

Make these checks for the safety of yourself, your passengers and other road users. Every time you get into your vehicle, check that:

- the driving seat and head restraint are correctly adjusted for position, height and back support, so that you can sit with the correct posture, reach all the controls comfortably and take effective observations;
- all interior and exterior mirrors are clean and correctly adjusted;
- gauges and warning systems are working correctly (never start a journey with a defective warning device or when a warning light is showing);

- the parking brake is applied;
- the gear selector is in neutral (or in 'Park' if driving an automatic vehicle);
- you have sufficient fuel for your journey;
- your mobile phone is switched off; and
- the doors are working correctly and are closed before moving off.

Before starting your journey, make sure you know and understand the:

- controls: where they are and how they work;
- vehicle size: its width and height (e.g. taxi bus/limousine);
- handling: the vehicle's characteristics; and
- brakes: whether ABS brakes are fitted.

Other safety issues

Before allowing your passengers to open the doors to get out of your vehicle, particularly on the off-side, you should always apply the parking brake and put the gear lever into neutral and check the mirrors and look around for any passing vehicles.

Also when you leave your vehicle make sure the parking brake is applied and the engine is switched off.

Loading your vehicle

It is your responsibility as a driver to ensure that your vehicle is not overloaded. Never exceed the weight limits for your vehicle as this can be dangerous. It will also mean that your vehicle uses more fuel as the engine has to work harder.

You **MUST** also ensure that any load:

- is fastened securely;
- does not obscure your view; and
- does not stick out dangerously.

Consider fitting a specially designed roof box to carry bulky items. This is streamlined to save fuel and will also secure the load more safely. If you do fit a roof box or rack, take it off when it is not in use to reduce wind resistance. The drag from a roof box can increase the fuel consumption by more than 15%.

Make sure that any objects or animals you carry are secured safely.

- Dogs should be strapped in with a special car harness or travel behind a grille. Other animals should be carried in cages or special carry-boxes which should be secured with the seat belt. The only exception to this is assistance dogs which can travel with their owner on the floor of your vehicle (when possible).
- Make sure packages are securely stored, preferably in the boot of the vehicle where they should be strapped down or wedged in to stop them moving around.

If you do need to carry packages inside the car make sure that they will not move if you have to brake or turn suddenly. In particular:

- strap down any large or heavy object with the seat belt;
- do not put anything on the parcel shelf or anywhere that it would obstruct your vision; and
- it is probably safest to carry small items on the floor, but make sure they do not get into the footwell and impede your use of the pedals.

Carrying a heavy load may have an effect on the handling of your car, so:

- you need to allow a greater stopping distance when carrying a heavy load;
- you may need to adjust your headlights and inflate your tyres more to take account of the load; and
- you should ensure that you distribute the weight evenly as any change to the centre of gravity will affect the braking and steering.

You also need to consider the effect a full complement of passengers will have on your braking distances, handling characteristics and stability. When loaded you need to increase your separation distance to allow for an increase in your stopping distances.

Your driving

When driving, it is your responsibility to follow all the relevant regulations. You must keep up to date with the road traffic rules and apply them at all times.

This manual not only provides general driving advice which any good driver should incorporate into their driving, it sets out clear guidance on how you as a professional driver should drive. As a professional driver higher standards are required, standards which set an example to other road users and have as their foundation the safety of others including your passengers, to all other road users especially those who are more vulnerable (Children, the elderly and those with disabilities) and consideration.

There is a recommended reading list at '[Appendix 4](#)' of this manual. The list includes DVSA publications, such as *The Official DVSA guide to Hazard Perception (DVD)*, *The Official DVSA Guide to Learning to Drive* and *The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills*. You should also refer to The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland to keep up to date with revisions in traffic rules and any new road signs that may be introduced.

Keep in mind that ignorance of the law is no defence. It is reasonable to expect that you, as a professional driver, will be knowledgeable and make every effort to apply that knowledge and set a good example.

Your driving licence

You need your taxi driver's licence in order to earn your living. To keep it you will want to drive to a high professional standard. When you drive any other vehicle – your own car, for example – it is essential that your driving continues to be to the same high standard.

Your taxi driver's licence will be at risk if you accumulate penalty points or are disqualified (e.g. Drink driving) due to offences committed while driving or riding **any** other vehicle.

Speed limits

Observing speed limits is your responsibility. The speed limits for cars and car derived vans (category B vehicles up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight) on our roads are:

- 70 mph (112 km/h) on motorways;
- 70 mph (112 km/h) on dual carriageways; and
- 60 mph (96 km/h) on any other road;

unless another, lower, speed limit applies. Speed limits are an absolute maximum they do not mean it is safe to drive at that speed irrespective of the conditions. You **MUST** take the road and traffic conditions into consideration and adjust your speed accordingly if necessary. Driving at speeds too fast for the conditions can be dangerous. For example you should always reduce your speed when:

- the road layout or condition presents hazards such as bends;
- sharing the road with pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, particularly children and motorcyclists; and
- driving at night, as it is more difficult to see other road users.

Speeding offences

The police use up-to-date technology to persuade drivers to obey speed limits, and to catch and prosecute those who do not. The aim is not to increase prosecutions; the aim is to improve driving standards.

Sophisticated detection equipment can 'lock on' to individual vehicles in busy traffic flows. Cameras can photograph vehicles exceeding the speed limit. It is therefore easier to detect who was driving at the time of the offence. If you are prosecuted for a speeding offence this could significantly impact on your taxi licence and ultimately result in its revocation.

Red light cameras

Cameras are increasingly being installed at light-controlled junctions to record drivers who do not comply with the signals. These cameras are also intended to act as a deterrent and to improve safety in general for road users.

Any photograph produced as evidence will be difficult to dispute if it shows the:

- time;
- date;
- speed;
- vehicle registration number; and
- length of time a red signal had been showing.

Bus lanes

Bus lanes are marked on busy roads to assist the flow of public transport. As a taxi driver, you can only use the bus lane if traffic signs indicate that taxis are permitted to use the lane. Some signs display times of operation. Outside of these times all vehicles can use the bus lane.



Use them sensibly and do not be tempted to speed just because the lane is clear ahead. You may be driving along the inside of stationary or slow-moving traffic where pedestrians could be tempted to cross the road. They may not be prepared for you moving faster along the bus lane.

Where the lane has been obstructed, try not to get annoyed. It achieves nothing except to distract you from your driving. Indicate in good time when you are ready to move out and then wait patiently for an opportunity to proceed.

Be prepared for the end of the lane, where other traffic may be changing position.

Parking restrictions

Whenever you are driving, regardless if you are operating as a taxi or not you should always maintain your professionalism. Do not stop in places where:

- stopping to allow passengers to get in or out of your vehicle is not allowed;
- you will cause an obstruction; or
- you will inconvenience other road users.

Similarly, do not park:

- where parking is prohibited; or
- less than 15 metres (50 feet) from any junction, wherever possible, unless there is an authorised parking space.

Route planning

Plan your route carefully, especially if you are driving an exceptionally long vehicle such as a limousine. Short cuts through residential or narrow streets to avoid traffic congestion could result in you getting stuck. When planning a route using satellite navigation system do not rely on it exclusively as it may have out-of-date or incomplete information at any given time.

Anti-theft measures

There are many anti-theft systems on the market. Manufacturers are increasingly fitting anti-theft systems such as 'immobilisers' to new cars and some larger vehicles. There are however additional systems available which can be purchased which would supplement or enhance these systems. This manual is not intended to provide a detailed description of the precautions that you should take to avoid having your vehicle stolen or broken into. To provide this information would only alert criminals to the ways in which they can be overcome.

Unless you are handing a vehicle over to another driver, or parking it on an operator's premises where it is safe, do not:

- leave a vehicle unlocked or unattended;
- allow passengers to leave personal effects in full view, secure them in the boot; and
- forget to set any fitted anti-theft devices.

Remember, *there have been numerous incidents when considerable damage has been done by taxis which were driven away by unauthorised persons. Not only has there been damage to the stolen vehicle, but also to vehicles belonging to innocent parties.*

The basic rules are simple:

- avoid carelessness;
- assess the risks of theft or damage;
- activate all anti-theft devices fitted; and
- park in a safe place.

Section four

DRIVER SKILLS

This section covers

- Professional driving
- Driving at night
- Motorway driving
- All-weather driving
- Avoiding and dealing with congestion
- Environment issues
- Breakdowns
- Road traffic incidents
- First aid

Professional driving

Essential skills

Professional drivers adopt a positive approach to driving. This means:

- looking after yourself, your vehicle and your passengers;
- planning well ahead;
- practising good observation;
- keeping in control; and
- anticipating events.

Professional driving also means making allowances. You must always consider the safety and comfort of passengers. Sometimes you will have to allow for the ignorance of other road users.

Control

It is essential that your vehicle is under control at all times. You must drive it skilfully and plan ahead, so that your vehicle is always travelling at the correct speed and ready for your next manoeuvre. You should never have to do anything at the last minute.

If you get caught, you've got it wrong

Awareness

You need to develop your awareness, to know what's going on around you at all times. This can be achieved through:

- planning ahead;
- anticipating – experience will soon tell you what other road users are probably going to do next;
- being in control. Plan your actions do not be forced into situations by others;

- understanding what might happen; and
- remembering similar situations.

You must always drive:

- responsibly;
- carefully;
- considerately; and
- courteously.

At all times, show that your standards are high and that you can drive a taxi with skill and safety.

Consideration

It is also important to consider the effects your vehicle might have on pedestrians, especially on a wet day with puddles of water forming at the side of the road. If they are standing or walking near the kerb you could splash them as you go by. When pulling into stop, watch for anyone who may suddenly step off the pavement.

Anticipation

There are not many excuses for being taken by surprise when you are driving; almost every event is predictable to some extent.

You must consider and prepare for all possibilities in all situations, especially when you can never be completely sure of what other road users will do. Remember, if you are driving a novelty vehicle or a stretched limousine you won't be able to brake or change direction like lighter, smaller vehicles can.

Put yourself in other people's shoes. Make allowances for:

- children;
- cyclists and motorcyclists;
- horse riders (on the road or grass verge);
- older pedestrians;
- obviously less able drivers; and
- learner drivers.

Problems arise particularly when you are not sure what vulnerable road users intend to do. Try to prepare yourself for all possibilities.

Aggression

Your passengers trust you; their safety is in your hands once they board your vehicle. Do not betray that trust. When you are driving:

- accept that mistakes can be made;
- expect others to make mistakes; and
- do not rise to aggression.

People who drive aggressively often see their driving as a competition. It is preferable to let them go on their way. Refuse to be involved in their bad driving behaviour – and their road traffic incident.

Your driving should always be a good example to others. By driving patiently and being prepared for the unexpected you will avoid:

- giving offence to others;
- creating hostility; and
- provoking others to drive dangerously.

Effective observation

As a taxi driver, you may at some point during your career have the opportunity to drive a variety of different types of vehicles. These will all have their own individual characteristics, characteristics which you need to be aware of, as they may impact on your ability to take effective all round observations.

You must use the mirrors effectively and act upon what you see in them. Just looking is not enough. You need to know what road users around you are doing, or might do next. Check frequently down the sides of your vehicle, particularly if you are driving something other than a standard taxi – e.g. stretched limousine. Your mirrors must be clean and properly adjusted for maximum view at all times. See cockpit drill on page 68.

Check the offside mirror:

- for overtaking traffic coming up behind, or already alongside;
- before signalling; and
- before changing lanes, overtaking, moving or turning to the right.



Check the nearside mirror:

- for cyclists or motorcyclists filtering up the nearside and for pedestrians who may be standing very close to the kerb;
- for traffic on your left when moving in two or more lanes;
- when you've passed another road user, parked vehicle or pedestrians before moving back to the left; and
- before changing lanes, after overtaking, before turning left or moving further to the left, before leaving roundabouts.

You should use your mirrors frequently so that you are constantly aware of what's happening around you. You must be aware of pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists.

Check for them:

- before moving off;
- at pedestrian crossings;

- in slow-moving, heavy traffic; and
- when manoeuvring to park.

Blind spots

A blind spot is the area that cannot be seen either when using normal forward vision or when using the mirrors. The main blind spots are:

- the area between what you see as you look forward and what you see in your exterior mirror; and
- the area obscured by the bodywork of the vehicle when you look in your mirrors.

Vehicles of different shapes have different blind spots. You should be aware that some vehicles have very large blind spots – they can obscure a group of pedestrians, a motorcyclist or a small car.



Exterior mirrors help reduce blind spots, but remember that mirrors won't show you everything behind you. You can buy auxiliary mirrors to mount on the surface of your exterior mirrors. These give an even wider angle of vision and go some way to reducing blind spots, but won't entirely eliminate them.

Even though you've used your mirrors, always look round over your right shoulder to check the blind spot before you move off.

Checking blind spots on the move

On occasions it will be necessary to check blind spots while you are on the move. These blind spots will be to either side and should not require you to look right round, but rather to give a quick sideways glance.

Looking right round to check blind spots on the move is unnecessary and dangerous, especially when driving at high speeds; in the time it takes you will lose touch with what's happening in front. Regular and sensible use of the mirrors will keep you up to date with what's happening behind. You will, however, still need to know when a glance into the blind spots is needed.



Take a quick sideways glance:

- before changing lanes;
- before joining a motorway or dual carriageway from a slip road; and
- before manoeuvring in situations where traffic is merging from the left or right.

Defensive driving

Recognise where other drivers' blind areas will be and avoid remaining in them longer than necessary. This is particularly important when overtaking large vehicles. Some vehicles have many blind spots resulting in very limited vision when reversing.

***Remember,** in some cases just a simple glance isn't enough. You need to check carefully.*

Observation at junctions

Some of the vehicles you might be driving may have a higher seating position – novelty vehicles or a taxi bus. Despite this higher seating position there will still be some junctions where you can't see past parked vehicles or even road signs. If possible, try to look through the windows of other vehicles, or watch for other vehicles' reflections in shop windows, which can give you some valuable information.

If you still can't see properly you will have to ease forward until you can do so, without emerging too far out into the path of approaching traffic. Remember, some road users are more difficult to see than others, particularly cyclists and motorcyclists.



Remember **LADEN**

- Look
- Assess
- Decide before you
- Emerge or enter, then
- Negotiate the junction.

Also remember, **if you do not know, do not go.**

Think once

Think twice

Think bike.

At junctions, check for everything that you would normally look for whenever you move off from a standstill position. For example, it can be difficult to predict what pedestrians might do at junctions. Sometimes they might run out into the road, or other times they might just step out without having seen you. In either case you must give way to them if they are in the process of crossing, they have priority.

If a vehicle is approaching from the right and indicating to turn into the junction where you are waiting, do not pull out until they have started to turn in, just to be sure. The only thing an indicator **confirms** for certain is that **it is working!**

Never decide to go after just one quick glance. Take in the whole scene before you commit yourself to moving out. Do not block access or exit from a side road when in stationary traffic, especially in busy or built-up areas. This is inconsiderate to other road users. Stay aware of side junctions when you are slowing down or stopping.

Zones of vision

A skilful driver will constantly scan the road ahead to see what's happening. You need to anticipate what might happen next.

Because you use the scanning technique you will know what's behind and next to you. Also note what's happening at the edges of your vision and check what changes there are out of the corner of your eye. You need to act on **all** your observations, and be ready to slow down or stop if necessary.

Check for:

- vehicles about to come out of junctions;
- children running out;
- cycles and motorcycles; and
- pedestrians stepping out.

Look for clues. If you see a cyclist ahead glance round to the right, they are probably going to try to turn right into the next road. Be ready for it. Similarly, watch the actions of pedestrians as they approach kerbs and cross the road. Older people sometimes become confused and change direction suddenly, or even turn back.

Keep a good look out for horse riders. If the animal starts to behave nervously allow the rider time and space to control it. The noise from your engine or exhaust system can disturb even a normally calm horse. Similarly, headlights or flashing lights can also startle horses. Heed any signal given by the rider to slow down or stop.

Take care even if the horse and rider are on the grass verge; you should still slow down and allow them the same courtesies.

Safe distances

Never drive at such a speed that you can't stop in the distance that you can see is clear ahead. You need to keep a safe distance regardless of the weather, the road and whether you are carrying passengers or not. This is one rule of safe driving that must never be broken.

- Always keep a safe separation distance between your vehicle and the one in front.
- In good weather conditions, leave at least 1 metre (about 3 feet 3 inches) per mph of your speed, or a two-second time gap.
- On wet roads you will need to leave at least a four-second time gap.

The two-second rule

You can check the time gap easily. Watch the vehicle in front pass a stationary object such as a bridge, pole or sign and then say to yourself:

“Only a fool breaks the two-second rule”

You should have finished saying this by the time you reach the object. If you have not, **you are too close**.

In heavy, slow-moving traffic you may not need to leave as much space, but you must still leave enough distance to be able to stop safely.

Tailgating

If you find another vehicle is tailgating, that is, driving too close behind you, gradually reduce your speed to increase the gap between you and any vehicle ahead. You will then be able to brake more gently and remove the likelihood of the close-following vehicle running into you from behind.

If another vehicle pulls into the safe separation gap you are leaving, ease off your speed to extend the gap again.

Never drive, at speed, within a few feet of the vehicle in front. It is not only car drivers in motorway right-hand lanes who commit this offence. Lorry and bus drivers can sometimes be seen driving much too close behind another vehicle – often at normal motorway speeds. If anything unexpected happens, a road traffic incident could follow.

You must not rely on someone else to plan ahead for you. They may not possess the same skills as you. Always keep your distance.

Being aware of others

Look well ahead for ‘stop’ lights. On a road where the national speed limit applies or on the motorway, watch for hazard warning lights flashing. These show that traffic ahead is slowing down quickly. If you notice vehicles in front of you flashing hazard warning lights, or you see traffic ahead slowing down, then briefly flash your own hazard warning lights to warn traffic behind you of the hazard.

When you plan well ahead, less effort is needed to drive your vehicle. You should be able to keep your vehicle moving by anticipating traffic speeds. Your fuel economy should improve and this could help your company to stay competitive.

Before you change direction or speed you must decide how any change will affect other road users. It is important to know what’s happening behind you as well as what’s going on in front of you. Faster-moving vehicles can catch up with you surprisingly quickly.

In some taxis due to their design you can't see much by looking round, which is why you must always be aware of vehicles just behind you and to either your left or right hand side as they come into your blind spot position.

A quick sideways glance is often helpful, especially:

- before changing lanes on a motorway or dual carriageway;
- where traffic joins from the right or the left; and
- prior to merging from a motorway slip road.

Do not take your attention off the road ahead for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Other road users

Others on the road might make mistakes. You have to accept that other road users are not necessarily as skilled as you so you must make allowances for their lack of consideration or forward planning.

Young children

Young children are particularly unpredictable and might run out into the road suddenly. If you are passing pedestrians who are walking or standing close to the kerb, you must be aware that the size of your vehicle could cause a draught. This could unsteady a small child or, indeed, an adult. Always check your nearside mirror as you pass.

When in school areas, you may see a pole with two flashing amber lights, one above the other. This means children will be crossing the road to or from school. Slow down and watch out for them.



Older people

Some older pedestrians may have poor eyesight or hearing difficulties. This might make them indecisive and they may sometimes become confused. They also might take longer to cross the road. You need to understand this and allow them more time.

Older drivers might be hesitant or become confused at major junctions or gyratory systems. Do not intimidate them by driving up too close or revving the engine.

Learner drivers

Learner drivers who are not used to all driving situations and other types of road user might be affected by close following vehicles. They might be driving at an excessively low speed or be hesitant. Be patient and give them room.

Cyclists

As you pass a cyclist you should allow them plenty of room – at least the width of a car. They might, due to high winds, be pushed into your path or swerve to avoid a drain cover or a steep

camber at the edge of the road. If they are approaching a junction or roundabout, you must be aware that they might turn right from the left-hand lane, crossing the path of traffic.

It is essential that you are aware of the presence of cyclists **all around** you. Use your nearside mirror as you pass a cyclist to ensure that you've done so safely.

When you are waiting at a junction, be aware that cyclists might move up along either side of you. If they are positioned in front of you, be aware of this situation as it develops and allow them to move away before you move off.



Motorcyclists

Much of what has been said about cyclists also applies to motorcyclists. They are very vulnerable because, like cyclists, they are much smaller than other vehicles, with a narrow profile, so they are difficult to see.

However, they also travel much faster than cyclists, so any situation develops much more quickly. Many incidents occur because drivers fail to notice motorcyclists, so look out for them when:

- emerging at junctions – the motorcyclist may be travelling along the major road and may be hidden behind other traffic. They can be completely hidden from you in the blind spots caused by the vehicle's door pillars, mirrors etc. They may also be hidden by signs, trees, or street furniture;
- turning into a road on your right – the motorcyclist may be following, overtaking or meeting you. Oncoming motorcyclists may be particularly difficult to see if they are following a larger vehicle or you are looking directly into low bright sun light;
- straddling lanes, e.g. to turn left or to negotiate a roundabout; and
- changing lanes or moving out to overtake slower-moving or parked vehicles.



Motorcyclists will often ride between slower-moving traffic in queues to make progress (commonly known as filtering), particularly in urban areas. When you are in heavy, slow-moving traffic, always ensure it's safe before you change direction.

When a motorcyclist is intending to turn right, they may look over their right shoulder to check their blind area, just before turning. This is called the 'lifesaver' look. Watch out for this and be aware that they'll be changing direction shortly.

When roads are wet during or after rain, pay particular attention to the path a motorcyclist might take, particularly on bends. There could be drain covers or white lines which the motorcyclist might need to avoid, to prevent the motorcycle skidding. Give them time and space to do so.

Pay special attention to motorcycles and mopeds displaying 'L' plates. The riders of these machines may be riding on the road with very little experience, so they are particularly vulnerable.

Horses and other animals

Horses are easily frightened by:

- noise
- headlights or flashing lights
- vehicles passing too close.

If you see horse riders ahead, either on the road or on the grass verge, plan your approach carefully. Slow down safely and do not rev the engine. You should allow for the fact that some of the riders might be learners and may not have full control if the animal is startled or frightened. Novice riders may sometimes be on a leading rein and have someone walking with them. When you pass them, do so slowly and leave plenty of room.

Always check your mirrors to ensure that you've safely completed the manoeuvre. Do not flash your headlights unnecessarily, and **do not** over rev your engine or sound your horn behind animals, particularly horses as this could cause them to shy or bolt. If someone in charge of animals signals you to slow down or stop, do so and switch off your engine if necessary.

Guide dogs

A guide dog usually has a distinctive loop type of harness. Remember the dog is trained to wait if there is a vehicle nearby.

The presence of a guide dog does not necessarily indicate only a visual impairment. When a person is both deaf and blind, they may carry a white stick with a red band and their dog may have a red and white checked harness. This could also mean they may neither see nor hear your signals.



Mirrors

You must use the mirrors well before you signal, make any manoeuvre or carry out an action which may affect other road users, such as before:

- moving away;
- changing direction;
- turning left or right;
- overtaking;
- changing lanes;
- slowing or stopping;

- speeding up; and
- opening any door.

Mirrors must be:

- clean;
- properly adjusted; and
- free from defects.

Whenever you use the mirrors you must act sensibly on what you see. Take note of the traffic behind you and what it is doing. Remember to check the nearside mirror for any vehicles moving up on the left. This is particularly important when moving in slow moving queues of traffic to check for filtering cyclists or motorcyclists.

Remember, just looking isn't enough.

Traffic lights

At some busy road junctions the road may be covered in skid marks. This shows that vehicles have come up to the junction too fast and have had to brake hard.

Approaching traffic lights

Lights on green - Ask yourself the following:

- How long has green been showing?
- Can I stop safely at this speed if the lights change?
- If I do have to brake hard, will the traffic behind be able to stop safely?
- Are there any vehicles waiting to turn left or right?
- How will weather conditions affect my braking?



Lights on red - You must, of course, stop at red traffic lights. However, you may be able to time your approach so that you keep your vehicle moving as they change. Timing your approach to avoid stopping and moving off again may make your driving easier and your passengers more comfortable.

