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# How to record your pupils' progress learning to drive and the skills they need

Updated 7 February 2023

## Applies to England, Scotland and Wales

[Publication for Northern Ireland \(https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/driving-instructors-record\)](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/driving-instructors-record)

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-a-record-of-your-pupils-driving-lessons/how-to-record-your-pupils-driving-lessons-and-a-summary-of-the-skills-they-need>

# How to record your pupils' progress

The driver's record lets you record the level your pupils have reached against 27 driving skills. The skills are split across 8 groups.

These are the skills that make up the recommended [learning to drive a car syllabus](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/car-and-small-van-driving-syllabus) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/car-and-small-van-driving-syllabus>). The skills are explained in more detail in '[The Official DVSA Guide to Learning to Drive](https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/official-dvsa-guide-learning-to-drive/)' (<https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/official-dvsa-guide-learning-to-drive/>).

The 5 progress levels are:

- 1 **Introduced.** The subject is introduced and your pupil is able to follow the instructions they're given.
- 2 **Helped.** Your pupil is improving but still needs a bit of help.
- 3 **Prompted.** Sometimes your pupil needs prompting, especially if it's a new or unusual situation.
- 4 **Independent.** Your pupil is dealing with this consistently, confidently and independently.
- 5 **Reflection.** In conversation, your pupil shows that they understand how things would have been different if they had done something differently. They can adapt to situations and see why perfecting the skill makes them safer and more fuel-efficient.

## Resources

These resources from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) can help your pupil:

- [The Official DVSA Guide to Driving - the essential skills](https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/official-dvsa-guide-driving-essential-skills/) (<https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/official-dvsa-guide-driving-essential-skills/>)
- [The Official Highway Code](https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/official-dvsa-highway-code/) (<https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/official-dvsa-highway-code/>)
- [Know Your Traffic Signs](https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/know-your-traffic-signs/) (<https://www.safedrivingforlife.info/shop/know-your-traffic-signs/>)

# 1. The basics

Skills in this group:

- [skill 1: legal responsibilities](#)
- [skill 2: safety checks](#)
- [skill 3: cockpit checks](#)
- [skill 4: security](#)

## Skill 1: Legal responsibilities

As a driver, it's your pupil's responsibility to know how the law relates to them and the car they're driving.

They need to make sure they're up to date with the rules and regulations.

Your pupil needs to understand how the following affect them:

- health
- eyesight
- drink
- drugs
- tiredness
- mobile phones

They must be able to check that the car they're driving is:

- taxed and has an MOT (if it needs one)
- insured
- safe to drive (roadworthy)

## Skill 2: Safety checks

It's important that your pupil knows whether the car is in good working order before they start the engine.

Your pupil needs to be able to carry out safety checks and know about:

- **fuel** - whether they have enough fuel for the journey and, if necessary, planning where to refuel the car
- **lights** - how to check all lights are clean and working
- **oil** - where and how to check the levels of engine oil and brake fluid
- **water**, screenwash and coolant – where they are and how to check them
- **electrics** – how to check that the battery and charging system, indicators, horn and other warning devices are working properly
- **rubber** – the correct tyre pressure, how to measure it and how to check tread depth and tyre condition

Your pupil can think **FLOWER** to remember these checks.

They should always check that the brakes and steering are working before they start to drive.

### Skill 3: Cockpit checks

These checks may be simple, but they're essential.

The car your pupil is using needs to be comfortable and ready for them to drive before they start the engine.

Your pupil needs to check:

- all doors are closed and the parking brake is on
- their seat is in the right position and they can reach the foot controls comfortably
- the head restraint is in the right place
- the steering wheel is adjusted so they can use it easily
- their seatbelt is fastened and comfortable
- all mirrors are correctly adjusted
- the parking brake is on and the gear lever is in neutral (or in P or N in an automatic car)
- whether they'll need to refuel the car

They need to know:

- the right order to carry out the cockpit checks - they should adjust their seat before checking the mirrors
- the different ways to adjust their seat to give them the best driving position

- how to adjust the mirrors, including adjusting the interior mirror at night so they're not dazzled by the vehicle behind them

## Skill 4: Security

Your pupil needs to be aware of their own personal security as well as the security of the car and its contents.