Lights not working - If you come up to traffic lights that are not working, or there is a sign to show that they are out of order, treat the junction like an unmarked junction and proceed with great care. Take good, all-round observation and be prepared to stop if others assume priority.

Lights stuck on red - By law you **MUST NOT** go through a red traffic light, unless a police officer tells you to do so. Occasionally, the signals may go out of phase and the red light shows for longer than it should. Remember, if you drive on and there is a, you will have broken the law.

Never attempt to beat any traffic lights. Do not:

- speed up to try to beat the signals. Remember what might happen to your passengers if you have to brake suddenly; and
- leave it until the last moment to brake. Heavy braking may well end up in a loss of control.

Be aware that another road user coming across your path may go through the lights as they are changing to red. They may still be in your path as your lights change to green. Do not take any risks.

Remember, a green light doesn't give you right of way; it means 'go on if the way is clear'. Check the junction to make sure other traffic using the junction stops at their red traffic light. **Don't emerge at a green light if it will result in you blocking the junction.**

Advanced stop lines

At some traffic lights there are advanced stop lines to allow cyclists to position themselves ahead of traffic. The area between the advanced stop area and the second white line is usually coloured with a white image of a cyclist set in the middle.



If you are approaching this type of traffic light layout you **MUST** be prepared to stop at the first white line if the lights change. You are, in certain circumstances, permitted to stop past the first white line.

If, on approach, the lights change to amber or red and you are so close that to stop prior to the first white line would result in heavy braking, then you may enter the marked area but you **MUST** stop prior to the second white line.

Giving signals

You should signal to:

- warn/inform other road users what you are going to do, especially if this involves a manoeuvre; and
- help/aid other road users.

Road users you need to consider include:

- drivers of oncoming vehicles;
- drivers of vehicles behind;
- motorcyclists;
- cyclists;
- crossing supervisors (e.g. school crossing patrol);

- police directing traffic;
- mobility scooters;
- pedestrians; and
- horse riders.

Give all signals clearly and in good time. Also, use only those signals that are shown in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland.

You should avoid giving any signals that could confuse, especially when you are going to pull up just past a road on the left. Another road user might misunderstand the meaning of the signal.

Avoid giving unauthorised signals, no matter how widely you assume they are understood. Remember, any signal that does not appear in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland is unauthorised and could be misunderstood by another road user.

Avoid unnecessary signals. Always consider the effect your signal will have on all other road users.

Use of the horn

There are few instances when you will need to use the horn. Using it does not:

- give you any right of way; and
- relieve you of the responsibility of driving safely.

You should only sound the horn if you:

- think that another road user may not have seen you; and
- need to warn other road users of your presence – at blind bends or on a hump bridge, for example.

Do not use the horn:

- to rebuke another road user;
- simply to attract attention (unless to avoid an incident);
- when stationary (unless a moving vehicle presents a danger); or
- at night between 11.30 pm and 7.00 am in a built-up area, unless there is danger from a moving vehicle.

Avoid long blasts on the horn, which can alarm pedestrians. If they do not react, they may be deaf.

Remember, *see and be seen.*

Mobile phones

You **MUST** exercise proper control of your vehicle at all times. It is illegal to use a handheld mobile phone or similar device when driving. You should also never use a handheld microphone while driving. Even using hands-free equipment is likely to distract your attention from the road.

Find a safe place to stop before using all such equipment. Driving a taxi demands your full attention all of the time (see 'Section one' of this manual, on 'Responsibility').

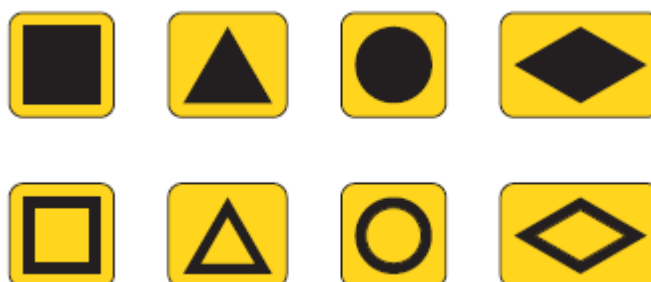
Emergency diversion routes

In an emergency, when it is necessary to close a section of motorway or other main road to traffic, a temporary sign may advise drivers to follow a diversion route. This route guides traffic around the closed section, bringing it back onto the same road further along its length.



To help drivers navigate the route, black symbols on yellow patches may be permanently displayed on existing direction signs, including motorway signs. A trigger sign will initially alert road users to the closure and then the symbol is shown alongside the route that drivers should follow.

A number of different symbols may be used, as in some places there may be more than one diversion operating. The range of symbols used is shown opposite.



Drivers should follow signs bearing the appropriate symbol. These may be displayed on separate signs or included on direction signs, giving the number of the road to follow.

Driving at night

Problems encountered

You need additional skills to drive at night. There are also additional responsibilities for the driver. The problems related to driving in the dark are:

- much less advance information;
- limited lighting (street lights or vehicle lights only);
- dazzle from the headlights of oncoming vehicles;
- shadows created by patchy street lighting;
- poor lighting on other vehicles, pedal cycles, etc; and
- dangers created by the onset of tiredness. Fatal road traffic incidents have happened because the driver of a vehicle either fell asleep briefly or didn't see an unlit broken-down truck or car until it was too late.



You need to plan journeys at night carefully, particularly on motorways where there is little to ease the boredom. You should also make sure that you get proper rest and refreshment stops.

Above all, you must drive at a speed that allows you to stop safely in the distance that you can see to be clear ahead. In many cases, that's within the distance illuminated by your headlights or by street lights.

Tiredness

The smallest lapse of concentration at the wheel can result in a loss of control. Many fatal incidents have been attributed to the driver becoming over-tired and falling asleep at the wheel. Remember:

- do not begin your journey if you are tired;
- do not drive without proper rest periods or rest breaks;
- keep plenty of cool, fresh air circulating through the driving area;
- do not allow the air around you to become too warm;
- avoid eating a heavy meal before or during a journey;
- pull up at the next safe, convenient and legal place if you feel your concentration slipping;
- listen to the radio or a CD if you can do so without disturbing your passengers (but do not change CDs while driving); and
- walk around in the fresh air before setting off again after a rest stop.

If you know that you will have a long journey at the end of the day, plan your day and your rest periods so that you can accommodate this journey. Remember, if you are carrying passengers, you can't stop in the middle of a journey to take a nap.

Factors causing fatigue include:

- time of day – natural alertness is at a minimum between midnight and 6.00am. There is another, smaller dip between 2.00pm and 4.00pm;
- lack of sleep;
- continual glare from oncoming headlights. This is very tiring on the eyes and can lead to general tiredness; and
- limited lighting (street lights, pedal cycles) causing strain on the eyes when reading signs, looking for premises or seeing other vehicles.

Remember, tiredness can kill.

Night vision

Have your eyesight tested regularly and make sure that your night vision is up to the standard required. If in doubt, have it checked. Do not:

- wear tinted glasses; or
- use windscreen or window tinting film or sprays.

Lighting-up time

Regardless of the official lighting-up times (when you must turn your lights on; see The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland), you should be ready to switch on any lights that you may

need. If the weather conditions are poor or it becomes overcast, do not be afraid to be the first driver to switch on.

Unlit vehicles

Only vehicles less than 1525 kg unladen are allowed to park in 30 mph zones without lights at night. Be on the alert when driving in built up areas, especially when the street lighting is patchy.

Although builders' skips must be lit and show reflective plates to oncoming traffic, these items are often either forgotten or vandalised, so be on the lookout for skips.

Adjusting to darkness

When you step out from a brightly lit area into darkness, such as when leaving a petrol station or a shopping centre, your eyes will take a short while to adjust to the dark conditions. Use this time to check and clean lights, reflectors, lenses and mirrors.

At dawn

Other drivers may have been driving through the night and may also be less alert. Leave your lights on until you are satisfied that other road users will see you.

Remember, it is harder to judge speed and distance correctly in the half-light at dusk and dawn. The colour of some vehicles makes them harder to see in half-light conditions. By switching your lights on you could prevent another road user stepping, riding or driving out into your path because they hadn't realised how close you were or how fast your vehicle was travelling.

Remember, see and be seen.

Vehicle lighting

It is essential that all lights are clean and that the bulbs and light units work properly. As well as being able to see ahead properly, other road users must be able to recognise the size of your vehicle and which way it is going.

In general, white lights indicate that the vehicle is:

- moving towards you;
- stationary, facing you; or
- reversing towards you (or is about to do so).

Red lights mean that the vehicle is:

- moving away from you;
- ahead of you and braking; or
- stationary, facing away from you.

Amber lights that are not flashing mark the side of a vehicle.

Auxiliary lighting

Fog lights

High-intensity rear fog lights and additional front fog lights must only be used when visibility is 100 metres (328 feet) or less. Remember to switch them off when conditions improve.

Interior lights

You should also ensure that the interior lights are working to aid passengers getting into and out of your vehicle and when necessary to assist with payment.

Exterior lights

Longer vehicles such as stretched limousines and novelty vehicles may have marker lights along the side to help make them more visible as they emerge from junctions and roundabouts, as well as other traffic situations.

Parking lights

Some vehicles, depending on their weight, must have lights on when parked on the road at night. This could include some types of taxis – stretched Limousines, novelty vehicles.

A lay-by is generally very close to the carriageway, and if your vehicle falls into the classification where lights should be used you must still have your lights on when parked in a lay-by. Unless your vehicle is parked off-road, such as in a car park, by law it must be clearly lit.

You must not park on a road at night facing against the direction of traffic flow unless you are in a recognised parking space.

Driving in built-up areas

Always use dipped headlights in built-up areas in the dark. It helps others to see you and also aids your visibility if the street lighting changes or is not working properly.

Watch out for:

- pedestrians in dark clothing;
- joggers; and
- cyclists (often without lights).

Take extra care when approaching pedestrian crossings. Drive at such a speed that you can stop safely if necessary. Make sure that you still obey the speed limits even if the roads appear to be empty.



Maintenance work

Remember that essential maintenance work is often carried out at night. Street cleansing in the larger cities often takes place at night, so be on the lookout for slow-moving vehicles.

Be on the alert for diversion signs, obstructions, coned-off sections of road, etc, which may be difficult to see at night.

Driving in rural areas

If there is no oncoming traffic you should use full beam headlights to see as far ahead as possible. Dip your lights as soon as you see the lights of traffic coming towards you or you start following another vehicle. This will avoid dazzling the other driver or rider.

If there is no footpath, watch out for any pedestrians on the nearside of the road. The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland advises pedestrians to walk facing oncoming traffic in these situations, but not all pedestrians follow this advice.

The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland advises large groups of people on organised walks to walk on the left, carrying appropriate lights and wearing fluorescent clothing.

Also, be prepared to find temporary traffic lights on rural roads.

Fog at night

If fog is forecast consider whether it is safe to drive especially if the fog becomes so thick that you are unable to go any further.

Unfortunately, seriously reduced visibility has resulted in a number of major incidents involving multiple collisions. If conditions become severe enough, your journey may have to be cancelled. There is ample justification for putting caution before inconvenience.

Overtaking at night

Some taxis (limousines, novelty vehicles) can take longer to overtake other vehicles due to their length and weight; you must only attempt to overtake when you can see well ahead that it is safe to do so, that you have time to return to your side of the road and you do not break the speed limit in order to complete the manoeuvre.

This means that, unless you are driving on a dual carriageway or motorway, you will have few opportunities to overtake. Unless there is street lighting, you might not be able to see properly if there are bends, junctions, hills, dips in the road, etc, which may prevent you from seeing an oncoming vehicle.

If you do decide to overtake, make sure that you can do so without cutting in on the vehicle you are overtaking, or causing oncoming vehicles to brake or swerve. Never close in on the vehicle ahead before you attempt to overtake it, as this will restrict your view ahead.

When overtaking, switch to main beam headlights when you are past the point where you would dazzle the driver in their external mirrors. Using headlights will improve your vision ahead, but do not dazzle approaching traffic (on a dual carriageway, for instance).

Separation distance

Avoid driving so close to the vehicle in front that your lights dazzle the other driver. Make sure that your lights are on dipped beam. If another vehicle overtakes you, dip your headlights as soon as the vehicle starts to pass you. Your headlight beam should fall short of the vehicle in front.

Remember, react in good time.

Motorway driving

Accident records show that, statistically, motorways are the safest roads in the UK. However, motorway incidents often involve fast-moving vehicles and consequently result in more serious injuries and damage than collisions on other roads.



There is often little room for error when driving fast on a motorway. The generally higher speeds and the volume of traffic mean that conditions can change much more quickly on motorways than on other roads. Because of this you need to be:

- totally alert;
- physically fit;
- concentrating fully; and
- assessing well ahead.

If you are not, you may fail to react quickly enough to any sudden change in traffic conditions.

Fitness

Do not drive if you are:

- tired;
- feeling ill;
- taking medicines that could affect your driving; or
- unable to concentrate for any reason.

Any of these factors could affect your reactions, especially in an emergency.

Regulations

You must follow the motorway rules and regulations. Study the sections in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland [Motorways \(253 to 273\) | nidirect](#). Know, understand and obey any warning signs and signals.

Vehicle checks

Before driving on the motorway you should ensure that you carry out routine checks on your vehicle, especially considering the long distances and prolonged higher speeds involved. For further details on vehicle maintenance, see [‘Appendix 3’](#).

Tyres

All tyres should be checked regularly, especially if you are going to drive on the motorway. Tyres can become hot and may disintegrate under sustained high-speed running (for more information on tyres see page 43).

Mirrors

Ensure that all mirrors are properly adjusted to give the best possible view to the rear. Also, make sure that they are clean. In winter, make full use of any demisting heating elements fitted to your mirrors. Keep the lenses and screens of any rear view video equipment clean and clear.

Windscreen

All glass must be:

- clean;
- clear; and
- free from defects.

Keep all windscreen washer reservoirs topped up and the jets clear. Consider, during the very cold winter months, adding windscreen cleaner which includes antifreeze. Make sure that all wiper blades are in good condition. Do not hang mascots or put stickers where they could restrict your view or distract you.

Windscreens are usually laminated and will crack rather than shatter. If you notice a crack or chip during your vehicle checks, have it assessed and repaired as soon as possible. A small crack can quickly become larger if the screen flexes during a journey, particularly if the road is uneven or potholed.

Instruments

Check all gauges, especially any warning lights such as oil pressure and coolant.

Lights and indicators

By law, all lights must be in working order, even in daylight. Make sure that all bulbs, headlight units, lenses and reflectors are fitted, clean and working properly.

High-intensity rear fog lights and marker lights (if fitted) must also work correctly. Indicator lights must flash between 60 and 120 times per minute. Reversing lights must either work automatically when reverse gear is chosen or be switched on manually, with a warning light to show when they are on.

Fuel

Make sure that you either have enough fuel to complete the journey or have planned your day that refuelling will not affect the service you provide.

Oil and coolant

The engine operates at sustained high speeds on a motorway so it is vital to check the oil level before setting out. Running low can result in costly damage to the engine and could cause a breakdown at a dangerous location. Similarly, it is essential to check the levels of coolant in the system.

Audio and video equipment

Do not allow the use of audio and video equipment (where fitted) to distract you from driving carefully and safely. You should not use microphones or headphones of any kind, or be distracted by tuning the radio while driving. Even if your vehicle is fitted with a hands-free radio communication or telephone system these can still distract you. Do not use them while driving; select a safe and suitable place to stop.

Joining a motorway

There are three ways in which traffic can join a motorway. All these entrances will be clearly signed.

At a roundabout

The motorway exit from a roundabout will be signposted to prevent traffic that does not want to use the motorway from driving onto it unintentionally.

Main trunk road becoming a motorway

There will be prominent advance warning signs so that prohibited traffic can leave the road before the motorway regulations come into force.

Via a slip road

Slip roads leading directly onto the motorway will be clearly signed to prevent prohibited traffic entering the motorway. In many cases the slip road begins as an exit from a roundabout.

Effective observation

Before joining the motorway from a slip road, try to assess the traffic conditions on the motorway itself. You may be able to do this as you approach from a distance or if, before joining it, you have to cross the motorway by means of a fly-over.

Get as much advance information as you can to help you to plan your speed on the slip road before reaching the acceleration lane. You must give way to traffic already on the main carriageway. Plan your approach so that you do not have to stop at the end of the acceleration lane. Never use the size or speed of your vehicle to force your way onto the motorway.

Use the MSM/PSL routine. A quick sideways glance may be necessary to ensure that you correctly assess the speed of any traffic approaching in the nearside lane.

Remember to:

- look for approaching traffic;
- assess the speed of approaching vehicles;
- decide when you can build up speed;
- emerge safely onto the main carriageway; and
- negotiate the hazard – adjust to the speed of traffic already on the motorway.

Do not:

- pull out into the path of traffic in the nearside lane if this would cause it to slow down or swerve; or
- drive along the hard shoulder to filter into the left-hand lane.

Making progress

Approaching access points

After passing a motorway exit there will usually be an entrance onto the motorway. Look well ahead and, if there are several vehicles joining the motorway:

- do not try to race them while they are in the acceleration lane;
- be prepared to adjust your speed; and
- move to the next lane, if it is safe to do so, to allow joining traffic to merge.

Lane discipline

Keep to the left-hand lane unless you are overtaking slower vehicles. Larger vehicles are generally fitted with speed limiters which set the maximum speed to 100 km/h (62 mph) or 90 km/h (56 mph), so consider this before attempting any overtaking. Watch out for signs showing a crawler/climber lane for these types of vehicles. This will suggest a long, gradual gradient ahead.

Use the MSM/PSL routine well before you signal to move out. Do not start to pull out before signalling, or signal at the same time as you begin the manoeuvre. Other drivers need time to react.

Before pulling back in after overtaking, be sure to check your left mirror even if the driver flashes their headlights at you. Do not rely on this signal. It is important that **you** check the position of the road user you've overtaken to ensure you've passed safely before returning to the left. Take extra care with motorcycles as they are more vulnerable and may be affected by your vehicle.

On a three or four lane motorway make sure that you check for any vehicles in the right-hand lane or lanes that might be about to move back to the left. Most of the traffic coming up from behind will be travelling at a higher speed. Look well ahead to plan any overtaking manoeuvre.

Separation distance

When driving at motorway speeds you must allow more time for everything that you do. If for example you are laden with a full complement of passengers and their luggage, your overall stopping distance will increase due to the extra weight. It will be further increased if the

weather conditions are poor and/or the condition of your brakes and tyres. You therefore need to allow:

- greater safety margins; and
- a safe separation distance.

This means that in good conditions you will need at least:

- 1 metre (about 3 feet 3 inches) for every mile per hour; and
- a two-second time gap.

In poor conditions (e.g. wet) you will need at least:

- double the distance; and
- a four-second time gap.

In snow or icy conditions the stopping distances can be up to 10 times those needed in normal dry conditions. If you are following a working snow plough, do not overtake, as there may be deep snow ahead.

Remember, seeing and being seen.

Make sure that you start out with a clean windscreen, mirrors and windows. Use the washers, wipers and demisters to keep the screen clear. In poor conditions use dipped headlights.

Keep reassessing traffic conditions around you. Watch out for brake lights or hazard warning lights that show the traffic ahead is either stationary or slowing down. (Hazard warning lights may be used on moving vehicles to alert traffic to danger ahead.)

High-intensity rear fog lights must only be used when visibility is 100 metres (328 feet) or less. They should be switched off when visibility improves, unless fog is patchy and danger still exists.

Motorway signs and signals

Motorway signs are larger than most normal road signs. They can be read from further away and can help you to plan ahead. Know your intended route. Be prepared in good time for the exit you require.

Where there are major road works there may be diversions. Look for the yellow:

- square;
- diamond;
- circle; and
- triangle symbols and follow the symbol on the route signs.



Remember, react in good time.

Signals

Warning lights show when there are dangers ahead such as:

- accidents;
- fog; or
- icy roads.

Look out for variable-message warning signs, which will warn you about:

- lane closures;
- speed limits;
- hazards; and
- traffic stopped ahead.

Red light signals

If the red 'X' signals show on the gantries above your lane, do not go any further in that lane.

- Be ready to change lanes.
- Be ready to leave the motorway.
- Watch out for brake lights and hazard warning lights showing that traffic has stopped or is moving very slowly ahead.



If the matrix sign indicating 'Stop: all lanes ahead closed' shows over every lane, stop and wait. You may not be able to see the reason for the signals and other drivers may be ignoring them. Remember, you are a professional driver who should know what the signals mean and can demonstrate to other drivers what they should do.

Weather conditions

Because of the higher speeds used on motorways, it is important to remember the effects that the weather can have on driving conditions.

In windy conditions, be alert for places where the road is shielded, i.e. by hedges or banks. When there is a break in this shielding, the sudden effect of high winds may mean your steering could become more difficult, and your vehicle might be blown off course.

Crosswinds

Be aware of the effects of strong crosswinds on other road users. In particular, watch out for these effects:

- after passing motorway bridges;
- on high, exposed sections of road; and
- when passing vehicles towing caravans, horse boxes, etc.

If you are driving a vehicle with flat sides, such as a taxi bus or a novelty vehicle, be on your guard as the vehicle's extra height means you will feel the effects of wind to a greater degree.

If you must travel under conditions of high winds, it may be useful to plan an alternative route before you set off, just in case. Motorcyclists are especially vulnerable to severe crosswinds on motorways. Watch out for them. Allow plenty of room when overtaking, a sudden gust could blow the rider across into your path. Check the left-hand mirror after you've overtaken them.

Rain

The spray thrown up by large, fast-moving vehicles can make it very difficult to see ahead. Higher speeds also cause more spray.

- Use headlights so that other drivers can see you.
- If overtaking a large vehicle that's throwing up spray, move out earlier than normal.
- Reduce speed when the road surface is wet. You need to be able to stop in the distance that you can see is clear.
- Leave a greater separation gap. Remember the four-second rule as a minimum.

Take extra care when the surface is still wet after rain. Roads can still be slippery even if the sun is out. In wet conditions, especially where there are puddles at the side of the road, try to avoid splashing pedestrians near the edge of the kerb.



Slow down and avoid driving through the puddle if possible – your consideration will be much appreciated.

Ice or frost

In cold weather, especially at night when temperatures can drop suddenly, watch out for any feeling of 'lightness' in the steering (not always obvious with power-assisted steering). This may suggest frost or ice on the road. Watch for signs of frost along the hard shoulder. Remember, a warm interior can isolate you from the real conditions outside.

Motorways that appear wet may in fact be frozen. There are devices that fix onto an outside mirror to show when the temperature drops below freezing point. Also, some manufacturers fit ice-alert warning lights on the instrument panel.

Allow up to 10 times the normal distance for braking in these conditions. Remember, any braking must be gentle.

Fog

If there is fog on the motorway you must slow down so that you can stop in the distance that you can see is clear.

You should:

- use dipped headlights;
- use the rear high-intensity fog lights if visibility is 100 metres (328 feet) or less;
- stay back; and
- check your speedometer.



Do not:

- speed up again if the fog is patchy; you could quickly run into dense fog again.
- hang onto the rear lights of the vehicle in front.

Fog affects your judgement of speed and distance. You may be travelling faster than you think.

Slow down.

Remember, don't use high intensity rear fog lights unless visibility is 100 metres (328 feet) or less.

Multiple collisions on motorways do not just happen – they are caused by drivers who:

- travel too fast;
- drive too close;
- assume nothing has stopped ahead; and
- ignore signals.

Watch out for any signals that tell you to leave the motorway. Also, look for incidents ahead and for emergency or incident support vehicles coming up behind (possibly on the hard shoulder). Police cars or enforcement officer vehicles may be parked on the hard shoulder with their lights flashing. This might mean that traffic has stopped on the carriageway ahead.

'Motorway madness' is the term used to describe the behaviour of reckless drivers who drive too fast for the conditions. The police prosecute drivers after serious multiple collisions. This is to get the message across to all drivers that they **must** slow down in fog.

Remember, you can't see well ahead in fog – so always slow down.

Breakdowns on the motorway

If your vehicle develops a problem, leave the motorway at the next exit or go to a service area. If you can't do this, pull onto the hard shoulder and stop as far to the left as possible.

- Switch on the hazard warning lights.
- Make sure that the vehicle lights are on at night, unless there is an electrical problem.
- When passengers are alighting from your vehicle, ensure they keep away from the carriageway and hard shoulder, and that children are kept under control.
- If removing passengers from your vehicle is not immediately feasible, move passengers as far forward in the vehicle as possible. This should help to limit injuries if another vehicle runs into the back of you.
- Do not try to carry out even minor repairs on the motorway.

You **MUST NOT** place a warning triangle or any other warning device on the carriageway, hard shoulder or slip road of a motorway.

Emergency telephones

Motorway emergency telephones are free of charge to use and easily located. You will be connected to the Police. The operator will then get in touch with a recovery company for you.

In most cases the emergency telephones are 1.6 km (about 1 mile) apart. The direction of the nearest phone will be shown by the arrow on the marker posts along the edge of the hard shoulder. Do not cross the carriageway or any slip road to get to a telephone. Face the oncoming traffic while using the telephone.

If your vehicle has its own telephone, make sure that whoever you contact also informs the police or telephone them yourself.

If you use a mobile phone, identify your location from the marker posts on the hard shoulder before you phone.

If anything falls from either your vehicle or another vehicle:

- use the nearest emergency telephone;
- do not attempt to recover it yourself; and
- do not stand on the carriageway to warn oncoming traffic.

Leaving the motorway

Progressive signs will show upcoming exits. At one mile you will see the:

- junction number;
- road number; and
- one-mile indicator.

Half a mile from the exit you will see signs for the:

- main town or city served by the exit;

- junction number;
- road number; and
- half-mile indicator.

Finally, from 300 yards (270 metres) before the exit there will be three countdown markers, one every 100 yards (90 metres). Remember, the driver of a vehicle travelling at 60 mph (95 km/h) has 60 seconds from the one-mile sign to the exit. Even at a speed of 50 mph (80 km/h) there is still only 80 seconds from the one-mile sign to the exit.

Plan well ahead in order to be in the left hand lane in good time. Large vehicles in the left-hand lane may prevent a driver in the second lane from seeing the one-mile sign, leaving very little time to move to the left safely.

You must use the MSM/PSL routine in good time before changing lanes or signalling. Assess the speed of traffic well ahead.

Avoid the situation where you try to overtake but then have to pull back in quickly in order to slow down to leave the motorway at the next exit.

Do not:

- pull across the carriageway at the last moment; and
- drive over the white chevrons that divide the slip road from the main carriageway.

If you miss the exit, drive on to the next one. Occasionally there are several exits close together, look well ahead and plan your exit in good time. Watch out for other drivers' mistakes, especially those who leave it too late to exit from the motorway safely.

Traffic queuing

In some places traffic can be held up on the slip road. Look well ahead and be prepared for this. Do not queue on the hard shoulder. Illuminated signs have been introduced at a number of these sites to give advance warning of traffic queuing on the slip road or in the first lane. Watch out for indicators and hazard warning lights when traffic is held up ahead.

Use the MSM/PSL routine in good time and move to the second lane if you are not leaving at such an exit.

End of the motorway

There are 'End of motorway regulations' signs:

- at the end of slip roads; and
- where the road becomes a normal main road.



These remind you that different rules apply to the road that you are joining. Watch out for signs advising you of:

- speed limits;
- dual carriageways;

- two-way traffic;
- clearways;
- motorway link roads; and
- part-time traffic signals.

Reduce speed

After driving on the motorway for some time it is easy to become accustomed to the speed. When you first leave the motorway, 40 mph (64 km/h) seems more like 20 mph (32 km/h). You should:

- adjust your driving to the new conditions as soon as possible; and
- check the speedometer to see your actual speed.

Start reducing speed when you are clear of the main carriageway. Remember, motorway slip or link roads often have sharp curves that need to be taken at lower speeds. Look well ahead for traffic queuing at a roundabout or traffic signals. Be prepared for the change in traffic at the end of the motorway. Watch out for pedestrians, cyclists, etc.

Contraflows and roadworks

Essential roadworks involving two-way traffic on one carriageway of the motorway are called contraflow systems. The object is to let traffic carry on moving while repairs or resurfacing take place on the other carriageway or lanes.



Red and white marker posts or traffic cylinders are used to separate opposite streams of traffic. The normal white lane-marking reflective studs are replaced by temporary yellow/green fluorescent studs.

Signs

Take notice of advance warning signs, gantry signs or flashing signals. Get into the correct lane in good time and do not force your way in at the last moment as this can greatly increase the chance of mistakes and incidents.

A 50 mph (80 km/h) compulsory speed limit is usually in force in contraflow systems. However, in the event of a head on collision, the closing speed will still be about 100 mph (approx 160 km/h). You **MUST** obey all speed limits; they have been imposed for a reason.

Roadworks are complicated environments and you will need more time to spot hazards, for your own safety and the safety of road workers.

Travelling through roadworks

When you drop your speed to travel through roadworks, it may seem as if you are travelling more slowly than you really are. It is important to observe the speed limit and not just slow down to the speed that feels safe to you. When you are approaching or driving through roadworks or contraflow areas, you should:

- concentrate on what's happening ahead;
- keep a safe separation distance from the vehicle in front – you will need time to brake if that vehicle stops suddenly;
- look out for road workers who are placing or removing signs;
- look well ahead to avoid having to brake hard;
- obey advance warning signs that tell you which lanes mustn't be used by large vehicles;
- avoid sudden steering movements or any need to brake sharply; and
- be aware that lanes may be narrower than normal. You must take care not to let your vehicle 'wander' out of such lanes.



Do not:

- let the activity on the closed section distract you;
- change lanes if signs tell you to stay in your lane;
- let your concentration wander – road workers can appear in unexpected places and can be difficult to spot in cluttered environments;
- exceed the speed limit; and
- speed up until the end of the roadworks when normal motorway speed limits apply again.

If all drivers observe the speed limits when travelling through these areas, this will help to keep traffic moving and not 'bunching up'. This is good for journey time as well as the environment.

Exiting roadworks

Stay within the speed limits even when you are leaving the coned areas. There may be road worker vehicles leaving the roadworks at this point. Do not speed up until you are clear of the roadworks.

Road traffic incidents

Serious incidents can occur when vehicles cross into the path of the other traffic stream in a contraflow. You **MUST**:

- keep your speed down;
- keep your distance; and
- stay alert.

Breakdowns

If your vehicle breaks down in the roadworks section, stay with it. These sections of motorway are usually recovered by a free recovery service so a vehicle (free of charge within the roadworks section) should be with you fairly promptly. Watch out for broken-down vehicles blocking the road ahead.

If you are carrying passengers when you break down you need to consider their safety and the completion of their journey. If possible you should try to arrange an additional taxi to pick them up once you are off the motorway.

All-weather driving

Passengers want to be able to travel 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Whatever the weather, you will need to drive safely so that you, your passengers and your vehicle arrive safely at your destination, with as few hold-ups as possible.

It is essential that you take notice of warnings of severe weather such as:

- high winds;
- floods;
- fog;
- ice; and
- snow and blizzards.

If you become stranded the road may become blocked for essential rescue and medical services. In the case of fog it could result in other vehicles colliding with the stranded vehicle. Training and preparation are vital. Do not venture out in severe conditions without being properly prepared. If the weather is very bad, cancel or postpone your journey.

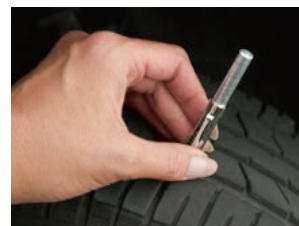
Your vehicle

Your vehicle must be in good condition at all times. This means making regular safety checks and observing maintenance schedules strictly. Far too many cases brought before the courts result from incidents caused by vehicles that weren't looked after properly.

Make sure that the vehicle you drive is fully roadworthy.

Tyres

Check your tyres are correctly inflated. This should be done when they are cold. Check the tread depth and pattern. Examine them for cuts, damage or signs of cord visible at the side walls.



Brakes

It is essential that the brakes are operating correctly. This is especially important on wet, icy or snow-covered roads. Any imbalance could cause a skid if the brakes are applied on a slippery surface.

Oil and fuel

Use the correct grades of fuel and oil in very hot or very cold weather.

Long periods of hot weather will make the oil in engines and turbo-chargers work harder. You may need to allow engines with turbo chargers fitted to idle for about a minute before

increasing engine revs above tick-over speed (when starting) or before stopping the engine. This prevents the bearings from being starved of oil.

In extremes of cold you will have to use either a suitable grade of diesel fuel with these properties to stop fuel lines freezing up or diesel fuel anti-waxing additives.

Use of the correct coolant when topping up prevents dilution of the rust inhibitors and anti-freeze components of the liquid. Also, remember that allowing a cooling system to freeze will wreck components and possibly crack the engine block or cylinder heads.

Icy weather

Ensure that the whole of the windscreen is clear before you drive away in frosty conditions. Make full use of all heaters and demisters fitted.

If you are driving at night, remember that falling temperatures may lead to icy conditions. This will cause ungritted roads to become very slippery. If the road surface looks wet and your steering feels light and/or there is no sound from your tyres you are probably driving on ice.

Ease your speed as soon as you can. Braking must be gentle and over much longer distances.

Leave more time for the journey, because you will need to drive more slowly than usual. On slippery surfaces, keep a safe separation distance from any vehicle in front. Allow **10** times the normal stopping distance.

Drive sensibly, and be careful of other road users getting into difficulties. Do not accelerate, brake or steer suddenly. No risks are ever justified. **If conditions are really bad, do not drive.**



Heavy rain

You must make sure that you can see clearly ahead at all times. Do not drive if a windscreen wiper is faulty, even though the one on your side is working. In addition, the windscreen must be demisted fully and the windscreen washer bottle(s) topped up with the correct washing fluid. This is particularly important in winter. It is against the law to drive with frozen or ineffective windscreen washers.

Allow more space for braking – at least twice as much as in dry conditions. If possible, brake only when the vehicle is stable (and preferably when travelling in a straight line). Also, avoid sudden or hard braking.

Obey advisory speed limit signs on motorways. Take great care when overtaking on motorways in very wet weather. Your tyres may lose grip because of the build-up of a water layer between the road surface and the tyres (known as aquaplaning). If your steering suddenly feels light, ease your foot off the accelerator and slow down gently without braking. When the tyres regain their grip, the steering should feel normal again.

When driving through deep water such as a ford, drive slowly in as low a gear as possible (e.g. 1st gear) with the engine revs high to prevent water entering the engine through the exhaust system.

Other road users will have more difficulty seeing you when there is heavy rain by the spray from your vehicle so take care when you need to change lanes. When overtaking cyclists in heavy rain, take care that spray from your vehicle does not affect their control. Leave plenty of room when passing them and check your left-hand mirror to see whether they are still in control. Do not use rear fog lights unless visibility is 100 metres (328 feet) or less. Fog lights reflect and dazzle following drivers.

Remember, *no risk is worth taking.*

Snow

Falling snow can reduce visibility quite seriously. Use dipped headlights and slow down. Leave a much greater stopping and separation distance – up to 10 times the stopping distance on dry roads. When driving on snow, and particularly if it is also windy, the best way to control your vehicle is to drive slowly in as high a gear as possible.

Road markings and traffic signs can be covered by snow. Take extra care at junctions.



High-level or exposed roads are sometimes closed by deep snow. Listen to any weather warnings. Do not try to use such roads if:

- warning signs indicate that the road is closed; and
- severe weather is forecast.

Some country roads in exposed places have marker posts at the side of the road, which tell drivers how deep the snow is.

Remember, if you get stuck it could:

- stop snow ploughs from clearing the road;
- delay emergency vehicles;
- cause other road users to become stuck; and
- put passengers at risk.

If your vehicle gets stuck in snow use the highest gear possible to try to get out. Alternating between the reverse and forward gears, if possible, is a good way of getting moving again when the snow is soft.

Do not keep revving in a low gear; you will only make the driving wheels dig in even further. It is often helpful to keep a couple of strong sacks in your vehicle to put under the drive wheels if you get stuck.

Hardened snow can cause considerable damage. A shovel is often handy if you must go through areas where snow is a problem during the winter. Make sure that your vehicle is properly prepared for any journey. This is especially important in the winter. In some countries you must carry snow chains at certain times of the year, and they must be used in bad weather. Ultimately, ask yourself whether you should drive through an area where such conditions are likely.

Ploughs and vehicles spreading sand or other de-icers

Do not try to overtake a snow plough or vehicle spreading sand or other de-icers. You may find yourself running into deep snow or skidding on an untreated stretch of road, which these maintenance vehicles could have treated had you followed on behind them. Keep well back from these vehicles. Their presence could mean that the weather is already bad or that it is expected to be.

Fog

Do not drive in dense fog if you can postpone your journey and avoid driving at night in these conditions. Do not start a journey that might need to be abandoned because it becomes too dangerous to drive any further.

If you must drive in fog, **slow down**. Also, keep a safe separation distance from any vehicle in front. If you can see the rear lights of a vehicle in front you are probably too close to stop in an emergency.

A large vehicle ahead of you may temporarily displace some of the fog, making it seem thinner than it really is. Overtaking at that point could quickly lead to a problem. Stay back.

Slow down

- Do not speed up if the fog appears to thin. It could be patchy and you may run into it again.
- Keep checking the speedometer to see your true speed. Fog can make it difficult to judge speed and distance.

Stay back

- Keep a safe separation distance from any vehicle ahead.
- Do not speed up if a vehicle appears to be close behind.
- Only overtake if you can be sure the road ahead is clear.

Lights

Use dipped headlights whenever you find it difficult to see. You need to see clearly and be seen at all times.

Use high-intensity rear fog lights and front fog lights (if fitted) when visibility is 100 metres (328 feet) or less. Rear fog lights must only be capable of operating with dipped headlights or front fog lights. Switch off front and rear fog lights when you can see further than 100 metres (328 feet), but beware of patchy fog.

Keep all lights and reflectors clean and make sure that they are working correctly at all times, particularly in bad weather.

Reflective studs

Reflective studs are provided on dual carriageways and motorways to help drivers to see in poor visibility. The colours of reflective studs are:

- red - On the left-hand edge of the carriageway;
- white - To indicate lane markings;
- amber - Between the right-hand edge of the carriageway and the central reservation;
- green - At slip roads and lay-bys; and
- yellow/green fluorescent - At roadworks contraflow systems.

On some country roads there are black and white marker posts with red reflectors on the left-hand side and white reflectors on the right-hand side of the road. All these reflective devices are designed to help you know where you are on the road.

In fog do not:

- drive too close to the centre of the road;
- confuse centre lines with lane markings;
- drive without using headlights; and
- use full beam, especially when following another vehicle. You will make it more difficult for the other driver to see by casting shadows and causing glare in the mirror.

Remember, you can't afford to take risks. Slow down and stay back.

High winds

In bad weather it is a good idea to listen to, watch or read the weather forecast if you are going to drive a taxi bus or a novelty vehicle which has high sides.

Listen to advance weather warnings if you have to drive on roads that often have strong winds, such as:

- high bridges;
- high-level roads;
- exposed viaducts; or
- exposed stretches of motorway.

Watch out for signs warning of high winds, and beware of fallen trees or damaged branches that could fall on your vehicle. Take notice of signs and warnings and remember that:

- roads may be closed to certain vehicles;
- there may be delays due to lanes being closed. This is done on high bridges to create empty buffer lanes in the event of any large vehicles being blown off course; and

- you may need to use another route.

If you ignore any signs or warnings you could put your passengers, your vehicle and yourself at risk. If there is an incident your passengers could be injured and you could be prosecuted.

Other road users

In very windy weather, you are likely to be affected by high sided vehicles when:

- they overtake you; and
- you overtake them.

Similarly you can affect other road users particularly motorcyclists and cyclists.

Although cars are the most stable vehicle under high winds, buffeting can still affect them to some extent so do not ignore warnings of severe winds.

Avoiding and dealing with Congestion

The increasing number of vehicles on the roads has caused a level of congestion that can lead to frustration and increases in journey times. This affects urban areas, higher-speed roads and motorways.

However, there is an opportunity for all drivers to help alleviate this problem to some extent, by changing their driving habits. Detailed below are ways to do this.

Journey planning

Route planning

Make sure you know where you are going by planning beforehand. If possible, include alternatives in your plan in case you find your original route blocked, especially if the location is unknown to you. If you do have an alternative it should try to be as direct as possible, you need to consider the potential cost a lengthy alternative route would have on your passenger. You could refer to a satellite navigation system (but do not rely on it exclusively), these have been known to take you along what can be inaccessible roads for the type of vehicle your driving.

With the introduction of Smartphone's, traffic flow and live traffic updates are now available online or using a traffic apps.

Be aware of the size of your vehicle in relation to the width of certain accesses or narrow town roads – it can be very difficult or impossible to manoeuvre a long vehicle like a limousine, for example, in a one-way street or if a sharp turn is found to be too narrow, or where weight or height restrictions apply (novelty vehicles – fire engine, etc)

Satellite navigation systems are a useful tool when in transit but you should never rely upon them exclusively. Most are designed for cars and smaller vehicles, if you are driving a novelty vehicle, they may not filter out inappropriate items, such as narrow lanes, weight-restricted areas or low bridges, all of which physically may restrict or prohibit the passage of long or taller vehicles.

Be aware also that, because situations can change very quickly on roads, it is possible there may be sudden delays or diversions which a global positioning system (GPS) can't detect.

When in transit, your vehicle radio may pick up and broadcast local warnings of any sudden emergencies, delays or diversions in your vicinity. This extra warning information will help you make any urgent or necessary adjustments to your route plan.

Remember that any in-vehicle navigation system can reduce your concentration on the road and your level of control of the vehicle, so it is advisable to restrict any visual or manual interaction with a system to an absolute minimum (see Rule 150 in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland [Rules and advice for drivers and riders \(103 to 158\) | nidirect](#)). In the interests of safety, you should find a safe and legal place to stop before making adjustments.

Your journey

Leave plenty of time, especially if you are connecting with other forms of transport – air, rail or ferry. Concern about reaching your destination in time can lead to frustration and the increased tendency to take risks, which in turn could lead to an incident. Timetables and schedules need to allow for this so that you are not forced into taking unnecessary risks to stay on time. Being delayed or diverted, add to this frustration so resist the temptation to speed in order to make up time.

Mobile phones

A mobile phone can be useful in case of delays or breakdowns. However, remember that it is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving, and this includes while you are waiting in a queue of traffic. Find a safe place to stop before making a call. If you are driving alone on a motorway, you must leave the motorway before using the phone.

Hazard perception

Looking well ahead to see what other road users in front of you are doing will enable you to plan your driving. If you see any changes that could cause you to slow down or alter course, ease off the accelerator and gradually slow down rather than leaving it late and having to brake harshly. By slowing down early the traffic situation ahead will often have cleared by the time you get there.

Constant speed

When you can see well ahead and the road conditions are good, you should try to drive at a constant speed – this is the time to use cruise control if it is fitted to your vehicle. Cruise control should not be used when the road conditions are poor – wet or slippery.

Whether or not you have cruise control, choose a speed which is within the speed limit and one which you and your vehicle can handle safely. Make sure you also keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front. Remember to increase the gap on wet or icy roads. Also remember that, in foggy conditions, you will have to slow down to the distance you can see to be clear.

At busy times, there are some stretches of motorway that have variable speed limits shown above the lanes. The maximum speed limits shown on these signals are mandatory and appear on the gantries above the lanes to which they apply.

These speed limits are in place to make traffic proceed at a constant speed as this has been shown to reduce bunching, and consequently, over a longer distance, congestion eases. Your overall journey time normally improves by keeping to the constant speed, even though at times it may appear that you could have travelled faster for shorter periods.

Lane discipline

You should drive in the left-hand lane of a dual carriageway or motorway if the road ahead is clear.

If you are overtaking a number of slower moving vehicles it may be safer to remain in the centre lane until the manoeuvre is completed rather than continually changing lanes. Return to the left-hand lane once you've overtaken all the vehicles or if you are delaying traffic behind you, but do not hog the middle lane.

You mustn't normally drive on the hard shoulder, but at roadworks and certain places where signs direct, the hard shoulder may become the left-hand lane.

Using sign information

Look well ahead for signals or signs, especially on a motorway. Signals situated on the central reservation apply to all lanes.

On very busy stretches, there may be overhead gantries with messages about congestion ahead, and a separate signal for each lane. The messages may also give an alternative route which you should use if at all possible. If you are not sure whether to use the alternative route (for example, can you reach your destination if you use the route suggested), take the next exit, pull over at the first available safe area (lay-by or service area) and look at a map.

Remember, on a motorway, once you've passed an exit and encounter congestion, there may not be another opportunity to leave and you could be stuck in slow-moving or stationary traffic for some time. Take the opportunity to leave the motorway when it arises; you can always re-join it if you feel that this is the best course of action, once you've had time to consider the options.

If you need to change lanes to leave the motorway, do so in good time. At some junctions a lane may lead directly off the motorway. Only get in that lane if you wish to go in the direction indicated on the overhead signs.

Motorway signals can be used to warn you of a danger ahead. For example, there may be a road traffic incident, fog, or a spillage, which you may not immediately be able to see.

Amber flashing lights warn of a hazard ahead. The signal may show a temporary maximum speed limit, lanes that are closed or a message such as 'Fog' or 'Queue'. Adjust your speed and look out for the danger. Do not increase your speed until you pass a signal which is not flashing or one that gives the 'All clear' sign and you are sure it is safe to increase your speed.

Gantries

These feature a large message sign board and signal boxes above each of the lanes and the hard shoulder. The signs on the gantries show the mandatory speed limit across the carriageway, displayed in a red circle and enforced by law.



Variable speed limits help to keep traffic moving when the route is congested. The speed and availability of lanes is controlled so that traffic is able to flow more smoothly.

The signals can also be used to control and divert traffic around road traffic incidents, or in order to close a lane or multiple lanes for roadworks. This provides additional protection for road workers and more advance notice to road users of what's happening ahead.

Urban congestion

Congestion in urban areas leads to:

- longer journey times;
- frustration; and
- pollution through standing and slow moving traffic.

Congestion is generally at its worst during peak periods such as the daily commute to and from work. This can be even heavier during school term with the added pressures of getting kids to school on time.

Environmental issues

The effects of pollution

Air pollution affects the health of many people. In densely populated areas, traffic is the biggest source of air pollution. A significant proportion of all emissions comes from road transport so how we drive can have a positive effect on the local air quality.

If you follow the principles of Ecosafe driving set out in the following pages, you will become a more environmentally friendly driver. Your journeys will be more comfortable, you will reduce the need to brake suddenly or harshly and you could considerably reduce both your fuel bills and those emissions that cause damage to the atmosphere. In addition, it will help reduce running costs by reducing wear and tear on your vehicle. Plus as a professional driver, you can set an example to other road users in helping to keep the environment green.

Fossil fuels are a finite resource which must be used wisely; use the advice contained in this manual to become an Ecosafe driver. Developing your planning, perception and anticipation skills will obviously help to make you a safer driver. However, although it is beneficial to save fuel, you must not compromise your safety or that of other road users when attempting to do so. Road safety is more important. At all times you should be prepared to adapt to changing conditions and it may be that you will have to sacrifice fuel-saving for safety.

Remember, *never sacrifice or compromise road safety over Ecosafe driving.*

It is vital that professional drivers manage the fuel used by their vehicles. This can be done by monitoring your fuel usage which can help reduce fuel consumption by at least 5%, as well as providing cost savings. As part of this process, use of safe and fuel-efficient driving techniques will contribute to this fuel saving.

Using fuel more efficiently means:

- improved profit margins;
- lower emissions;
- lower costs; and
- improved environmental performance.

What you can do to help

Driving in a more fuel-efficient way is known to save on costs. It is better for the environment and can also improve the image of a company and the transport industry as a whole, by showing that they are making an effort to reduce their carbon footprint.

Try to drive in an eco-friendly manner at all times, whether you are driving for business or pleasure. For example, if your vehicle is stationary and likely to remain so for more than a few minutes you should apply the parking brake and switch off the engine. This is not only good practice it helps to reduce emissions and noise pollution.

Fuel, like all forms of power, costs money as well as having an impact on the environment. Minimising the fuel or power you use is always important, both for the planet and for your pocket. It is still possible to drive a taxi in a manner that's more beneficial to the environment by applying a little care and thought to how, and when, you drive. Here are some suggestions on what you can do.

Becoming an Ecosafe driver

Ecosafe driving is a recognised and proven style of driving that contributes to road safety, while reducing fuel consumption and emissions.

One of the main factors in increasing road safety is the emphasis on planning ahead so that you are prepared in advance for potential hazards. By increasing your hazard perception and planning skills you can make maximum use of your vehicle's momentum and engine braking. By

doing this, you can help reduce damage to the environment. Momentum allows the engine to run more efficiently, with less strain on components. Keeping your vehicle moving at a slow walking pace, instead of moving it from a standstill, will use less fuel.

The speed gathered when climbing a hill can be used to descend without touching the accelerator. Modern vehicles use little or no fuel in these circumstances and won't do so until the accelerator is needed again when descent is complete and momentum begins to slow.

Hazard awareness and planning

You should be constantly scanning all around as you drive. Check into the far distance, midground and foreground. Also check behind and to the sides by using all mirrors frequently.

Early recognition of potential hazards is important, but just looking is not enough; you need to act correctly on what you've seen. This will mean you are able to:

- anticipate problems; and
- take appropriate action in good time to ensure that you are travelling at the correct speed when dealing with a hazard.

By doing this you will avoid late braking and harsh acceleration, both of which lead to higher fuel consumption. Whenever you drop down a gear, fuel consumption increases. Forward planning helps to eliminate excessive gear changes, such as when approaching junctions or roundabouts.

It is not always necessary to use every gear. Reducing the number of gear changes not only improves fuel consumption but also means you save time and physical energy, which in turn can mean less fatigue.

Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front as this will help you to plan your driving. Try to leave yourself sufficient room so you do not always have to brake immediately or harshly when traffic in front of you slows down. By simply taking your foot off the accelerator, your vehicle will slow down and fuel consumption will be reduced. However, you may wish to gently touch your brake pedal to activate your brake lights to advise vehicles behind that you are slowing down.

If you plan early for hazards you will avoid causing other road users to bunch, traffic will flow more smoothly and you will use less fuel.

Driving away

Avoid over-revving your engine when you start your vehicle and try to pull away smoothly.

Choosing your speed

Always drive sensibly and keep within the speed limit. Exceeding a speed limit by only a few miles per hour will mean that you use more fuel but, more importantly, you are breaking the law and increasing the risk of serious injury if you are involved in a collision.

Cruise control

Use cruise control, when appropriate, if it is fitted. Using cruise control keeps a steady setting on the accelerator so not varying the intake of fuel. Use of constant speeds on motorways and dual

carriageways enables full use of cruise control, which helps to optimise the engine management system's ability to precisely measure and deliver the appropriate amount of fuel for any given situation. This not only gives more economic fuel use but also reduces engine wear.



Use of cruise control, combined with effective route planning and keeping unnecessary revs to a minimum, can help to minimise the amount of fuel used. If your vehicle has a fuel consumption readout display on the instrument panel, use it to monitor the fuel used during the journey. Cruise control can also help to maintain your speed within the speed limit.

But remember, it should not be used as a substitute for concentration – you must exercise proper control of your vehicle at all times. Also you should not use cruise control when driving in wet or slippery conditions or in heavy traffic as your feet in relation to the foot controls may not be in their usual position which may increase your reaction time.

The accelerator

Try to use the accelerator smoothly and progressively. When appropriate, take your foot off the pedal and allow the momentum of the vehicle to take you forward. Taking your foot off the accelerator when going downhill can save a considerable amount of fuel without any loss of vehicle control.

Whenever possible, avoid rapid acceleration or heavy braking as this leads to greater fuel consumption and more pollution. Driving smoothly can reduce fuel consumption by about 15% as well as reducing wear and tear on your vehicle.

Selecting gears

It is not always necessary to change up or down through each gear – it is possible to miss out intermediate gears. This helps to reduce the amount of time you spend accelerating, and as this is when fuel consumption is at its highest, you can save fuel by skipping some gears. As soon as conditions allow, use the highest gear possible without making the engine struggle, and do not use the accelerator fiercely.



Fuel consumption

Check your fuel consumption regularly. To make sure you are getting the most from your vehicle, simply record the amount of fuel you put in against miles travelled. This will help you check whether you are using fuel efficiently.

If you haven't changed your driving method, or the conditions in which you are driving, an increase in the average fuel consumption can mean the vehicle needs servicing. An eco-friendly driver is constantly aware of how much fuel their vehicle uses. If a trip computer is fitted, this can help you check fuel consumption.

Overfull fuel tanks can cause fuel to leak through the breather vent. Fuel expands when hot, so leaks can happen once expansion occurs if the tank is filled to the brim. This can waste fuel and make the road surface dangerous for other road users. Always leave a little room for expansion in the interests of safety.

Remember, spilt fuel can make the road surface very slippery.

Braking

Smooth and progressive braking will save fuel and reduce stress on the vehicle, driver and passengers. When using the footbrake, the lost road speed has to be made up by accelerating, which burns fuel. If it is necessary to change down a gear, even more fuel is used.

Harsh braking uses more fuel and increases the number of gear changes required to regain speed. It is possible that the safety and comfort of passengers being carried is more likely to be compromised under heavy or sharp braking. By using smooth, progressive braking, the amount of road speed lost can be minimised.

Engine braking

With your foot fully off the accelerator the engine needs very little fuel, so take advantage of engine braking wherever possible. Use lower gears rather than extended use of the brakes to avoid brake fade.

Engine power

Modern vehicles are designed to deliver power even when engine revs are quite low. You will find that you can make use of the higher gears at low speeds.

Select for economy and low emissions

There are advantages and disadvantages in all types of fuel; engines powered by diesel are possibly the most popular within the taxi industry. These engines are very fuel efficient and produce less carbon dioxide (a global warming gas) than any other road transport fuel. They also emit less carbon monoxide and fewer hydrocarbons than petrol-engine vehicles, but they do produce more emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulates, which are bad for local air quality.

A particulate trap on a vehicle can help to reduce harmful emissions by filtering hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and particulate matter. Newer vehicles have to meet strict new emissions standards aimed at reducing these pollutants, and all diesel vehicles can now use ultra-low sulphur diesel fuel to reduce exhaust pollution.

When you obtain a new vehicle, the vehicle's handbook will be helpful in advising how to drive it in the most fuel efficient way. Some advantages of driving in a fuel-efficient way are:

- reduced emissions; and
- improved operating costs.

Keep your vehicle well maintained

You should make sure that your vehicle is serviced and maintained regularly.

- Make sure the engine is tuned correctly. Badly tuned vehicles use more fuel and emit more exhaust fumes. The taxi vehicle test includes a strict exhaust emission test to ensure correct tuning, so vehicles operate more efficiently and cause less air pollution.
- Have your vehicle serviced as recommended by the manufacturer. The cost of a service may well be lower than the cost of running a badly maintained vehicle.
- If you do your own maintenance, make sure that you send oil, old batteries and used tyres to a garage or local authority site for recycling or safe disposal. Do not pour oil down the rain; it is illegal, harmful to the environment and could lead to prosecution.
- Use good-quality engine oil in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Make sure your tyres are properly inflated. Incorrect tyre pressure results in shorter tyre life and may create a danger as it can affect stability and braking capacity. In addition, under-inflation can increase fuel consumption and emissions. You should check your tyre pressures at least once a week.

When refuelling your vehicle, ensure that you switch the engine off first and you should aim to only fill it up to the bottom of the filler neck and no further. Make sure you replace the filler cap correctly and make sure it is secured to prevent any spillage. If you fill the tank to the brim, when the fuel becomes hot and expands, its only way of escape is via the breather vent. If, at any time, you notice that your fuel filler cap is missing you **MUST** get it replaced before continuing.



Do not forget to pay for your fuel before leaving the forecourt, this could be very embarrassing especially if you are stopped by the police and you are carrying passengers.

Also, knowing your particular vehicle's average miles or kilometres per litre (mpl or km/l) can help early identification of problems. If the ratio drops, this may indicate a problem with the vehicle. Drivers are usually the first to notice problems, so here's a check list of signs that may indicate that your vehicle needs attention to stop it wasting fuel. Include this list in your regular vehicle examination.

Check for:

- any fuel or oil leaks including missing or broken fuel caps;
- signs of fuel spills around filler neck;
- low tyre pressure;
- tyre wear suggesting faulty steering or wheel alignment;
- missing tyre valve caps;

- traces of black smoke in exhaust;
- any bodywork damage; and
- excessive engine oil consumption (no leaks) suggestive of internal wear.

Improving fuel economy

Every time you move off, do so smoothly – avoid harsh acceleration.

Change down to the appropriate gear, but wait for your speed to decrease.

On acceleration, try to skip gears where you can.

Never leave it to chance – maintain your vehicle in good condition.

Observe and keep the revs at a steady level.

Minimise brake use – plan ahead and keep monitoring road conditions.

Your top speed should remain constant – think ‘Gear high–rev low’.

Breakdowns

If your vehicle breaks down, try to stop as far to the left as possible. If you can, get off the main carriageway without causing danger or inconvenience to other road users, especially pedestrians. Some form of warning is vital if an electrical problem has put the rear lights out of action. Place a warning cone, pyramid or reflective triangle at least 45 metres (147 feet) behind the vehicle on normal roads. However, do not attempt to place any type of warning device on a motorway.

Some vehicles have their fuse and relay boxes on the right hand side of the vehicle. Do not attempt to work on the right-hand side of the vehicle unless you can do so without putting yourself in danger or affecting passing traffic. Many road traffic incidents happen at breakdowns. Protect yourself, your passengers and your vehicle.

Assessing the dangers

If your vehicle is creating an obstruction or is a potential danger to other road users, tell the police as soon as possible. This is particularly important when you are carrying passengers, especially school children. Their safety must come first.

If you think that there is a serious risk of collision, escort your passengers to a safe location. Ensure that they wait somewhere well away from the traffic. Explain carefully what you are doing and ask someone to go for help if necessary.

Make sure that you:

- know where your passengers are;
- know what they are doing; and
- keep them informed.

If you breakdown on a motorway, pull onto the hard shoulder as far to the left as possible ensuring that your steering is turned slightly to the left so that if you are hit from behind, your vehicle will not be pushed on to the main carriageway.

Ask your passengers to get out of the vehicle via the nearside door away from passing traffic and to wait near the vehicle but on the embankment away from the hard shoulder. If you are carrying any animals keep them inside the vehicle. Once you have done this contact the emergency services.

Rather than use a mobile phone, use the roadside emergency telephone, if possible, which will help pinpoint your location. When you do use the emergency telephone make sure you face the traffic to help ensure your safety. The phone is connected to the police and they can help to arrange the recovery of your vehicle etc.



You will be asked for the:

- number on the emergency telephone, which gives your precise location;
- details of your vehicle; and
- details of the fault.

Recovery agencies

If you are driving long distances or are working through the night, you must know what to do if you break down especially if you are carrying passengers. You may and require:

- a replacement vehicle for your passengers; and/or
- the attendance of a breakdown vehicle.

If you are an owner operator, you must be prepared for anything that might happen, even if you only have one vehicle. Under no circumstances must passengers be left stranded.

Vehicles that breakdown on the motorway must be removed promptly for safety reasons.

Do not ignore danger signals

If you suspect that there is something wrong with your vehicle do not be tempted to carry on driving. You could end up causing traffic jams if your vehicle eventually breaks down in an awkward place.

A minor problem could turn out to have major effects. For example, a broken injector pipe dripping fuel onto a hot exhaust manifold may only seem to be a slight engine hesitation to the driver. However, this problem has been known to cause fires in which the vehicle was completely destroyed.

Blow-outs

Many breakdowns involve a tyre bursting, commonly known as a blow-out. These are dangerous because they make your vehicle difficult to control. They also leave debris on the road, which causes danger to other road users.

Front wheel blow-outs

A front wheel blow-out can mean that you won't be able to steer your vehicle properly. If this happens you should:

- keep a tight hold on the steering wheel;
- always be aware of anything on the left-hand side of your vehicle;
- signal left (if there is time to do so);
- try to steer to the left-hand side of the road (or to the hard shoulder on the motorway);
- slow down gradually – do not brake hard;
- try to stop your vehicle under control as far to the left as you can;
- put a warning triangle, cones, or another permitted device behind the vehicle if you need to (but **not** if you are on a motorway; and
- switch on the hazard warning lights if your vehicle is blocking part of the road.



If you can avoid braking hard or swerving you should be able to stop your vehicle without skidding.

Rear wheel blow-outs

Although a rear wheel blow-out usually has less effect on the steering than a front wheel blow-out, the stability, handling and ride will significantly be affected. Follow the same procedure for a front tyre blow-out, and pull off the road as safely as possible.

Vehicle checks

For information on vehicle safety checks etc please refer to '*The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills*' which also forms part of the recommended reading list.

Road traffic incidents

You should drive at all times with anticipation and awareness. By driving defensively you lessen the risk of being involved in a road traffic incident.

If, however, you are involved in or have to stop at an incident, you should act decisively and with care to prevent any further damage or injury. Ultimately, your own safety and that of your passengers and others must be your first concern.

Always stay alert and try to anticipate the actions of other road users. You need to understand how your vehicle will affect other road users, especially:

- cyclists;

- pedestrians; and
- motorcyclists.

Pedestrians standing on the edge of a kerb and cyclists should be given adequate room as you pass them by. If you are driving a taxi bus or novelty vehicle they are even more vulnerable as they could be hit by your mirrors. Make sure you assess the risk accurately and take the most appropriate action to try to eliminate it.

You can remove most of the incident risk from your own driving by:

- concentrating;
- driving safely and sensibly;
- staying alert;
- being fully fit;
- planning well ahead;
- observing the changes in traffic conditions and acting upon them;
- driving at a safe speed to suit the road, traffic and weather conditions;
- keeping your vehicle in good overall condition;
- making sure that passengers do not distract you;
- not rushing; and
- avoiding the need to act hurriedly.

If you are involved in a road traffic incident you **MUST** stop. It is an offence not to do so.

At an incident scene

If you are one of the first to arrive at an incident scene, your actions could be vital. Find a safe place to stop, so that you do not endanger yourself, your passengers or other road users.

As a general rule, your first priority is to secure the scene, this includes getting help and/or calling the emergency services. This should be followed by checking any casualties, especially the quiet ones, they may not be breathing. If someone is screaming for example it is a good indication that their breathing is not compromised. It is the quiet ones you need to check first.

You must ensure that either you or others:

- warn other traffic by using hazard warning lights, beacons, cones, advance warning triangles, etc;
- check that there are no naked lights, or take the correct action if there are;
- telephone 999, giving full details of what has happened;
- check that all hazard flashers can be seen. If other road users confuse your signals it could make things worse;
- switch off all engines; and
- stop anyone from smoking.

If it is your vehicle that's involved in a collision, you should also check your passengers for signs of injury.

Dealing with injuries

It is best to avoid moving injured people until the emergency services arrive. You should be extremely careful about moving casualties – it could prove fatal. Casualties should only normally be moved if:

- they are in need of resuscitation (that is, if they are not breathing); and/or
- they are in immediate danger (from fire, chemicals, fuel spillage, etc).

You should:

- move any apparently uninjured people away from the vehicle(s) to a safe place;
- give first aid if anyone is unconscious;
- check for the effects of shock. A person may appear to be uninjured but might be suffering from shock;
- keep casualties warm but do not give them anything to eat or drink; and
- give the facts (not assumptions, etc) to medical staff when they arrive.

You should not remove a motorcyclist's helmet unless it is essential to do so; for example, if they are not breathing normally.

Caring for passengers

You must do everything you can to protect your passenger/s at a breakdown or scene of an accident/what's happening:

- without upsetting them further; and
- by only giving them accurate information that they need to know.

You will need to decide whether it is appropriate for your passenger/s to:

- stay where they are; or
- move to a safer position, if they are able to do so (e.g. in front of your vehicle in case another vehicle could run into the back of you).

If you are unable to supervise the movement of your passenger/s, ask someone responsible to do it for you. You must not allow people to wander around. They could put themselves at risk or get in the way of the emergency services. You should ask for anyone with medical qualifications to come forward and help.

On the motorway

Because of the higher speeds on motorways there is more danger of a minor incident turning into a serious one. You must inform the police and emergency services as quickly as you can.

- Use the nearest emergency telephone, that's connected directly to the police.
- If you use a mobile phone, identify your location from marker posts on the hard shoulder first.
- Do not cross the carriageway to get to an emergency telephone.

- Try to warn oncoming traffic, but do not endanger yourself (see page 120 refer to the use of triangles etc on the m/way).
- Move any uninjured people well away from the main carriageway to a safe place such as an embankment.
- Watch out for emergency vehicles coming along the hard shoulder.

Emergency vehicles

Be aware that emergency vehicles may approach at any time while you are on the road. You should look and listen for flashing blue, red or green lights, headlights or sirens being used by ambulances, fire engines, police or other emergency vehicles. When one approaches, do not panic; consider the route it is taking and take appropriate action to let it pass. If necessary, pull to the side of the road and stop, but make sure you are aware of other road users and that you do not endanger them in any way.

If you see or hear emergency vehicles in the distance, be aware that there may be an incident ahead and that other emergency vehicles may be approaching.

In addition to the usual emergency vehicles you would expect to see using blue flashing lights (fire service, police, ambulance), there are others which are perhaps not so common. These include the bomb disposal team, coast guard and blood transfusion vehicles. A green flashing light means a doctor on call.

Dangerous goods

If an incident involves a vehicle displaying either a hazard warning information plate or a plain orange rectangle:

- give the emergency services as much information as possible about the labels and any other markings;
- contact the emergency telephone number on the plate of a vehicle involved in any spillage, if one is given;
- keep well away from such a vehicle. In attempting to rescue a casualty you may become one;
- beware of any liquids, dusts or vapours – no matter how small the amount may appear to be. People have been seriously injured from just a fine spray of corrosive fluid leaking from a pinhole puncture in a tanker; and
- do not use a mobile phone close to a vehicle carrying flammable loads.



Documents and information

If your vehicle is involved in an incident you **MUST** stop. It is against the law not to do so. Also, you **MUST**:

- inform the police immediately, if – anybody is injured – damage is caused to another vehicle or property and the owner is not present or can't be found – the incident involves any of the animals specified in law;
- produce your insurance documents and driving licence, and give your name and address to any police officer who may require it; and
- give your own and the vehicle owner's name and address (if different), and the registration number of the vehicle, to anyone having reasonable grounds for requiring them.

If you can't show your documents at the time, regardless of whether anyone is injured or not, you **MUST** produce your insurance certificate to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. (For more information on what action you should take in the event of an incident please refer to The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland)

At the incident scene you:

- **MUST** exchange details with any other driver or road user involved in the incident; and
- should obtain names and addresses of any witnesses who saw the incident.

Incident reporting

It is likely that, regardless of the insurer, the information required when completing any incident report form will be very similar, with only slight variations. It is a good idea, therefore, to familiarise yourself with your taxi operator's particular reporting requirements, to make sure you collect all the necessary details at the time of the incident.

Take notes at the scene so that you have the information when you need it. Make a note of:

- the time;
- the place;
- street names;
- vehicle registration numbers;
- weather conditions;
- lighting (if applicable);
- any road signs or road markings;
- road conditions;
- damage to vehicles or property;
- traffic lights (colour at the time)(if applicable);
- any indicator signals or warning (horn)(if applicable);
- any statements made by other people involved; and
- any skid marks, debris, etc.

Reaction in the event of aggression

Be aware that others involved in an incident may initially behave in an agitated or aggressive manner. This can often be a symptom of shock so try to be as reasonable and gently spoken as possible when asking for personal details or insurance information. The fact that you appear calm and in control may be all that's needed to diffuse a situation. (See page 65)

Fire

A fire can occur in a number of locations:

- engine compartment;
- passenger area;
- luggage areas;
- transmission;
- tyres;
- fuel system; and/or
- electrical circuits.

It is vital that any outbreak is tackled without delay. A vehicle can be destroyed by fire within an alarmingly short period of time. During your vehicle checks, you should already have made a check of the tyres and electrical equipment.

It is also advisable to be aware of any flammable items which passengers may be carrying. Fuel cans for example must be of an approved type as it is illegal and dangerous to carry petrol in a container that is not intended for that purpose. Items such as these should be secured in the luggage compartment and not in the passenger compartment.

If you know what the substance is then you are in a better position if a fire occurs to use or not use the type of extinguisher which is legally required to be carried on your vehicle, and once the emergency services arrive advise them of the particular hazard.

If a fire is suspected or discovered, in order to avoid danger to others, it is essential to:

- stop as quickly and safely as possible (on the hard shoulder if on a motorway);
- get everyone out of your vehicle as quickly as possible and lead them to a safe place;
- either telephone 999 or 112 or get someone else to do it immediately; and
- tackle the source with a suitable fire extinguisher, **if you can do so safely. Do not endanger your own life.**

If a fire is suspected inside the engine compartment, **do not** lift the bonnet. You may be able to insert an extinguisher nozzle in the small gap available when the catch is released but **do not** take risks.

Remember, stay calm and react promptly.

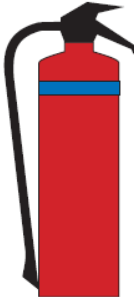
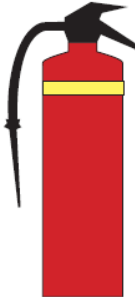
Fire extinguishers

All taxis **MUST** carry at least one fire extinguisher. It **MUST** be serviceable and carried in an easy accessible location on the vehicle.

Regulations specify the type and size of fire extinguisher that **MUST** be carried on your vehicle. You should be able to recognise the various types of fire extinguisher and know which fires they are intended to tackle. For example, it is dangerous to tackle a fuel fire (flammable liquid) with a water fire extinguisher, since this may only spread the fire further. Each extinguisher will have a coloured label or badge relevant to its content.

Types of Fire Extinguishers

Their uses and their colour coding according to BS EN 3: 1996

			
WATER	POWDER	FOAM	CARBON DIOXIDE (CO₂)
For Wood, paper, textile and solid material fires	For liquid and electrical fires	For use on liquid fires	For liquid and electrical fires
DO NOT USE on liquid, electrical or metal fires	DO NOT USE on metal fires	DO NOT USE on electrical or metal fires	DO NOT USE on metal fires

Most extinguishers are intended to smother the source of the fire by either the action of an inert gas or a dry powder. Try to isolate the source of the fire. Also, avoid operating a fire extinguisher in a confined space.

Never put yourself in danger when tackling a fire. Always call the fire service as quickly as possible because they are the experts. Make sure you get all the passengers out and direct them to a place of safety.

First aid

Some taxi drivers carry first aid equipment. Although the carriage of such equipment is not a legal requirement, as a professional driver, you are encouraged to take some first aid training which could in the event of an emergency, help save a life. In addition, the training if delivered by an approved training body may go towards your periodic training requirement for your taxi licence.



Any first aid training given at the scene of an incident should be looked on as only as a temporary measure until the emergency services arrive. If you haven't had any first aid training, the following guidance could be helpful.

Deal with the danger

Your initial reaction is to rush to the scene but further collisions and the possibility of a fire breaking out are two of the main dangers. Approach the scene with care and use all your senses to identify potential dangers – the smell of petrol for example. Stop anyone from smoking. If possible switch off all engines and warn other traffic.

Get help

If there are bystanders try to get their assistance. Make sure that someone calls the appropriate emergency services on 999 or 112 as soon as possible. Also make sure they know exactly where they are and can give accurate directions to the emergency services and confirm the number of vehicles / casualties involved and possibly their condition e.g. if anyone is having difficulty breathing, they are bleeding heavily or are not responding when spoken to.

Help those involved

DO NOT move casualties that are still in vehicles unless there is an immediate threat of fire or further danger.

DO NOT remove a motorcyclist's helmet unless it is essential.

DO NOT give them anything to eat or drink as this could cause issues with their airway.

DO give what assistance you can including reassurance and try not to leave them on their own or wander off, potentially into the path of other vehicles etc. Try to keep them as warm, dry and as comfortable as possible.

Provide emergency care

If you need to provide emergency care, follow the DR ABC code.

Danger



Check that it's safe to approach.

Response		Try to get a response by gently shaking the casualty's shoulders and asking loudly 'Are you all right?' If they respond, check for injuries.
Airway		If there's no response, open the casualty's airway by placing your fingers under their chin and lifting it forwards.
Breathing	 	Check that the casualty is breathing normally. Look for chest movements, look and listen for breathing, and feel for breath on your cheek. If there are no signs of breathing, start CPR. Interlock your fingers, place them in the centre of the casualty's chest and press down hard and fast – around 5-6 centimetres and about twice a second. You may only need one hand for a child and shouldn't press down as far. For infants, use two fingers in the middle of the chest and press down about a third of the chest depth. Don't stop until the casualty starts breathing again or a medical professional takes over.
Circulation		If the casualty is responsive and breathing, check for signs of bleeding. Protect yourself from exposure to blood and check for any that may be in the wound, such as glass. Don't remove anything that's stuck in the wound. Taking care not to press on the object. If anything is embedded, apply firm pressure over the wound to stem the flow of blood. As soon as practical, fasten a pad to the wound with a bandage or length of cloth. Use the cleanest material available.

Unconscious and breathing

Do not move a casualty unless there is further danger. Movement could add to spinal or neck injury. If breathing stops, treat as recommended under 'DR ABC' above. Do not attempt to remove a motorcyclist's helmet unless it is essential – for example, if the casualty is not breathing normally. Otherwise serious injury could result.

If an adult or child is unconscious and breathing, but otherwise uninjured, place them on their side in the recovery position (as shown).



The recovery position

- Start with the casualty on their back and sit or crouch to one side of them.
- Place the arm nearest you straight out, at a right angle to their body.
- Roll them onto their side towards you.
- Turn the casualty's other arm palm upwards, and place this hand between the ground and the casualty's cheek.
- With your other hand, grasp the casualty's top leg just above the knee and pull it up at a right angle, keeping the foot on the ground. This will prevent them from rolling over any further.
- Make sure that the casualty's airway remains open and that you monitor their condition until a medical professional takes over.

Dealing with shock

The effects of shock may not be immediately obvious. Warning signs to look for include:

- paleness of the face (pallor)
- cold, clammy skin;
- fast, shallow breathing:
- fast, weak pulse:
- yawning or sighing:
- confusion:
- loss of consciousness (in extreme cases).

Prompt treatment can help to deal with shock.

- Do not give the casualty anything to eat or drink. Their condition may be severe enough to require surgery, in which case it's better if their stomach is empty.
- Lay them down, with their head low and legs raised and supported, to increase the flow of blood to their head.
- Call 999 or 112 for medical help. Say that you think the person is in shock, and explain what you think caused it (such as bleeding or a heart attack).
- Loosen any tight clothing around the person's neck, chest and waist to make sure it doesn't constrict their blood flow.
- Fear and pain can make shock worse, by increasing their body's demand for oxygen, so, while you wait for help to arrive, it's important to keep the person comfortable, warm and calm. Do this by covering them with a coat or blanket and comforting and reassuring them.

- Keep checking their breathing, pulse and level of response.
- If they lose consciousness at any point, open their airway, check their breathing, and prepare to treat someone who has become unconscious.

Burns

Put out any flames, take care for your own safety. Cool the burn for at least 20 minutes with plenty of clean, cold water. Cover the burn with cling film if available. Do not try to remove anything that's sticking to the burn.

Be prepared

Always carry a first aid kit – you might never need it, but it could save a life.

Learn first aid – you can get first aid training from a qualified organisation such as St John Ambulance, St Andrew's First Aid, British Red Cross Society or any suitable qualified body

Section five

THE TAXI TESTS

This section covers

- The taxi theory test
- Preparing for the driving test
- How to apply for your driving test
- What to expect on the day
- The minimum test vehicle specification
- Being accompanied on test
- The test route
- The content of the practical test
- Test assessment
- After the test
- Complaints

The taxi theory test

All new taxi drivers will first have to pass a taxi theory test before taking the practical driving test. If you intend taking lessons prior to taking your practical driving test you can do so, but you **MUST** pass the theory test before a booking for a practical test can be accepted.

The theory test comprises of two main parts, the multiple choice test and the hazard perception test. Both tests are taken as part of the same test event and both **MUST** be passed before a theory test certificate will be issued.

The tests are computer based and they have been devised to test your knowledge and understanding of driving theory and in particular, the rules of the road and best driving practice. Your knowledge of this information is tested in the first part as a series of multiple choice questions, some of which are based around case studies. Each question has 4 possible options, only one of which is correct. (More information on this part of the test is outlined below) Sample theory test questions including a sample case study are included at '[Appendix 7](#)' and there is an online practice paper which will help you test your knowledge.

The second part of the theory test is the hazard perception part which tests your ability to identify hazards and take the necessary action. (More information on this part of the test is outlined below).



Booking your theory test

The easiest way to book your test is online or by telephone. You can also book by post.

Booking online or by telephone – by using these methods you will be given the date and time of your test immediately. Book online at [Book your theory test online](#). To book by telephone, call 0345 600 6700.

If you are deaf and use a text phone or minicom, call 0300 200 1166. You will need your:

- driving licence number; and your
- credit or debit card details (the card holder must book the test). We accept MasterCard, Visa, Delta, Visa Electron and switch cards.

You will have the option to receive your booking confirmation immediately by email or by post within 10 days.

If you require a theory test in a language other than English or provision for special needs please see page 136.

Taking your theory test

Arriving at the test centre - You must make sure that when you arrive at the test centre you have all the relevant documents with you, or you won't be able to take your test and you will lose your fee.

You will need:

- your taxi theory test appointment letter; and
- your signed full Northern Ireland (or UK) driving licence (Both parts – photocard and paper counterpart); or
- your signed paper counterpart along with a valid passport (your passport does not have to be a UK passport); or
- your valid community driving licence.



Important Note: *No other forms of identity are acceptable.*

All documents MUST be the originals. We can't accept photocopies.

The test centre staff will check your documents and make sure that you take the right theory test.

Remember, *if you don't bring your documents, your test will be cancelled and you will lose your fee.*

You are advised to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled time of your test. If you arrive after the session has started, you may not be allowed to take the test.

Languages other than English

The taxi theory test is only delivered in English however you can make arrangements to have a translator. The translator **MUST** be approved by DVA and you must make the arrangements when you book your test. You have to arrange and pay for the services of the translator yourself.

Tests with translators can be taken at all theory test centres in Northern Ireland.

Provision for special needs

Every effort is made to ensure that the theory test can be taken by all candidates. It is important that you state your needs when you book your test so that the necessary arrangements can be made.

Reading difficulties – A Reader / Recorder can be arranged if suitable documentary evidence is provided at the time of booking. You can ask for up to twice the normal time to take the multiple choice part of the test.

You will be asked to provide a letter from a suitable independent person who knows about your reading ability (such as a teacher or employer). Please check with the 'Customers Care Team' (on the booking number - 0345 600 6700), if you are unsure who to ask.

We can't guarantee to return any original documents, so please send copies only.

Hearing difficulties - If you are deaf or have other hearing difficulties, the multiple choice part and the introduction to the hazard perception part of the test can be delivered in British Sign Language (BSL) by a signer, providing suitable documentary evidence is provided at the time of booking. If you have any other requirements please call the 'Customer Care Team' on the normal booking number - 0345 600 6700.

Physical disabilities - If you have a physical disability which would make it difficult for you to use a mouse button to respond to the clips in the hazard perception part of the test, we may be able to make special arrangements for you to use a different method if you let us know when you book your test.

Voiceover assisted tests - You can ask for an English voiceover if you cannot read or understand written English well. A voiceover lets you hear the theory test instructions and questions through headphones. The questions will be read out to you automatically. You can hear the possible answers by clicking on the text on the screen. You can hear the questions as many times as you like – just click on the text of the question again.

Documents to be produced for the tests

You **MUST** produce certain documents to the invigilator at the start of the test. These are:

- your appointment letter; and
- a valid category B Driving Licence (both parts; if relevant) which you must have held continuously for a minimum of 3 years (excluding any disqualification).

Multiple choice / Case studies

The multiple choice test consists of 100 multiple choice questions, 20 of which are based around four individual case studies. Each question has four options but only one is correct. You select the correct answer by using the mouse to **click** on one of the options.



Before you start this part of the test, you will be given a chance to work through a practice session lasting for approximately 15 minutes. This will let you get used to the system and if necessary staff at the theory test centre will be available to offer some help and advice if you have any difficulties.

The questions are based around the syllabus areas and include a wide range of topics relating to road safety, the environment, customer care, disabled passengers and documentation.

The theory test is divided up into four bands:

Band 1

Road Procedure and Responsibilities, Ecosafe Driving & The Environment

Band 2

Traffic Signs & Signal, Vulnerable Road Users & Mechanical Knowledge

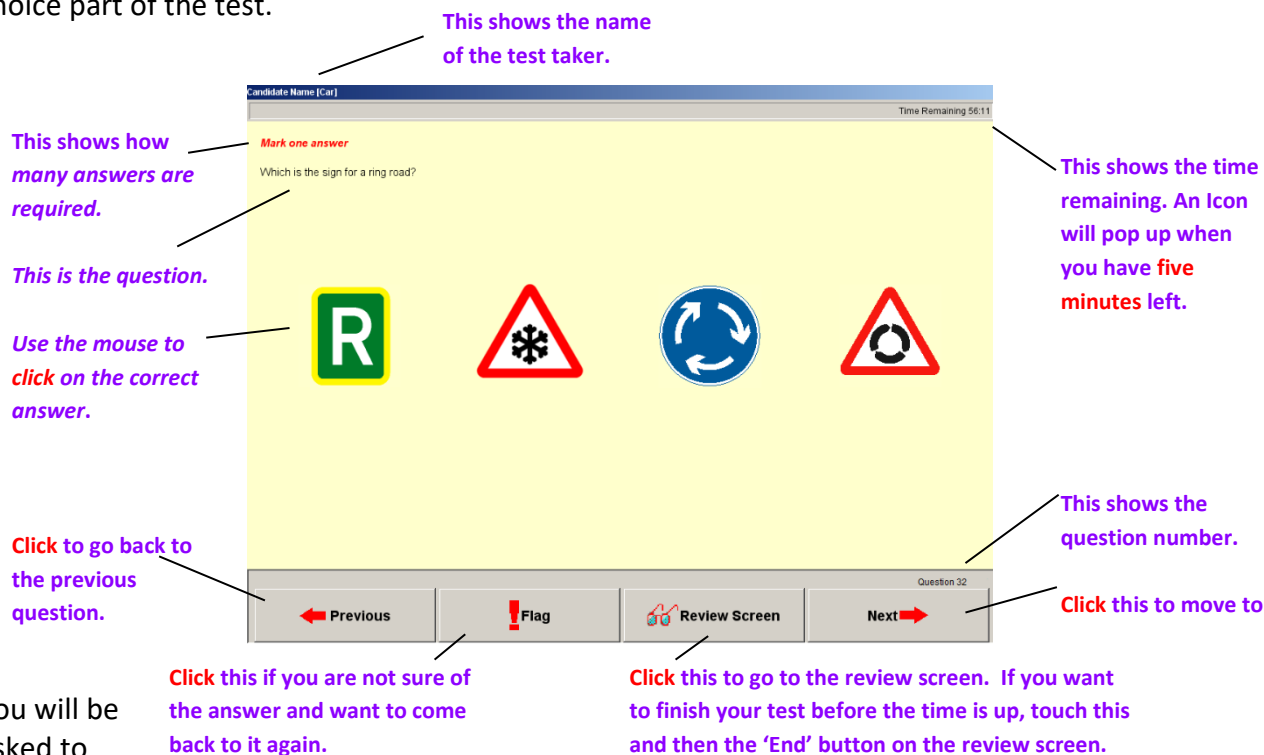
Band 3

Health & Safety, Legal Responsibilities & Safe Loading of the Vehicle

Band 4

Customer Care, Carriage of Vulnerable Passengers & Passenger Comfort and Safety

You **MUST** score a minimum of **18 in each band** and **80 overall** in order to pass the multiple choice part of the test.



You will be asked to select one

correct answer from the four possible answers given. If you try to move on without selecting the correct answer you will be reminded of that before you are allowed to proceed. Below is a basic screenshot of the layout that you will be presented with during the test.

To answer, you need to **click** on the box alongside the answer or **click** the image you think is correct. If you change your mind and do not want that answer to be selected, **click** it again. You can then choose another answer.

Take your time and read the questions carefully. You are given 100 minutes for this part of the test, so relax and do not rush. Some questions will take longer to answer than others, but there are no trick questions. The time remaining is displayed on screen. Extra time can be provided if you have special needs and have informed us when you book your test.

You will be able to move backwards and forwards through the questions and you can also 'flag' questions that you would like to look at again. It is easy to change your answer if you want to. Try to answer all the questions. If you are well prepared you should not find them difficult.

Before you finish this part of the test, if you have time, you can use the 'review' feature to check your answers. If you want to finish your test before the full time, **click** the 'review' button and then the 'end' button on the review screen. When you **click** the review button you will see the following screen.

The screenshot shows the 'Candidate Name [Taxi Driver Theory Test]' and 'Time Remaining 1:39:15'. The main area displays four statistics:

Icon	Statistic	Value
	Total Number of Test Questions	100
	Number of Complete Questions	64
	Number of Incomplete Questions	36
	Number of Flagged Questions	3

Below the statistics are four buttons: 'Review All', 'Review Incomplete', 'Review Flagged', and 'End'. Each button has a corresponding icon (circular arrow, partial bar, flag, and a red dot respectively).

Annotations:

- Total number of questions in the test.** (Points to 100)
- Complete questions.** (Points to 64)
- This includes the questions with incomplete answers and questions you haven't answered.** (Points to 36)
- Questions you have marked with a flag.** (Points to 3)
- Click this to go back to the beginning of the test. You can look at all questions again and change your answers if you want.** (Points to Review All)
- Click this to see the questions that you haven't answered or have marked with the wrong number of answer.** (Points to Review Incomplete)
- Click this to go back to all the questions you have marked with a flag. You can then work through all the flagged questions.** (Points to Review Flagged)
- If you click this during the practices session, it will take you to the start of the test. During the actual test this button will end the test session.** (Points to End)

There are four case studies in each test with five multiple choice questions which relate to each case study. The case studies are designed to test your:

- knowledge (basic recall of facts);
- comprehension (basic understanding); and
- application (practical use of knowledge and understanding).

It does this by creating a scenario or a set of circumstances that you may encounter in a real life situation. You will then be asked a number of questions relating to the scenario, which will require you to consider how you would react or behave in each case. Sample theory test questions including a sample case study are included at '[Appendix 7](#)'. There are also four Taxi Theory test practice papers, albeit with a reduce number of questions, available online at NI Direct/Motoring or you can select this link: [The taxi theory test - practice papers](#)

Hazard perception test

After you've finished the multiple choice part, there is a break of up to three minutes before you start the hazard perception part of the test. You cannot leave your seat during this break. This part of the test will consist of a series of clips, each approximately 60 seconds long, shown from a driver's point of view.

Before you start this part of the test you will be shown a short tutorial video that explains how the test works and gives you a chance to see a sample clip. This will help you to understand what you need to do. You can run this video again if you wish.

During this part of the test you will be shown 14 clips, containing 15 scoreable hazards. One clip therefore has two scoreable hazards but you will not know which one so you need to keep concentrating and clicking even after you have spotted the first developing hazard.

You should respond by **clicking** the mouse button **as soon as you see** a hazard developing that may result in you, the driver, having to take some action, such as changing speed or direction.

In each clip there are a wide range of potential hazards just like those you will see on the road. A few of these hazards develop into something which could be potentially more dangerous; these are the ones you need to identify and respond to as soon as possible. The test is designed to measure your ability to spot these developing hazards.

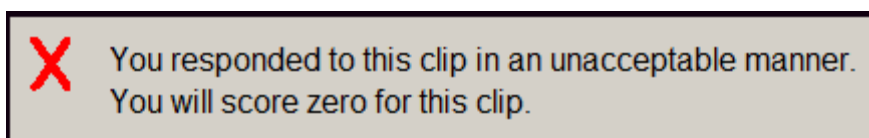
You will score points for clicking the mouse when you see a developing hazard.

The response is measured from when the hazard starts to develop. When you click the clip will NOT stop running and a **red flag** will appear at the bottom of the screen to show that your response has been noted. Early responses score 5 points and descends through 4, 3, 2, 1 to zero for those too late or missed completely. The pass mark for the hazard perception is a minimum of **50 points** out of a potential **75 points**.



The scoring response is measured from the moment a potential hazard develops into an actual hazard so concentrate and click when this happens. And remember, the view you see is that from your vehicle.

Do not try to beat the system by **clicking** the mouse without any thought to what you see. If you do you will be given this message. You will lose your score for that clip.



Before each clip starts, there will be a 10-second pause to allow you to see the new road situation.

The hazard perception part of the test lasts for approximately 20 minutes. For this part of the test there is no extra time available, and you can't repeat any of the clips (you do not get a second chance to see a hazard when you are driving on the road).

The result

You should receive your result at the test centre within 10 minutes of completing the test. You will be given a score for each part of the test (the multiple choice part and the hazard perception part). You will need to pass both parts at the same time in order to pass the test. If you fail either of the parts you will have to take the whole test again.

The Official DVSA Guide to Hazard Perception for all drivers will help you prepare for the hazard perception part of the theory test. This can be obtained by mail order by calling **0333 200 2401**. Alternatively, it can be purchased from good bookshops or online at safedrivingforlife.info/shop

After the theory test

When you pass your theory test you will be given a certificate. Keep this safe, you will need it when you go for your practical test. This certificate has a life of two years from the date of your test. This means that you have to take and pass the practical test within this two-year period. If you do not, you will have to take and pass the theory test again before you can book your practical test.

Preparing for the driving test

The taxi practical driving test is not just a slightly more difficult 'L' test. It is of an advanced nature and a high standard of competence is required.

You should study all the reading material available (a full list is at [Appendix 4](#)) and we recommend the following:

- The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland;
- Know Your Traffic Signs; and
- The Official DVSA Guide to Driving - the essential skills.

If you intend to take driving lessons to prepare for the test then please be aware that you should not give payment for driving instruction to anyone who is not a registered Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) or trainee licence holder.



For information on how to choose a driving instructor and how to check your instructor is registered please go to [Choosing a driving instructor](#).

Where you can take your test

Test centres including the full postal addresses where you can take your taxi practical driving test can be found at [Appendix 1](#).

How to apply for your driving test

You can book your test on line at [A guide to booking your practical driving test](#) or by telephone on 0300 200 7862, using a debit or credit card.

You can get information on fees on our website [Driving test fees](#).

Disabilities

Please tell us about any disabilities or special circumstances you may have to help us plan the test to meet your needs.

Eyesight requirements

The examiner won't conduct an eyesight test because you will be required to meet specified eyesight standards as part of the medical requirements to be granted a taxi driver's licence. However, it is your responsibility to ensure you can comply with the legal eyesight requirements (including wearing glasses or contact lenses if necessary) when driving. If your eyes deteriorate you are legally bound to inform the taxi licensing authority (DVA) immediately.

What to expect on the day

Arrive in good time for your test, otherwise it may not go ahead and you will lose your fee. The test will last about 90 minutes in total. You will be driving for around 60 minutes so make sure that you have sufficient fuel.

When you meet the examiner you will be asked to sign a declaration that the vehicle you are using for the test is taxed and fully insured for use during a driving test.

Documents to be produced for the driving test

You **MUST** produce certain documents to your examiner at the start of the test. These are:

- your appointment letter;
- vehicle registration document (Tax Book, V5C (NI));
- a valid MOT certificate (if necessary);
- a valid taxi theory test pass certificate which will be in the form of a notification letter;
- a valid category B driving licence (both parts; if relevant) which you must have held continuously for a minimum of 3 years (excluding any disqualification/s).

If your driving licence was issued outside Northern Ireland and does not contain your photograph you will be required to produce additional photographic evidence of identity.

There is only one other alternative photographic evidence of identity:

- a valid passport.

Note: *failure to produce one or more of these documents may result in the test not taking place.*

All documents *MUST* be the originals. We can't accept photocopies.

The minimum test vehicle specification

In order to be suitable for the test, your vehicle **MUST** be of a minimum specification. To avoid disappointment and your test not taking place, make sure that your test vehicle:

- is in category B (not more than 3500kg maximum authorised mass);
- is capable of at least 100km/h (62mph);
- has a minimum length of at least 3.96 metres (13 feet);
- has a maximum length of 6 metres (19 feet);
- has a clear view of the road directly behind the vehicle from the front passenger seat;
- is fitted with front and rear seats;
- has a fully functional and anchored three point seatbelt for the front passenger seat;
- has properly anchored seatbelts for the rear seats;
- has an appropriate head restraint for the front passenger seat; and
- has a suitable rear view mirror (or mirrors depending on the vehicle) fitted for use by the examiner (a mirror fitted to the sun visor is not acceptable).

You should also make sure that the vehicle:

- is not being used on a trade licence or displaying trade registration plates; and
- is legally roadworthy.

Some vehicles may not be suitable for the test. If you are in any doubt as to whether your vehicle is suitable contact any DVA test centre or check on line at [Taxi driver practical test](#).

Note: *if the vehicle does not meet the requirements above your driving test will not go ahead and you will lose your fee.*

Type of transmission for test

If you take your driving test in a vehicle that has automatic transmission and your car licence (category B) is restricted to vehicles with automatic transmission you will be issued with a taxi licence which will be limited to the restrictions on your car licence.

Being accompanied on test

A friend, relative or an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) may accompany you on the test. For obvious reasons they are not allowed to take part in the test in any way.

If you choose to have your instructor present the benefit to you is that it gives them the opportunity to better support your ongoing learning and development. For example, if you do not pass the test, your instructor will have witnessed your performance first-hand, listened to the examiner's feedback, and can better discuss it with you afterwards. They can then develop these areas during future lessons. If you pass, your instructor can give feedback about what you can do to further improve your driving.

If you do not wish to have a friend, relative or an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) with you during the test, they are still welcome to listen to the examiners debrief at the end of the test. This facility will be offered to you at the end of all tests and it is your decision whether they listen in or not.

Use of interpreters

If you require an interpreter you can bring one with you on the test. An interpreter **MUST** be at least 16 years of age. Approved Driving Instructors (ADI's) are allowed to act as interpreters. Your interpreter can only translate the examiners questions, your replies and the examiners directions, they may not physically demonstrate how to carry out a 'Show Me' question for example, nor are they allowed to assist your driving in any way.

Supervised test

Your driving examiner may be accompanied by a supervisor. Do not worry, he or she will not be concerned with your performance but with the examiner's and will take no part in the conduct of the test.

The test route

The test route will cover a wide variety of urban and rural road and traffic conditions. It will take in roads carrying two-way traffic, dual carriageways and possibly, one-way systems.

Your examiner will give your clear directions in good time. If you do not understand what it is they are asking you to do just ask them to repeat the instructions. Do not worry if you go the wrong way, providing you did it safely and no other road users were inconvenienced it should not have any bearing on the result of the test. The examiner will take steps to get you back on route as soon as possible.

The content of the practical test

Initial instructions

At the start of the on road section of the taxi driving test, the examiner will ask you to continue to follow the road ahead, unless traffic signs indicate otherwise or unless you are asked to turn left or right. You will be given the directions in good time. If you are not sure, ask the examiner to repeat the direction.

What is expected

The level of ability expected is higher than that of an 'L' test.

In order to pass the test you must be able to demonstrate to the examiner that you are well grounded in the principles of safe driving and have consideration for the safety and comfort of fare paying passengers. You must be able to use the controls with a high degree of skill and finesse in all traffic situations.

You must also be able to demonstrate at the time of the assessment that you are a competent and considerate driver and not a danger to yourself or other road users.

Once on the road you must drive in a progressive, professional manner. You should aim to drive as you normally do and not try to put on an act for the examiner. You must drive safely and within the legal limits.

You should bear in mind the consequences of incorrect gear use, brakes and steering on the overall stability of the vehicle and the effect this may have on the safety and comfort of fare paying passengers.

You will also need to show the examiner that you can safely and correctly:

- adjust the seat as necessary to obtain a correct seating position;
- adjust the rear view mirrors, head restraints and seat belt;
- check that the doors are closed;
- start the engine and move off smoothly (uphill and downhill as well as on the flat);
- accelerate to a suitable speed while maintaining a straight course, including during gear changes;
- adjust speed to negotiate left or right turns at junctions, possibly in restricted spaces, while maintaining control of the vehicle;
- maintain reasonable progress, avoiding undue hesitancy whilst taking road, traffic and weather conditions into account;
- brake accurately to stop, if need be by performing an emergency stop;
- observe (including the use of the rear-view mirrors) other road users, road alignment, markings, signs and potential or actual risks;
- communicate with other road users using the authorised means;
- react appropriately in actual risk situations;
- comply with road traffic regulations and the instruction of the police, enforcement officers, traffic wardens, etc;
- pull up and move off from the kerb and/or a parking space;
- drive with the vehicle correctly positioned on the road, adjusting speed to traffic conditions and the line of the road;
- keep the right distance between vehicles.
- change lanes;
- pass parked or stationary vehicles and obstacles;
- approach, emerge from and cross junctions; and
- turn right and left at junctions or to leave the carriageway.

Where the opportunity arises you will also be expected to safely and correctly:

- meet and pass oncoming vehicles, including in confined spaces;
- cross the path of other vehicles:

- overtake in various situations;
- approach and cross level-crossings;
- drive in road tunnels; and
- deal with pedestrian crossings.

You will also be expected to take all precautions necessary when getting into and alighting from your vehicle.

As part of the test you will be asked to drive independently of directions from the examiner for a period or periods during the test in a safe, legal and competent manner.

Throughout the test you must drive in a safe and fuel efficient manner demonstrating competence in vehicle control and planning (Eco-safe driving).

You will also be expected to display courtesy and consideration to other road users, especially those who are more vulnerable, including;

- pedestrians;
- riders on horseback;
- cyclists; and
- motorcyclists.

During the test you need to demonstrate that you can carry out **any two** of the following manoeuvres safely and competently;

- reverse in a straight line and reverse left round a corner while keeping within the correct traffic lane (*Left reverse*);
- reverse in a straight line and reverse right round a corner while keeping within the correct traffic lane (*Right reverse*);
- turn the vehicle to face the opposite way, using forward and if necessary reverse gears (*Turn in the road/U-Turn*);
- reverse park the vehicle into a parking bay; and
- reverse park the vehicle on road behind a car or between two parked cars.

Vehicle safety checks and emergency situations

The test will include an assessment of your knowledge of vehicle safety, passenger comfort and safety and dealing with emergencies.

You will be asked five questions. These will be a combination of 'show me' and 'tell me' scenarios. The examiner may also show you some pictures during this part of the test and ask you to choose a correct answer from the picture shown.

The questions are designed to test your knowledge and practical ability to perform certain tasks.

Failure to answer these questions correctly could result in you failing the test. A sample of the questions is contained in '[Appendix 5](#)'.

You should be able to show the examiner by explaining verbally and demonstrating practically that you have satisfactory knowledge of how to make basic routine safety checks on your vehicle. You must also be able to show by explanation and demonstration that you have sufficient knowledge of the correct action to take in various emergency situations.

Vehicle safety checks

You should be able to carry out routine basic safety checks on:

- oil, fluid and coolant levels;
- tyre pressures;
- seat belts;
- seats including head restraints; and
- demisting controls.

You should also be able to identify defects, especially with:

- steering;
- brakes;
- tyres;
- seat belts;
- lights;
- horn;
- rear-view mirrors;
- direction indicators; and
- windscreen, wipers and washers.

You should understand the effects that any fault or defect will have on the safety and legality of your vehicle.

Emergency situations

You should be able to explain and demonstrate knowledge of the:

- types of fire and places where fires might start on a vehicle;
- correct fire extinguisher to use on different types of fire;
- safe and correct way to deal with an emergency on a motorway;
- safe and correct way to deal with passengers in emergency situations; and
- safe and correct action to take following a road traffic collision.

You should:

- be able to answer the questions correctly and demonstrate when necessary.

You should avoid the following:

- not giving an answer or demonstration;
- giving an incorrect answer or demonstration; and
- giving an incomplete answer or demonstration.

Ancillary controls

You should understand the position and function of all controls and switches, gauges that have a bearing on road safety, for example:

- indicators;
- lights;
- windscreen wipers; and
- demisters.



You should understand the meaning of gauges or other displays on the instrument panel, especially:

- the speedometer;
- various warning lights/buzzers;
- on-board computer displays;
- braking system failure warnings;
- bulb failure warnings; and
- gear-selection indicators.

You should:

- be able to find the controls and operate them correctly when necessary, without looking down; and
- recognise warning lights/buzzers and be able to react promptly and correctly to them.

You should avoid:

- not being able to find controls and operate them correctly when necessary, without looking down;
- ignoring or reacting incorrectly to warning lights/buzzers and be able to react if they operate; and
- the examiner needing to tell you where controls or switches are in the interests of safety.

Precautions before starting the engine

The examiner expects that you've checked and prepared your vehicle for driving and for taking the test. Before you start your engine you must always be sure that:

- all doors are properly closed;
- your seat is correctly adjusted and comfortable, so that you can reach all the controls easily and have good all-round vision;
- your driving mirrors are correctly adjusted;
- your seat belt is fastened, correctly adjusted and comfortable;
- the parking brake is on; and
- the gear lever is in neutral.

Remember, make your adjustments before you start driving.

Controls

You must show the examiner that you understand what all the controls do and that you can use them:

- smoothly;
- correctly;
- skilfully;
- safely; and
- at the right time.

In particular, the examiner must be sure that you can properly control the:

- accelerator;
- clutch;
- footbrake;
- parking brake (handbrake);
- steering; and
- gears.

Of course, if your vehicle has automatic transmission some of these won't apply to you. However, you must:

- understand what the controls do; and
- be able to use them competently.

For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch you carefully to see how you use these controls.

If your vehicle is fitted with cruise control, the examiner will assess your use of it in terms of Ecosafe driving. Use the accelerator smoothly; harsh or uncontrolled use wastes fuel.

Accelerator and clutch

You should be able to:

- balance the accelerator and clutch to pull away smoothly;
- accelerate evenly to gain speed;
- release the accelerator smoothly to avoid erratic driving;
- depress the clutch pedal just before the vehicle stops; and
- engage the clutch smoothly when moving away and changing gear.

You should avoid:

- over-revving, causing excessive engine noise and exhaust fumes;

- heavy, inappropriate acceleration followed by immediate braking;
- making the vehicle jerk and lurch through uncontrolled use of the accelerator or clutch;
- riding the clutch; that is, failing to take your foot off the pedal when you are not using it; and
- jerky and uncontrolled use of the clutch when moving off or changing gear.

Use of gears

Use the highest gear possible, matched to the speed of your vehicle and road/traffic conditions. This will aid fuel economy.

You should show that you can:

- move off in the most suitable gear;
- choose the most appropriate gear for your speed and the road conditions; and
- change gear in good time before a hazard or junction.

You should avoid:

- taking your eyes off the road when you change gear;
- holding onto the gear lever unnecessarily;
- selecting the wrong gear; and
- coasting with the clutch pedal depressed or the gear lever in neutral.

Automatic gearboxes

Make sure you fully understand the procedure required before you attempt to drive a vehicle with automatic transmission.

You should be able to:

- ensure that your foot is on the footbrake when you engage 'drive' (D);
- use the accelerator gradually to avoid surging forwards or backwards; and
- make careful use of the accelerator to ensure smooth automatic gear-changing.

You should avoid:

- not controlling the vehicle with the footbrake;
- using the accelerator harshly causing the vehicle to surge forwards or backwards; and
- not using the accelerator correctly to ensure smooth automatic gear-changing.

Use of the footbrake

With all braking systems, it is important to remember that there is a direct relationship between the pressure applied to the footbrake pedal and the braking force exerted on the wheels.

You should:

- brake in good time;
- brake lightly in most situations;
- brake progressively; and
- use the correct technique for releasing pressure on the brake just before coming to rest.

These techniques allow you to stop the vehicle smoothly.

You should avoid:

- braking late and/or harshly;
- excessive and prolonged use of the footbrake;
- braking and steering at the same time unless you are already travelling at low speed; and
- braking in a way that would cause passengers discomfort.

The parking brake

Sometimes the parking brake is referred to as a handbrake. The function of the parking brake is to hold the vehicle still when it has stopped. Some modern braking systems will have automatic systems which apply a parking brake when the vehicle is brought to a stop by the footbrake or by pressing a button. You should know how to operate this type of system if it is fitted to a vehicle that you intend to drive.

You should:

- know how and when to apply the parking brake;
- apply the parking brake before leaving the vehicle; and
- coordinate your use of the parking brake and other controls in order to achieve smooth uphill starts.

You should avoid:

- applying the parking brake before the vehicle has stopped;
- attempting to move off with the parking brake still applied; and
- using the 'park' position on the gear selector on automatic vehicles as a substitute for applying the parking brake.

Steering

The steering wheel should normally be controlled with both hands for the safety of your passengers. It should also be used smoothly for the comfort of your passengers.

You should:

- place your hands on the steering wheel in a position that's comfortable and which gives you full control at all times. This is usually the 'ten to two' or 'quarter to three' position;
- keep your steering movements steady and smooth; and
- begin turning the wheel at the correct time when turning a corner.



You should avoid:

- turning the wheel too early when turning a corner (by doing so you risk cutting the corner when turning right, causing the rear wheel(s) to cut across the path of traffic waiting to emerge or striking the kerb when turning left);
- turning too late, you could put other road users at risk by swinging wide at left turns or overshooting right turns;
- crossing your hands on the steering wheel;
- allowing the wheel to spin back after turning; and
- resting your arm on the door.

Remember, the stability of a taxi can be affected by cornering too quickly.

Move away

The examiner will ask you to move off from rest at various points during the test. He or she will watch your use of the controls and observation of other road users each time. You must be able to move off safely and competently.

You should be able to move off:

- safely;
- under control;
- on the flat;
- from behind a parked car; and
- on a hill where appropriate.

You should not:

- immediately signal without first taking effective observation around you;
- pull out without looking;
- cause other road users to stop or alter their course;
- accelerate excessively;
- move off in too high a gear; and
- fail to co-ordinate the controls correctly and stall the engine.

Emergency stop

In normal conditions, a good driver should not need to brake really hard. However, emergencies can happen – for instance, when a child runs into the road in front of you.

In an emergency you must be able to stop as quickly and safely as possible whilst keeping the vehicle under control and without locking the wheels.

Remember, even when stopping quickly; follow the rule of progressive braking by pushing the brake pedal harder as the vehicle slows down.

A **quick reaction** is crucial in an emergency. The sooner you start braking, the sooner you should stop.

During the test you will be asked to stop as in an emergency. The examiner will:

- ask you to pull up at the side of the road;
- ask you to make an emergency stop when you are given the signal;
- demonstrate the signal to you; and
- confirm you understand the instructions.

You should react promptly to the signal given and stop the vehicle:

- in a short distance;
- under control; and
- without risk to other road users.

You should not:

- anticipate the signal by stopping while the examiner is checking the road behind;
- take too long to react to the signal given by the examiner;
- take too long a distance to stop;
- skid out of control;
- allow the vehicle to swing out of control; and
- cause a risk to other road users.

Remember, after an emergency stop you will most likely not be positioned at the kerb so make sure you check all the mirrors and the blind spots on both sides of the vehicle before moving off.

Manoeuvres

Manoeuvring a vehicle in a restricted space is something which a taxi driver will spend a lot of time doing. So, during the test you will need to carry out safely and competently any two different manoeuvres from the list below;

- reverse in a straight line and reverse left round a corner while keeping within the correct traffic lane (*Left reverse*);
- reverse in a straight line and reverse right round a corner while keeping within the correct traffic lane (*Right reverse*);
- turn the vehicle to face the opposite way, using forward and if necessary reverse gears (*Turn in the road / U-Turn*);
- reverse park the vehicle into a parking bay; and/or
- reverse park the vehicle on road behind a car or between two parked cars.

For both manoeuvres, the examiner will give you directions to a location which is suitable to manoeuvre the vehicle.

For the first manoeuvre, provided he or she is satisfied the location is safe legal and convenient

at that particular time the examiner will give you the choice of how to turn your vehicle around and drive off in the opposite direction. **This can be any of the methods set out below.**

If this is the case you will be asked to consider that you are in a situation where you have just dropped off a fare and you have now received a call on your radio to pick up another fare in the opposite direction.

However, if the examiner considers the location at that particular time is only suitable for a certain type of manoeuvre; he or she will choose it for you and give you suitable instructions to carry it out.

This will also be the case if **you** have chosen the manoeuvre but the traffic or road situation changes before the exercise begins, making the choice unacceptable or unsafe.

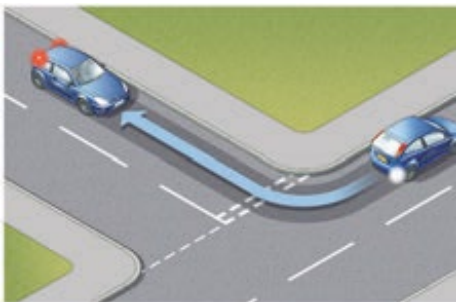
You must not mount the pavement or use entrances or driveways to turn your vehicle round as it could be unsafe and damage your vehicle.

You must not drive into a minor road and attempt to reverse out onto a major road as it is extremely unsafe.

The second manoeuvre in the test will be a different one from the first and will always be chosen for you by the examiner.

Reverse to the left

You should be able to reverse your vehicle smoothly, correctly, safely and under full control to the left. The examiner may ask you to pull up just before a side road on the left then, point out the side road and ask you reverse into it.



When reversing, you should continue in reverse gear well down the side road, keeping reasonably close to the left-hand kerb.

It is also important that you take direct rear observation over your left shoulder, through the rear window to check for other road users as well as checking to the right and in front of the vehicle.

You should:

- reverse under full control;
- keep reasonably close to the kerb without hitting or mounting it; and
- use good, effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre.

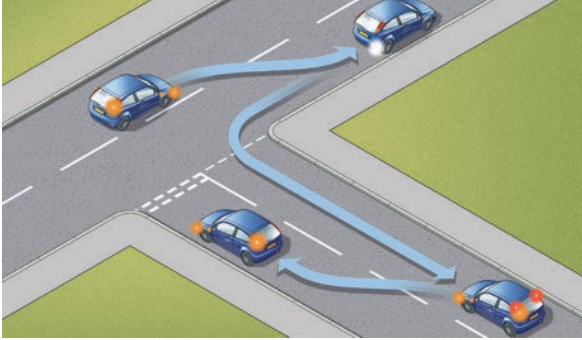
You should not:

- mount the kerb;
- swing out wide;
- reverse too far from the kerb;

- be inconsiderate or cause danger to other road users;
- take more than a reasonable time to complete the exercise creating a hazard for other road users; and
- steer harshly while the vehicle is stationary (dry steering).

Reverse to the right

You should be able to reverse your vehicle smoothly, correctly, safely and under full control to the right. The examiner will ask you to pull up on the left before you reach the next road on the right. He or she will then point out this side road on the right and ask you reverse into it.



He or she will ask you to continue driving on the left until you are past the side road, then move across to the right-hand side of the major road and stop and then reverse into the side road.

When reversing, you should continue in reverse gear well down the side road, keeping reasonably close to the right-hand kerb. It is important that you reverse well down the side road because, in moving forward after completing the manoeuvre, you have to regain the left-hand side of the road on approach to the junction with the major road.

It is also important that you take direct rear observation over your left shoulder, through the rear window to check for other road users as well as checking to the right and in front of the vehicle.

You should:

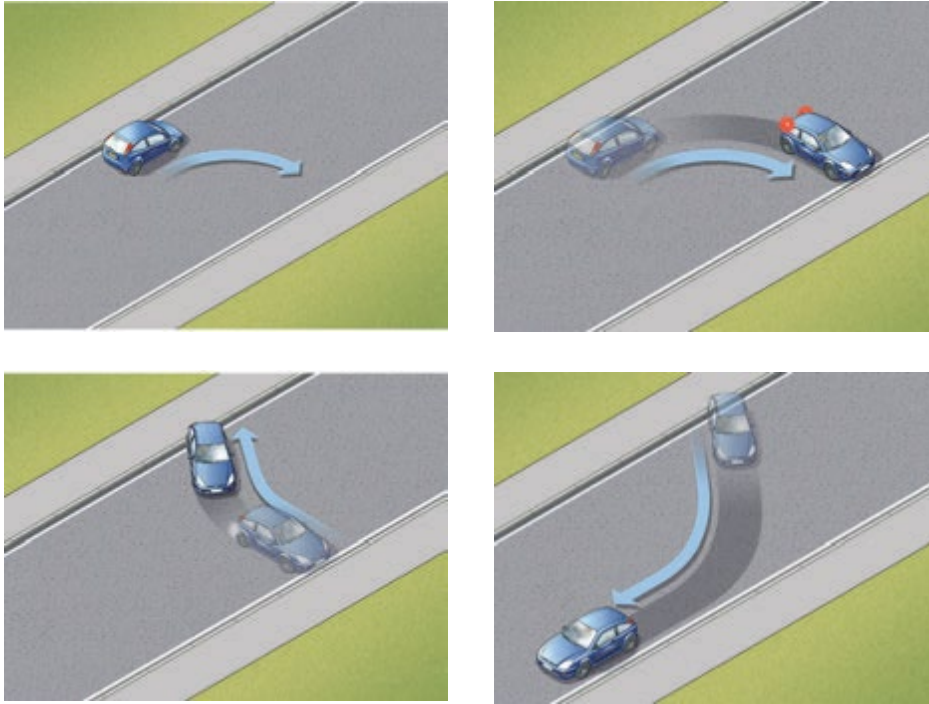
- reverse under full control;
- keep reasonably close to the right hand kerb without hitting or mounting it; and
- use good, effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre.

You should not:

- mount the kerb;
- swing out wide;
- reverse too far from the kerb;
- be inconsiderate or cause danger to other road users;
- take more than a reasonable time to complete the exercise creating a hazard for other road users; and
- steer harshly while the vehicle is stationary (dry steering).

Turn in the road

You should be able to turn your vehicle around in the width of the road to face the opposite direction using forward and reverse gears. You should make sure the road is clear in both directions before starting to manoeuvre.



You need to demonstrate that you can use the controls smoothly, be able to judge the length of your vehicle accurately and take good, effective all round observation.

When reversing you must take direct rear observation over your left shoulder, through the rear window to check for other road users as well as checking to both sides and in front of the vehicle.

You should:

- control the vehicle smoothly using the controls properly; and
- use good, effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre...

You should not:

- hit or mount the kerb;
- be inconsiderate or cause danger to other road users;
- take more than a reasonable time to complete the exercise causing an obstruction for other road users; and
- steer harshly while the vehicle is stationary (dry steering).

U-Turn

A U-Turn means turning the vehicle right round without any reversing. It may be viewed as hazardous or unlawful if the location chosen for it is not safe, legal and convenient or if you do not observe carefully before and during the manoeuvre.

If you intend to use a U-Turn as a means of travelling in the opposite direction you must consider if the road is wide enough. If in doubt do not attempt it and use another manoeuvre.

You should not mount the pavement or use entrances or driveways to turn your vehicle round in a U-Turn as it could be unsafe and damage your vehicle.

You should not drive into a minor road and attempt to reverse out onto a major road as it is extremely unsafe.

Remember, you may have to cross lines of opposing traffic so be aware that other drivers won't be expecting you to make a U-Turn and use good effective all round observation before and during the manoeuvre.

You should:

- control the vehicle smoothly using the controls properly; and
- use good effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre.

You should not:

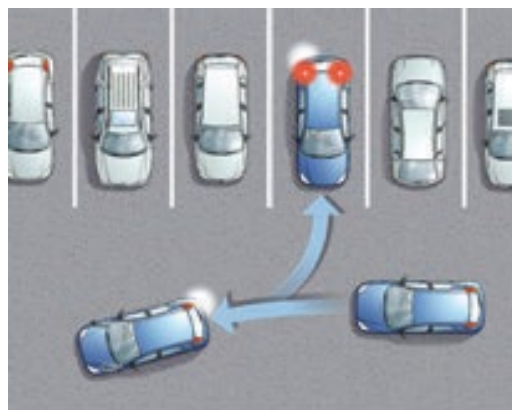
- hit or mount the kerb;
- use a driveway or entrance;
- reverse from a minor road into a major road;
- be inconsiderate or cause danger to other road users;
- take more than a reasonable time to complete the exercise causing a hazard or obstruction for other road users; and
- steer harshly while the vehicle is stationary (dry steering).

Reverse parking - Off road

The examiner may ask you to reverse into a parking bay in the test centre car park either at the start of the test or at the end of it.

Provided the examiner is satisfied that the conditions allow it, you will be able to choose which bay you wish to reverse into. **However, you should not use a parking bay which is reserved for disabled drivers.**

Whichever bay you choose you should look at the layout and the size available. Keep your speed down and use good, effective all round observation. Reverse and park accurately, making sure your vehicle is neatly parked between the layout markings of the bay.



You should:

- control the vehicle safely, smoothly and accurately;
- use good effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre; and
- show consideration to other road users.

You should not:

- hit or mount the kerb;

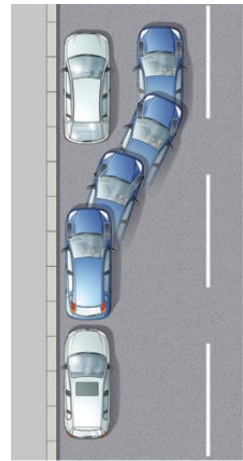
- get too close to a parked car or the layout markings;
- cross or straddle the layout markings;
- swing the vehicle from side to side;
- park at an angle or too far from the kerb;
- place too much emphasis on using the interior and exterior mirrors rather than taking direct all round observation;
- be inconsiderate or cause danger to other road users;
- take more than a reasonable time to complete the exercise causing a hazard or obstruction for other road users; and
- steer harshly while the vehicle is stationary (dry steering).

Reverse parking - On road

The examiner may ask you to carry out a reverse park manoeuvre on the left hand side of the road behind a single parked car or between two parked cars. These cars may be facing towards you or away from you.

You should be able to park your vehicle safely, reasonably close to and parallel with the kerb and within about two car lengths behind the parked car as part of this manoeuvre.

The examiner will ask you to pull up well before a parked car and then explain the manoeuvre to you.



You should:

- reverse the vehicle safely, under control and accurately;
- use good effective all round observation throughout the manoeuvre; and
- show consideration to other road users.

You should not:

- hit or mount the kerb;
- get too close to a parked car;
- swing the vehicle from side to side;
- park at an angle or too far from the kerb;
- place too much emphasis on using the interior and exterior mirrors rather than taking direct all round observation;
- be inconsiderate or cause danger to other road users;
- take more than a reasonable time to complete the exercise causing a hazard or obstruction for other road users; and
- steer harshly while the vehicle is stationary (dry steering).

Using the mirrors

Make sure you use your mirrors regularly and effectively as part of the MSM/PSL routine. You should use your mirrors in good time on approach to a hazard, before you accelerate, slow down, change direction, or begin any manoeuvre. Always be aware of what is happening behind you and act safely and sensibly on what you see.



You will be expected to use all the mirrors as the situation dictates.

Your use of the mirrors should be linked to the manoeuvre you intend to make and the type of vehicle you are driving. Normally you should always use the interior mirror first, followed by the exterior ones.

Your use of the exterior mirrors will depend on the manoeuvre and the situation. For example, before turning left in slow-moving traffic, your nearside exterior mirror will help you to look for cyclists filtering on your left.

A taxi driver needs to develop a technique for using the mirrors while remaining fully aware of what's happening ahead.

For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch your use of mirrors as you drive and assess whether you act sensibly on what you see.

You should use the mirrors effectively before:

- moving off;
- signalling;
- changing direction;
- turning left or right;
- overtaking or changing lanes;
- increasing speed;
- slowing down or stopping; and
- opening your car door.

You should avoid:

- signalling without using the mirrors;
- executing any manoeuvre without using the mirrors;
- changing speed or stopping without using the mirrors;
- failing to act on what you see when you look in the mirrors; and
- losing touch with the situation ahead when using the mirrors.

Giving appropriate signals

You must show the examiner that you can give clear signals in good time so that other road users know what you intend to do next. You must only use the signals shown in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland, as any others may be misunderstood. For this aspect of driving there

is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch carefully to see how you use signals in your driving.

You should use signals:

- to let others know what you intend to do;
- to help all other road users, including pedestrians; and
- at the appropriate time and for long enough to allow other road users to see the signal understand it is meaning and act upon it.

You should give any signals:

- clearly;
- at the appropriate time;
- by indicator; and
- by arm, if necessary.

You should avoid:

- giving misleading or incorrect signals, which includes signalling too early or too late;
- omitting to cancel signals;
- waving at pedestrians to cross the road; and
- giving signals other than those shown in The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland.

Response to signs and signals

The test requires that you must have a thorough knowledge of traffic signs, signals and road markings and be able to demonstrate this to the examiner.

Traffic signs

You should be able to:

- recognise them in good time; and
- take appropriate action on them.

Traffic lights

You must:

- comply with traffic lights;
- approach at such a speed that you can stop, if necessary, under full control; and
- only move forward at a green traffic light if it is clear for you to do so and if by doing so your vehicle won't block the junction.

Authorised persons

You must comply with signals given by:

- police officers;

- traffic wardens;
- school crossing patrols;
- Driver & Vehicle Agency enforcement officers; and
- any authorised person controlling traffic, for example; at road works.

Other road users

You must watch for signals given by other road users and show the examiner you can:

- react safely;
- take appropriate action; and
- anticipate their actions.

Use of speed

For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will carefully watch your control of speed as you drive. You should be aware of your speed at all times and always drive at a speed appropriate to the conditions.

You should:

- take great care in the use of speed;
- drive at the appropriate speed for the traffic conditions;
- be sure that you can stop safely in the distance you can see to be clear;
- leave a safe separation distance between your vehicle and the traffic ahead;
- allow extra stopping distance on wet or slippery road surfaces especially if you are carrying extra weight - passengers;
- observe the speed limits;
- drive sensibly and anticipate any hazards that could arise; and
- allow for other road users making mistakes.

You should avoid:

- driving too fast for the road, traffic or weather conditions;
- exceeding speed limits;
- varying your speed erratically;
- having to brake hard to avoid a situation ahead; and
- approaching bends, traffic signals and any other hazard at too high a speed.

Safe distance behind vehicles

During the test you must demonstrate that you can always keep a safe separation distance between your vehicle and the one in front. You must always drive at such a speed that you can stop safely in the distance you can see to be clear. Bear in mind the weather conditions and leave an appropriate gap.

For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch carefully and take account of your:

- use of the MSM/PSL routine;

- anticipation of situations;
- reaction to changing road and traffic conditions; and
- handling of the controls.

You should:

- be able to judge a safe separation distance between your vehicle and the one ahead;
- show correct use of the MSM/PSL routine, especially before reducing speed;
- avoid the need to brake sharply if the vehicle in front slows down or stops;
- take extra care when your view ahead is limited by large vehicles, such as buses or lorries.

Watch out for:

- brake lights ahead;
- direction indicators; and
- vehicles ahead of you braking without warning.

You should avoid:

- following too closely or tailgating;
- braking suddenly;
- swerving to avoid the vehicle in front, which may be slowing down or stopping; and
- not leaving side road junctions clear when a queue of traffic stops.

Maintaining progress and avoiding hesitancy

The examiner will be looking for a high standard of driving from an experienced driver displaying safe, confident driving techniques. You are not a learner driver and you won't pass the test if you drive hesitantly or in a way that shows you are not fully in control of your vehicle. For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch your driving and make an assessment.

You must demonstrate that you can:

- select a safe speed to suit road, traffic and weather conditions;
- move away at junctions as soon as it is safe to do so;
- avoid stopping unnecessarily; and
- make progress when conditions permit.

The examiner will watch your driving and will expect to see you:

- making reasonable progress where conditions allow;
- keeping up with the traffic flow when it is safe and legal to do so;
- making positive, safe decisions as you make progress;
- drive at the appropriate speed, depending on the type of road, traffic conditions, weather conditions and visibility; and

- approach all hazards at a safe speed without being unduly cautious or holding up following traffic unnecessarily.

You should avoid:

- driving so slowly that you hinder other traffic;
- being over-cautious or hesitant; and
- stopping when you can see that it is clear and safe to make progress.

Junctions (including roundabouts)

A junction is a point where two or more roads meet. Junctions are hazards where there is a greater risk of a collision occurring. Treat them with great care, no matter how easy they look.

You will negotiate several junctions and roundabouts during the test and the examiner will assess how you deal with them.

You should:

- observe road signs and markings and act correctly on what you see;
- use the MSM/PSL routine in good time on the approach to a junction or roundabout;
- assess the situation correctly, so that you can position the vehicle to negotiate the junction or roundabout safely;
- adjust your speed and stop if necessary; and
- make sure you take effective observation before emerging at any road junction and correctly judge the speed and position of other road users when joining major roads and roundabouts.

You should avoid:

- using the MSM/PSL routine incorrectly;
- approaching a junction or roundabout at the wrong speed;
- positioning and turning incorrectly;
- entering a junction or roundabout unsafely; and
- stopping or waiting unnecessarily.

Judgement

You should look well ahead for any hazards and show correct judgement when overtaking other traffic, meeting oncoming traffic, especially when there is restricted space and when crossing the path of other traffic when turning right.

For these aspects of driving there are no special exercises. The examiner will watch carefully and take account of your:

- appropriate use of the MSM/PSL routine;
- reactions to road and traffic conditions;
- handling of the controls; and
- choice of safe opportunities to overtake.

Overtaking

When overtaking you must:

- observe any signs and road markings which prohibit overtaking;
- take account of oncoming traffic;
- allow enough room;
- give motorcyclists, cyclists and horses at least as much room as a car; and
- allow enough space after overtaking – do not cut in.

You mustn't overtake when:

- your view of the road ahead is not clear;
- you would have to exceed the speed limit;
- to do so would cause other road users to slow down, stop or swerve; or
- there are signs or road markings that prohibit overtaking.

Meeting traffic

You must be able to meet and deal with oncoming traffic safely and confidently, especially:

- on narrow roads;
- where there are obstructions such as parked cars; or
- where you have to move into the path of oncoming vehicles.

Always use the MSM/PSL routine and be prepared to give way to oncoming traffic.

You should:

- show sound judgement and control when meeting oncoming traffic;
- be decisive when stopping and moving off;
- stop in a position that allows you to move out smoothly when the way is clear; and
- allow adequate clearance when passing stationary vehicles and slow down if you have to pass close to them.

You should be on the alert for:

- doors opening;
- children running out;
- pedestrians stepping out from between parked vehicles; and
- vehicles pulling out without warning.

You should avoid:

- passing too close to parked vehicles.
- causing other vehicles to slow down, swerve or stop; or
- passing too close to parked vehicles.

Crossing traffic

You must be able to cross the path of oncoming traffic safely and with confidence when you intend to turn right at a road junction or into an entrance.

You should:

- use the MSM/PSL routine on approach;
- position the vehicle correctly;
- accurately assess the speed of any approaching traffic;
- make safe and confident decisions about when to turn across the path of vehicles approaching from the opposite direction;
- wait, if necessary;
- ensure the road or entrance into which you are about to turn is clear; and
- show courtesy and consideration to other road users, especially pedestrians.

You should avoid:

- turning across the path of oncoming road users, causing them to stop, slow down, swerve or brake;
- cutting the corner so that you endanger vehicles waiting to emerge; or
- overshoot the correct turning point before you begin to turn.

Positioning

You should always position your vehicle correctly, normally well to the left. Keep clear of parked vehicles and position your vehicle correctly for the direction that you intend to take. Do not weave in and out between parked vehicles.

Where lanes are marked keep to the middle of the lane and avoid straddling the lane markings. You should not change lanes unnecessarily. Obey road markings, especially, directions and lane marking arrows at junctions and roundabouts, those in one-way streets and at bus lanes.

For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch carefully to see that you can position your vehicle correctly in all circumstances.

You should:

- use the MSM/PSL routine correctly;
- plan ahead and choose the correct lane in good time; and
- position your vehicle sensibly, even if there are not any lane markings.

You should avoid:

- driving too close to the kerb;
- driving too close to the centre of the road;
- changing lanes at the last moment or without good reason;
- hindering other road users by being incorrectly positioned or in the wrong lane;
- straddling lanes or lane markings; and
- cutting across the path of other road users in another lane at roundabouts.

Clearance to obstructions

You should look and plan well ahead for parked cars or other obstructions such as builder's skips. The examiner will expect to see you use the MSM/PSL routine early and sensibly to deal with these hazards.

As a general rule, if the obstruction is on your side of the road, approaching traffic will have priority. **Do not assume** that you have priority if the obstruction is on the other side of the road. Always be prepared to give way.

You should:

- use the MSM/PSL routine early;
- show sound judgement and control when passing obstructions;
- be decisive when stopping and moving off;
- stop in a position that allows you to move out smoothly when the way is clear; and
- allow adequate clearance when passing stationary vehicles or obstructions and slow down if you have to pass close to them.

You should be on the alert for:

- doors opening;
- children running out;
- pedestrians stepping out from between parked vehicles;
- pedestrians stepping out from behind obstructions; and
- vehicles pulling out without warning.

You should avoid:

- not using the MSM/PSL routine early;
- passing too close to parked vehicles and obstructions;
- causing other vehicles to slow down, swerve or stop; or
- being unaware of pedestrians around parked vehicles and obstructions.

Pedestrian crossings

You need to be able to recognise the different types of pedestrian crossing, show courtesy and consideration towards pedestrians and stop safely when necessary.

For this aspect of driving there is not a special exercise. The examiner will watch carefully to see that you:

- recognise the pedestrian crossing in good time;
- use the MSM/PSL routine;
- stop when necessary; and
- are especially alert when crossings are sited near schools, in shopping areas, at or near junctions.

You should:



- approach all crossings at a controlled speed;
- stop safely, when necessary; and
- move off when you are sure it is safe to do so.

You should avoid:

- approaching any type of crossing at too high a speed;
- driving on without stopping or showing awareness of waiting pedestrians;
- driving onto or blocking a crossing; and
- harassing pedestrians by, revving the engine, edging forward, sounding the horn, overtaking within the zigzag lines, or waving them to cross.

Position for normal stops

At times during the test the examiner will ask you to pull up either at a convenient place or a particular place. You need to demonstrate that you can pull up reasonably close to the edge of the road in a position to allow passengers to board or alight safely.

When you make a normal stop you must be able to select a safe, legal and convenient place where you will not:

- cause an obstruction;
- create a hazard; and
- contravene any waiting, stopping or parking restrictions

You must be able to stop in a safe position by:

- selecting it in good time;
- making proper use of the MSM/PSL routine;
- only stopping where you are allowed to do so;
- not causing an obstruction;
- recognising in good time road markings or signs indicating any restriction;
- pulling up close to and parallel with the kerb;
- choosing a convenient place to allow passengers to safely board or alight from the vehicle;
- applying the parking brake while the vehicle is stationary
- selecting neutral; and
- stopping at the correct place when asked;

You should avoid:

- pulling up without giving sufficient warning to other road users;
- causing danger or inconvenience to any other road users;
- parking at or outside, school entrances (zig zag lines), fire stations, ambulance stations or pedestrian crossings;
- parking where there are any restrictions;
- mounting the kerb or striking it;
- pulling up too far away from the kerb or not parallel with it;

- choosing an unsafe or inconvenient place to allow passengers to safely board or alight from the vehicle;
- leaving the parking brake off while the vehicle is stationary; and
- leaving the vehicle in gear.

Awareness and planning

The traffic situation can change from second to second, depending on the time of day, the location and the density of traffic.

The skilful driver anticipates what might happen. As the driver of a taxi you must constantly drive with this sense of awareness and anticipation and plan ahead. During the test the examiner will watch your driving and make an assessment of your awareness and planning skills.

Pedestrians

Give way to pedestrians when turning from one road into another, or when entering premises such as shops, bus or railway stations, schools, etc. Take extra care with children, older people and disabled people.

Motorcyclists

You should watch for motorcyclists:

- filtering in slow traffic streams;
- moving up along the side of your vehicle; and
- especially when you are about to move out at junctions.

Remember, *Think once, Think twice, Think bike.*

Cyclists

Take extra care when:

- crossing cycle lanes;
- you can see a cyclist near the rear of your vehicle or moving up along the nearside as you are about to turn left;
- passing a cyclist:
- approaching any children on cycles; or
- there are gusty winds.

Horse riders

Be particularly careful when approaching horses, especially those ridden by children. Give horse riders as much room as you can.

As a taxi driver you should:

- look out for horses being led or ridden on the road;
- slow down when you see a horse rider on the road, give them plenty of room;
- heed a signal given by the rider to slow down or stop;
- not sound your horn or rev your engine;
- look out for signals given by the riders and heed a request to slow down or stop;
- always pass the rider wide and slow; and
- avoid revving the engine until you are clear of the animal.



You should always avoid:

- sounding the horn unnecessarily;
- deliberately revving the engine;
- flashing your lights unnecessarily;
- beckoning pedestrians to cross the road;
- edging forward when pedestrians are crossing in front of your vehicle; and
- showing any signs of irritation or aggression towards other road users, especially the more vulnerable.

Independent driving

As part of the test you will be asked to drive independently of directions from the examiner for a period or periods during the test in a safe, legal and competent manner. During this period, you will have to make decisions in a timely and independent way.

During this time the examiner is not looking at your orientation skills, but is assessing your ability to demonstrate driving skills whilst focussing on identifying and following a series of traffic signs/verbal directions.

The examiner will use any or all of the following three methods:

- you will be asked to drive following traffic signs to a destination; or
- you will be asked to drive following a series of directions; or
- you will be asked to drive following a combination of traffic signs/series of directions.

The examiner will ask you to pull up at a suitable location before beginning the independent driving section of the test to give you directions.

If at any time you forget the destination, ask the examiner to repeat the directions he or she has given you.

When the independent driving section has been completed the examiner may, depending on the circumstances, ask you to pull up once more to inform you of this or may tell you whilst you are driving that independent driving has finished.

The examiner will give you directions as normal for the remainder of the test after independent driving has finished.

Eco-safe driving

During the test the examiner will assess your ability to drive and operate the controls of your vehicle in an Eco-safe manner. This will include your ability to plan ahead and anticipate the actions of other road users so you can slow down or speed up in a smooth progressive manner.

Although Eco-safe driving forms part of the assessment it will not have a bearing on the outcome of the test. If the examiner feels that your driving could improve in certain areas, he or she will pass on this information at the conclusion of the test.

More information on Eco-safe driving can be found in the DVSA publication, *'The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills'* which forms part of the recommended reading list.

Test assessment

Examiners use tablets during the driving test to input the assessment information. This is divided into assessment areas dealing with various aspects of driving a taxi, for example; use of mirrors, traffic lights etc.

The examiner will assess any faults seen as; a driving fault (a less serious fault when taken in isolation), a serious fault or a dangerous fault.

All faults relating to a particular assessment area will be recorded. More than fifteen driving faults recorded during the test will result in a failed test. One or more serious or dangerous faults will also result in a failed test.

Faults are defined as follows:

A **driving fault** is one which is not potentially dangerous. However, a candidate who habitually commits a driving fault in one aspect of driving throughout the test, demonstrating an inability to deal with certain situations, cannot be regarded as competent to pass the test, as that fault alone must be seen as potentially dangerous.

A **serious fault** is one which is potentially dangerous.

A **dangerous fault** is one involving actual danger to the examiner, candidate, the general public or property.

The examiner will complete the test report, give their decision and a copy of the test report will be sent to the email address provided.

If it is your intention to have your instructor present during the debrief please ensure they are nearby at the conclusion of the test. The examiner has a commitment to the next candidate so there may not be time to go looking for them.

Your instructor can, if necessary, ask for clarification during the debrief but the examiner will not get into lengthy discussions on the merits or otherwise of the test result.

In addition to the test report, a letter informing you that you have passed (HC8) will be attached to the email or you can re-apply for the test if you have been unsuccessful.

Possible causes for failure include:

- lack of progress and/or hesitancy;
- driving too fast for the road and traffic conditions or exceeding the speed limit;
- driving too close behind other vehicles;
- not making effective use of the mirrors;
- inconveniencing other road users;
- not using signals;
- using signals which are excessive, unnecessary or misleading;
- a lack of effective observation at junctions, including those controlled by traffic lights;
- incorrect road positioning; and
- unsatisfactory observation during manoeuvres.

This is a small selection of the possible reasons for failing the test. There are many more so you should ensure you are fully aware of what is being tested and what the examiner will expect from you. Further information can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/taxi-driver-practical-test

After the test

If you pass

Your examiner will:

- complete the test report on the tablet and offer to explain briefly any marks recorded
- issue an email with a pass notification letter (HC8); and
- a copy of the driving test report attached

Note: the HC8 letter is NOT a licence to drive a taxi. Once successful in your practical test you must apply online for your taxi driver's licence from PTLD

PTLD can only consider your application for taxi drivers licence once you have successfully completed both the theory and the practical test. Having passed these tests does not necessarily entitle you to a taxi driver's licence.

Note: if you are refused a taxi driver licence for other reasons after passing the taxi driver theory and practical tests, you are not eligible for a refund of the fee for either test.

Following the test any enquiries about your taxi driver's licence can be submitted to PTLD via email: TaxiandBusLicensing@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Passenger Transport Licensing Division (PTLD), Driver & Vehicle Agency, County Hall, Castlerock Road, Waterside, Coleraine, BT51 3HS.

If you do not pass

Your driving won't have been up to the high standard required to obtain a taxi driver's licence. You will have made mistakes that either caused, or could have caused, danger on the road.

Your examiner will:

- complete the test report on the tablet and offer to explain briefly why you have not passed.
- issue an email with a copy of the driving test report attached

You should study the driving test report and explanatory notes carefully and refer to the relevant sections in *'The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills'* and *this manual*.

If you have taken lessons with an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) show the report to them, he or she will help you to correct any faults that have been identified.

Listen to the advice your instructor gives and try to get as much practice as you can before you retake your test.

Complaints

The Agency welcomes all comments whether they are critical or complementary. If any aspect of our service has not been as good as you expected, tell us so we can put it right. Our leaflet 'Complaints Procedure', which is available at all test centres, fully explains what to do if you want to make a complaint or you can go online to view our procedure and our customer services email address. Just follow this link – [DVA Complaint / Claim procedure](#).

Section six

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This section covers

- Being disqualified from driving
- Taxi driver's licence entitlements
- Relevant forms used for the taxi industry
- Glossary
- Road signs - taxis
- Appendices

Being disqualified from driving

Disqualified

If you are disqualified from driving or riding the disqualification applies to all vehicle categories. In some cases you may be disqualified until tested which means you have to retake your initial car (category B) tests.

As holding a car licence (category B) is a prerequisite for obtaining a taxi licence, if you receive a driving disqualification for example for failing to meet the blood alcohol limits, this will automatically result in your taxi driver's licence being revoked and any periodic training which you may be intending to take would not be recognised as you no longer have a valid taxi licence.

Depending on the length of the disqualification you may have to attend additional periodic training sessions in order to meet the requirement of 35 hours over a five year period.

After disqualification

Once you have served your disqualification and/or retaken the car driving test which may include a theory test followed by an extended practical driving test, you can re-apply online to the taxi licensing authority to have your taxi licence reinstated.

Any previously held categories with the exception of any motorcycle entitlement you held will be reinstated on your driving licence. Additional tests will be required before these will be reinstated on your licence.

The decision about whether your taxi entitlement can be regained is a matter for the taxi licensing authority. They may decide to refuse the reinstatement on the grounds that you've



shown yourself to be an unfit and improper person to hold a taxi driver's licence or they may further delay the reinstatement of your taxi licence for an additional period.

Remember, if you lose your car licence entitlement you will lose your taxi licence entitlement. Disqualification therefore has serious social and professional consequences, don't let this happen to you. A considerable amount of time and money will have to be spent in order to regain your taxi licence.

Applying for a car retest

If you have to take your car (category B) retest you can apply for a provisional licence at the end of the period of disqualification. The normal rules for provisional licence holders apply:

- You **MUST** be supervised by a person who is at least 21 years of age and has held (and still holds) a full car licence for at least three years;
- Your **MUST** display red L plates to the front and rear of the vehicle;
- You are restricted to a maximum speed limit of 45mph while driving under provisional entitlement;
- You are not allowed to drive on motorways; and
- You are not allowed to operate as a taxi driver until you pass the car test.

Car driving tests can be booked online at [A guide to booking your practical driving test](#) or by telephoning the booking number on 0300 200 7862. There are higher fees for extended tests, so you must make it clear when you apply which type of test you want.

Once you have successfully passed the car test you can apply to the taxi licensing authority to have your taxi licence reinstated. The decision to re-issue a taxi licence after disqualification lies with the taxi licensing authority.

Taxi driver's licence entitlements

Currently there is only one class of taxi driver's licence which entitles you to drive all classes of taxis – standard saloon/hatch back cars, taxi buses, and limousines including novelty vehicles. The MAXIMUM seating capacity for a taxi is 8 passenger seats, excluding the driver. The taxi service that you can provide to the industry is limited to what class your vehicle has been licensed for ([see page 39](#)).



You **MUST** hold a full category B driving licence continuously for a minimum of 3 years (excluding any disqualification).

If you are the holder of a full car licence which is restricted to vehicles with automatic transmission, you can only take your taxi practical test in a car with automatic transmission. On passing your taxi practical test you will be restricted to driving taxis with automatic transmission.

If you wish to drive a manual taxi, you will first have to pass a manual car (category B) practical test. On passing that test, your taxi licence will automatically entitle you to drive manual taxis.

Automatic transmission is defined as a vehicle in which the driver is not provided with any means whereby he or she may, independently of the use of the accelerator or the brakes, vary the proportion of the power being produced by the engine that is transmitted to the road wheels of the vehicle. This definition includes semi-automatic vehicles, where no clutch pedal exists.

Glossary

ABS Anti-lock braking system (developed by Bosch), which uses electronic sensors to detect when a wheel is about to lock, releases the brakes sufficiently to allow the wheel to revolve, then repeats the process in a very short space of time – thus avoiding skidding.

C&U (Regs) Construction and Use Regulations that set out specifications that govern the design and use of all vehicles.

Cruise control A facility that allows a vehicle to travel at a set speed without use of the accelerator pedal. However, the driver can immediately return to normal control by pressing the accelerator or brake pedal.

DVSA The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency. This is an agency that provides similar services to that of DVA but in England, Scotland and Wales – Vehicle tests and Driving tests.

Electronic engine management system This system monitors and controls both fuel supply to the engine and the contents of the exhaust gases produced. The system is an essential part of some speed retarder systems.

HSE The Health and Safety Executive. HSE produces literature that provides advice and information on health and safety issues at work.

Kerb weight (KBW) The total weight of a vehicle plus fuel, excluding any load (or driver).

LPG Liquefied (compressed) petroleum gas.

MAM Maximum authorised mass, applying to vehicles that include fuel, passengers, etc.

PCV Passenger-carrying vehicle.

PSV Public service vehicle.

PTLD Passenger Transport Licensing Division.

Selective or block change A sequence of gear-changing omitting intermediate gears while correctly matching the speed of the vehicle.

Semi-automatic A transmission system in which there is no clutch but the driver changes gear manually.

Taxi plate A plate fixed to the vehicle with information relating to your taxi – number of seats, expiry date etc.

Toughened safety glass The glass undergoes a heat treatment process during manufacture so that in the event of an impact (such as a stone) on the windscreen, it breaks up into small blunt fragments, thus reducing the risk of injury. An area on the windscreen in front of the driver is designed to give a zone of vision in the event of such an impact.

Turbo-charged The exhaust gas drives a turbine, which compresses incoming air and effectively delivers more air to the engine than is the case with a normal or non-turbocharged engine.

Unladen weight The weight of a vehicle inclusive of the body and all parts which are necessary to or ordinarily used with the vehicle when working on a road, but exclusive of water and fuel for the vehicle and any loose tools or equipment.

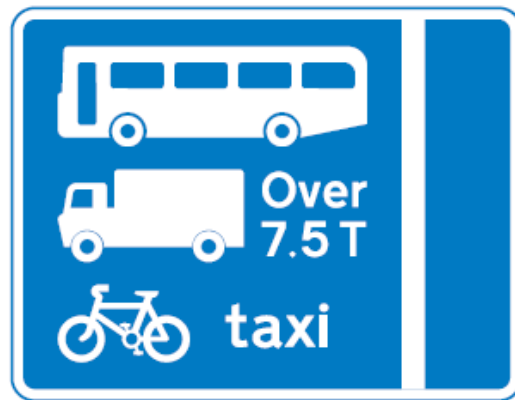
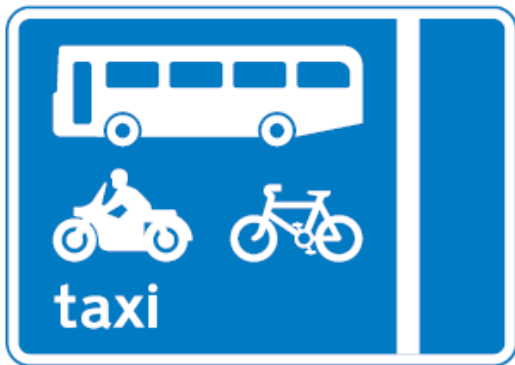
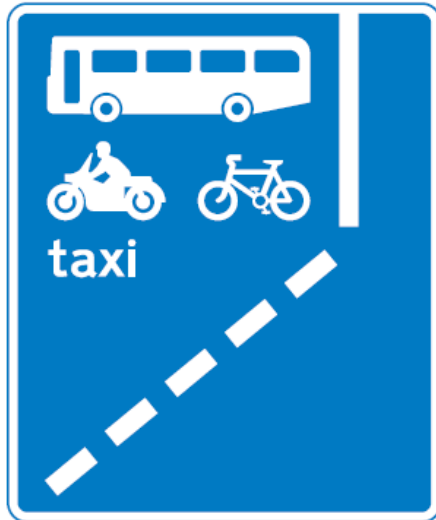
Walk-round check It is essential that every driver carries out a thorough walk-round check before using a vehicle on the public highway.

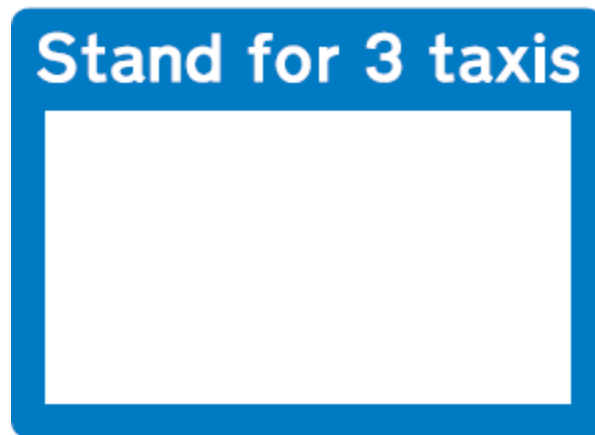
WTD (Working Time Directive) This is a European Union directive limiting the number of hours people can work, and determining what breaks should be taken, minimum holiday entitlement, etc. It applies to all kinds of employment, but currently excludes those who are self-employed.

Road signs - taxis

You must be aware of the specific road signs that relate to taxis. Those illustrated on this page are currently in use but not necessarily exhaustive.







APPENDICES

Appendix 1

DVA centres

Practical Driving Test Centres

Belfast DVA

Balmoral Road
Malone Lower
BT12 6QL

Coleraine DVA

2 Loughan Hill Industrial Estate
Gateside Road
Loughan Hill
BT52 2NL

Craigavon DVA

3 Diviny Drive
Carn Industrial Estate
Tarson
BT63 5RY

Londonderry DVA

Newbuildings Industrial Estate
Victoria Road
Ballyore
BT47 2SX

Newtownards DVA

Jubilee Road
Scrabo
BT23 4XP

Omagh DVA

2 Mullaghmena Park
Mullaghmenagh Upper
BT78 5PW

Theory test Centres

Ballymena

2nd floor
75 Wellington Street
BT43 6AD

Newry

The Store House
Ballybot House
28 Cornmarket
BT35 8BG

Belfast

City Exchange
11 – 13 Gloucester Street
BT1 4LS

Omagh

Dergmoney House
41a Dublin Road
BT78 1HE

Londonderry

The Embassy Building
3 Strand Road
BT48 6BB

Portadown

Magowan West
West Street
BT62 3PN

Booking Your Theory test

You can book on-line at [Book your theory test online](#) or by phoning 0345 600 6700

Passenger Transport Licensing Division (PTLD)

Driver & Vehicle Agency
County Hall
Castlerock Road
Waterside
Coleraine
BT51 3HS

Appendix 2

Other useful addresses

Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA)

Driver & Vehicle Agency, County Hall
Castlerock Road, Waterside
Coleraine
BT51 3TB
United Kingdom

Phone: [0300 200 7861](tel:03002007861) (9.00 am to 4.00 pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: dva@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Website : [Driving licences](#)

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

Phone: 0121 248 2000

Email: enquiries@rospa.com

Website: [RoSPA – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#)

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency

(VOSA) (Now part of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency – DVSA)

Website: [Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency - GOV.UK](#)

Appendix 3

Basic vehicle faults

Symptom	Probable cause	Remedy
Brakes		
Vehicle pulls to one side when braking	Incorrect adjustment	Seek qualified assistance
Warning light shows	Undue wear in pads/shoes	Seek qualified assistance
	System fault	Seek qualified assistance
	Low brake fluid level	Check level
	Brake light failed	Replace bulb
Brakes inefficient on good road surfaces	Possible component failure Brakes require adjusting	Seek qualified assistance
Brake pedal feels spongy when pressed	Possibility of air in the brake system	Seek qualified assistance
Lights		
Light does not come on	Bulb failure	Check and replace
	Fuse failure	Check and replace
Indicator flashing irregularly	Possible bulb failure	Check and replace
	Relay failure	Check and replace
Main/dip beam not lit	Part failure of unit	Check and replace
Tyres/steering		
Steering 'heavy' or erratic	Puncture	Change wheel and repair or replace tyre
	Power-assisted steering unit	Seek qualified assistance
Vibration in steering	Front wheel out of balance (check for loss of balance weight or bulge in tyre)	Seek qualified assistance or change tyre
	A bulge in one or both of the front tyres	Check and replace
	Loose front wheel nuts	Check and tighten / replace
Engine		
Misfiring or won't run	Fuel or electrical fault	Examine connections
	Defective spark plugs	Seek assistance Examine and replace if necessary
Fails to start	Out of fuel	Check gauge
	Damp in electrical circuits	Use anti-damp spray
Starter or solenoid clicks	Starter motor jammed	Rock vehicle back and forwards in gear with ignition off Turn 'square' end on starter with spanner

Squealing noise from engine area	Fan belt or alternator belt slipping	Adjust or replace
Overheating	Fan belt snapped or radiator hose leaking Fuse blown on electric cooling fan	Replace belt or hose Tape hose for temporary repair Replace fuse
Smell of fuel in the vehicle	Leaking fuel line	Examine connections Seek qualified assistance
Source: <i>The Official DVSA Guide to Driving - the essential Skills</i>		

Appendix 4

Recommended reading list

- Know Your Traffic Signs (TSO)
- The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland (TSO)
- All you need to know to be a taxi driver (Online DVA Website)
- Taxi Operator Handbook (TOL2)(DVA) (Online DVA Website)
- HC3 - Taxi Practical Driving Test Application Form (DVA)
- HC8 – Taxi Practical Driving Test Pass Notification Letter (DVA)
- HC9 – Taxi Driving Test Report Form (DVA)
- The Motor Vehicle (Driving Licences) Regulations 1996 (TSO)
- Public Service Vehicles Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1985 (Online DVA Website)
- Public Service Vehicles (Condition of Fitness, Equipment and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (online DVA Website)
- The Official Guide to Learning to Drive (TSO)
- The Official DVSA Guide to Hazard Perception – DVD (TSO)
- The Official DVSA Guide to Driving – the essential skills (TSO)
- The Official DVSA Theory Test for Car Drivers (Book or DVD-Rom) (TSO)

(The theory test publication will not contain all the questions for the taxi theory test. It does however give examples of the structure and layout of the types of questions that will be presented in the taxi test. Specific questions have been developed around the taxi industry, answers to which can be found in the above list of recommend reading materials.)

Four Taxi Practice papers are also available online at NI Direct/Motoring or by clicking on this link: [The taxi theory test - practice papers](#)

DVA - Driver & Vehicle Agency
 DVSA - Driving & Vehicle Standards Agency
 DVLA - Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
 TSO - The Stationary Office
 Online - Available on the internet

Appendix 5

Vehicle safety & emergency questions

TAXI VEHICLE SAFETY CHECKS AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS 2014

Advice and information on how to carry out vehicle safety checks and how to deal with emergency situations will be found in the manufacturer's handbook, [Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland](#), the appropriate [DVSA driving skills publication](#) and this manual. All of which are available online just click on the appropriate link.

Candidates taking the taxi driving test should be experienced and technically expert. The assessment criteria will reflect this. Candidates will be asked **five** questions, which will be a combination of 'show me' and 'tell me'. A driving fault will be recorded for each incorrect answer up to a maximum of **four** driving faults. If you answer all **five** questions incorrectly, a serious fault will be recorded, resulting in a failed test.

Vehicle Safety Checks have always been part of the officially recommended syllabus for learning to drive. Some of the questions will include a supplemental question which is designed to probe your understanding and knowledge a little deeper.

Below are examples of the type of questions that will be asked at the start of your practical driving test:

Example 1

Question: Tell me how you would check the rear reflectors to ensure they comply with the law.

Response: Rear reflectors must be fitted, clean and in good condition.

Sub

Question: If you wish to replace a broken rear reflector can you use an amber coloured version.

Response: No, a rear reflector must be red in colour.

Example 2

Question: Show me how you would check the hazard warning lights are working please.

Response: Switch on the hazard warning lights and check their function.

Driving test report form (HC9A)

		Taxi Driving Test Report				HC9A	
		Driver Number					
		Candidate's Name					
		Vehicle Make/Type		Manual	☐	Automatic	☐
		Registration Mark		Year		Adapted Vehicle	☐
DECLARATION I declare that the test vehicle is taxed, has a valid vehicle test certificate and my use of it for the purposes of the test is covered by a valid policy of insurance which satisfies the requirements of the relevant legislation.		Signature:				Theory Test P Certificate Produced Yes No NK Licence Details Checked ☐	

		Driving Faults	S	D		Driving Faults	S	D
1.0 Safety/Emergency Questions		☐	☐		14.0 Response to signs and signals:			
2.0 Ancillary Controls		☐	☐	☐	14.1 Traffic signs	☐	☐	☐
3.0 Precautions		☐	☐	☐	14.2 Road markings	☐	☐	☐
4.0 Controls		☐	☐	☐	14.3 Traffic lights	☐	☐	☐
4.1 Accelerator		☐	☐	☐	14.4 Traffic controllers	☐	☐	☐
4.2 Clutch		☐	☐	☐	14.5 Other road users	☐	☐	☐
4.3 Gears		☐	☐	☐	15.0 Use of speed	☐	☐	☐
4.4 Footbrake		☐	☐	☐	16.0 Safe distance behind vehicles	☐	☐	☐
4.5 Handbrake		☐	☐	☐	17.0 Maintain progress by:			
4.6 Steering		☐	☐	☐	17.1 Driving at an appropriate speed	☐	☐	☐
5.0 Move Away:		☐	☐	☐	17.2 Avoiding undue hesitation	☐	☐	☐
5.1 Safely		☐	☐	☐	18.0 Junctions			
5.2 Under Control		☐	☐	☐	18.1 Approach speed	☐	☐	☐
6.0 Emergency Stop	☐	☐	☐	☐	18.2 Turning right	☐	☐	☐
6.1 Promptness	☐	☐	☐	☐	18.3 Observation	☐	☐	☐
6.2 Control	☐	☐	☐	☐	18.4 Turning Left	☐	☐	☐
7.0 Reverse to left	L ☐	☐	☐	☐	18.5 Cutting Corners	☐	☐	☐
7.1 Control	☐	☐	☐	☐	19.0 Judgement When:			
7.2 Observation	☐	☐	☐	☐	19.1 Overtaking	☐	☐	☐
8.0 Reverse to right	R ☐	☐	☐	☐	19.2 Meeting traffic	☐	☐	☐
8.1 Control	☐	☐	☐	☐	19.3 Crossing traffic	☐	☐	☐
8.2 Observation	☐	☐	☐	☐	20.0 Positioning:			
9.0 Turn in the Road / U-Turn	T U ☐	☐	☐	☐	20.1 Normal driving	☐	☐	☐
9.1 Control	☐	☐	☐	☐	20.2 Lane discipline	☐	☐	☐
9.2 Observation	☐	☐	☐	☐	21.0 Clearance to Obstructions	☐	☐	☐
10.0 Reverse Parking (off road)	C ☐	☐	☐	☐	22.0 Pedestrian Crossings	☐	☐	☐
10.1 Control	☐	☐	☐	☐	23.0 Position for normal stops	☐	☐	☐
10.2 Observation	☐	☐	☐	☐	24.0 Awareness and Planning	☐	☐	☐
11.0 Reverse Parking (on road)	R ☐	☐	☐	☐				
11.1 Control	☐	☐	☐	☐				
11.2 Observation	☐	☐	☐	☐				
12.0 Use of mirrors		☐	☐	☐	Eco-safe Driving			
12.1 Signalling		☐	☐	☐	Control	☐	Planning	☐
12.2 Changing direction		☐	☐	☐	25.0 Test Terminated at Request of candidate	☐	25.0 Test Terminated in the interest of public safety	☐
12.3 Changing speed		☐	☐	☐				
13.0 Give appropriate signals		☐	☐	☐				
13.1 Where necessary		☐	☐	☐				

Appendix 7

Sample theory test / case study questions

This appendix contains one sample multiple choice theory test question from each of the four theory test bands and one case study with five related multiple choice questions (See page 134 for more information on the theory test).

Theory test question

Band 1

Mark one answer

What is the hard shoulder of a motorway for?

☐ Leaving the motorway

☐ Stopping when you are tired

☐ Stopping in an emergency

☐ Joining the motorway

Previous

Flag

Review Screen

Next

Theory test question

Band 2

Mark one answer

You MUST obey signs giving orders. These signs are mostly in

☐

blue rectangles

☐

red triangles

☐

red circles

☐

green rectangles



Previous



Flag



Review Screen

Next



Theory test question

Band 3

Mark one answer

On which occasions MUST you stop your vehicle?

☐

At a junction with double broken white lines

☐

When the amber flashes at a pelican crossing

☐

At a zebra crossing when someone is waiting

☐

When involved in a road traffic collision

Previous

Flag

Review Screen

Next

Theory test question

Band 4

Mark one answer

A passenger starts smoking in your taxi. What should you do?

☐	Ask them to stop until they get out	☐	Insist they sit in the rear of the vehicle
☐	Open the front and rear windows slightly	☐	Stop immediately and ask them to get out

Case study

Question 1

CASE STUDY You drive a taxi licensed to carry four passengers. You are in the middle of a 12 hour shift and you get a call from the office to pick up some passengers from a local night club. On the way, you come across traffic lights that have stopped working. There is a police officer standing facing you controlling the traffic and signalling you to go ahead. When you get to the night club there are five passengers one of whom is in a wheelchair. On the way back to the office via the motorway, you get a call on the taxi radio which does not have a hands free facility. The controller asks if you would consider staying on for an extra couple of hours. You have yet to complete the compulsory module of taxi periodic training.		Mark one answer What action should you take regarding the passengers when you arrive at the night club? ☐ Refuse to pick up any of the passengers ☐ Ask one of the passengers to wait until you return ☐ Lift the wheelchair passenger into the front seat ☐ Arrange an additional taxi to pick up the remaining passenger	
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Case study

Question 2

CASE STUDY

You drive a taxi licensed to carry four passengers. You are in the middle of a 12 hour shift and you get a call from the office to pick up some passengers from a local night club. On the way, you come across traffic lights that have stopped working. There is a police officer standing facing you controlling the traffic and signalling you to go ahead. When you get to the night club there are five passengers one of whom is in a wheelchair. On the way back to the office via the motorway, you get a call on the taxi radio which does not have a hands free facility. The controller asks if you would consider staying on for an extra couple of hours. You have yet to complete the compulsory module of taxi periodic training.

Mark one answer

Which signal would the police officer give?







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Question 3

CASE STUDY You drive a taxi licensed to carry four passengers. You are in the middle of a 12 hour shift and you get a call from the office to pick up some passengers from a local night club. On the way, you come across traffic lights that have stopped working. There is a police officer standing facing you controlling the traffic and signalling you to go ahead. When you get to the night club there are five passengers one of whom is in a wheelchair. On the way back to the office via the motorway, you get a call on the taxi radio which does not have a hands free facility. The controller asks if you would consider staying on for an extra couple of hours. You have yet to complete the compulsory module of taxi periodic training.		Mark one answer What should you do when you get the call from the office controller? ☐ Agree to stay on immediately after your shift ☐ Agree to cover the extra hours but take a 30 minute break ☐ Decline as you need to take at least 11 hours off ☐ Decline until you have had something to eat	
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Case study

Question 4

CASE STUDY

You drive a taxi licensed to carry four passengers. You are in the middle of a 12 hour shift and you get a call from the office to pick up some passengers from a local night club. On the way, you come across traffic lights that have stopped working. There is a police officer standing facing you controlling the traffic and signalling you to go ahead. When you get to the night club there are five passengers one of whom is in a wheelchair. On the way back to the office via the motorway, you get a call on the taxi radio which does not have a hands free facility. The controller asks if you would consider staying on for an extra couple of hours. You have yet to complete the compulsory module of taxi periodic training.

Mark one answer

What should you do when you get the call on the way back to the office?

☐

pull up on the hard shoulder

☐

move into the left hand lane

☐

reduce your speed to below 50 mph

☐

stop in a safe and convenient place

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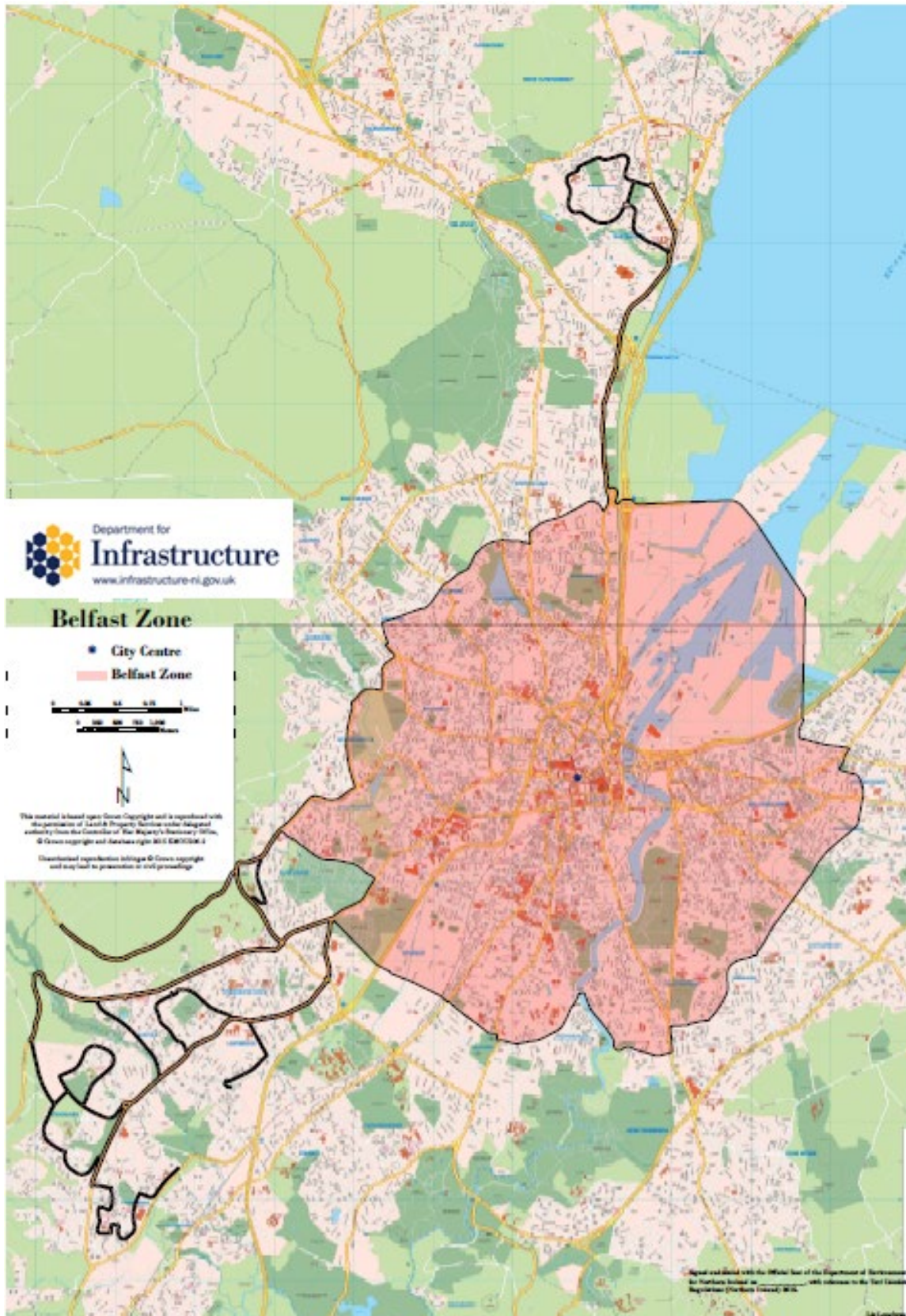
Case study

Question 5

CASE STUDY You drive a taxi licensed to carry four passengers. You are in the middle of a 12 hour shift and you get a call from the office to pick up some passengers from a local night club. On the way, you come across traffic lights that have stopped working. There is a police officer standing facing you controlling the traffic and signalling you to go ahead. When you get to the night club there are five passengers one of whom is in a wheelchair. On the way back to the office via the motorway, you get a call on the taxi radio which does not have a hands free facility. The controller asks if you would consider staying on for an extra couple of hours. You have yet to complete the compulsory module of taxi periodic training.	Mark one answer What training course have you yet to complete? ☐ First Aid ☐ Customer Care ☐ Disability Awareness ☐ Eco-Safe Driving
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Appendix 8

Belfast taxi zone map



Appendix 9

Sample TT / CS Answers

Multiple choice

- Band 1 – Stopping in an emergency
(Source: HC - Rule 240 & 270)
- Band 2 – Red Circles
(Source: HC - Page 106)
- Band 3 – When involved in a road traffic collision
(Source: HC – Rule 286 & DTES - Page 378)
- Band 4 – Ask them to stop until they get out
(Source: HC - Rule 148 & TM Page 63)

Case study

- Question 1 – Arrange an additional taxi to pick up the remaining passenger
(Source: TM - Page 23)



- Question 2 –
(Source: HC – Page 104)
- Question 3 – Decline as you need to take at least 11 hours off
(Source: TM - Page 59)
- Question 4 – Stop in a safe and convenient place
(Source: TM - Page 19)
- Question 5 – Disability Awareness
(Source: TM - Page 16)

The source stated is not necessarily the only source. Answers to theory test questions can be found in multiple publications included in the recommended reading list at [‘Appendix 4’](#).

Abbreviations

- TT – Theory Test
- CS – Case Study
- HC – The Official Highway Code for Northern Ireland
- DTES – The Official DVSA Guide to driving the Essential Skills
- TM – This Manual (All you need to know to be a taxi driver)