Your pupil needs to be aware of the ways they can reduce security risks. This includes:

- staying alert at all times
- letting someone know where they're going and when they expect to arrive or return
- keeping important or valuable items locked away from view while they're in the car
- choosing a secure place to park and leave the car, especially at night
- fitting additional security measures, such as a steering wheel lock and immobiliser

## 2. Control and positioning

Skills in this group:

- [skill 5: controls and instruments](#)
- [skill 6: moving away and stopping](#)
- [skill 7: safe positioning](#)

### Skill 5: Controls and instruments

Your pupil needs to concentrate on what's happening around them when they're driving, so operating the car's controls should become second nature.

They need to be able to operate the controls safely and confidently without looking at them.

This includes:

- foot controls – the accelerator, clutch and brake pedals
- hand controls – the parking brake, steering wheel, indicators, headlights and gearstick
- other controls – the horn (they need to know when and for what reason they can legally use it), windscreen wipers, demister and heated windows.

Your pupil also needs to be aware of any controls specific to the car they're driving.

They need to know the meaning and function of each element of the instrument panel.

## **Skill 6: Moving away and stopping**

Your pupil needs to know how to move away and stop safely every time they drive.

Your pupil needs to:

- be able to move away and stop safely on level ground, on a hill, at an angle and straight ahead
- use the mirrors - signal - manoeuvre (MSM) and position - speed - look (PSL) routines
- observe what's happening around them and be aware of any blind spots
- co-ordinate their use of the accelerator, clutch and footbrake so that they move off and slow down safely and smoothly
- use the parking brake and steering competently
- know where and when to look, what to look for and how to act safely on what they see
- be able to identify suitable stopping places
- know where and when to signal

## **Skill 7: Safe positioning**

Your pupil needs to be able to drive in the correct position for the road they're driving on. It's important for their own safety and the safety of other road users.

Your pupil should be able to:

- use the MSM and PSL routines

- show good lane discipline by planning ahead and moving into the correct lane in good time
- adapt their road position to suit the road width and traffic conditions
- keep a safe position during normal driving, especially around bends
- take up the correct position on a one-way street

They must also understand:

- how other vehicles, such as lorries and cyclists, need to position themselves
- what clearance they need to leave when passing stationary vehicles, cyclists or obstructions

### 3. Observations, signalling and planning

Skills in this group:

- [skill 8: mirrors - vision and use](#)
- [skill 9: signals](#)
- [skill 10: anticipation and planning](#)
- [skill 11: use of speed](#)
- [skill 12: other traffic](#)
- [skill 13: fuel-efficient driving](#)

#### Skill 8: Mirrors – vision and use

Your pupil must know what's happening around them at all times and act safely on what they see.

Your pupil must know:

- how to make use of the MSM and PSL routines
- when to use the mirrors
- why they need to use the mirrors and the importance of regular mirror checks
- how to act on what they see in their mirrors

They also need to know about the different mirrors fitted to the car, including:

- the uses for the interior mirror and the 2 exterior mirrors



- the effect that flat, concave and convex mirrors have, and how to interpret what they see in them
- what areas each mirror covers and where the blind spots are

## Skill 9: Signals

Your pupil needs to understand, and respond safely to, signals given by other motorists. They need to be able to give clear, well-timed signals so other road users know what they're planning to do.

Your pupil needs to know:

- why it's necessary to give signals
- when and how to give signals
- when and how to give arm signals
- when signals are not required

To understand signals given by other people using the road, they need to know:

- the significance of other types of signal, including brake, reversing and hazard warning lights
- how to read signals given by traffic controllers such as school crossing patrols

## Skill 10: Anticipation and planning

Anticipation and planning skills are found in all areas of driving. Your pupil should always be aware of what's going on around them while planning what they need to do in response.

They should understand that planning ahead can also save fuel, because easing off the accelerator earlier means they may not need to use the brakes as often or as heavily.

Your pupil needs to be able to:

- use the MSM and PSL routines
- identify hazards from clues and respond to them in good time
- recognise times, places and weather conditions that mean there's a higher risk

- use scanning techniques to help them plan ahead and prioritise how they'll deal with hazards

They also need to be able to anticipate the actions of other road users.

Your pupil should be familiar with the risks associated with:

- cyclists
- motorcyclists
- drivers of large vehicles
- pedestrians, including the very young, older people and those with disabilities
- animals
- emergency vehicles

## **Skill 11: Use of speed**

Your pupil should base their speed on various factors, including the condition of the road, weather and traffic, and the presence of pedestrians. They must always drive within the speed limit.

Your pupil needs to:

- know the national speed limits and restrictions for different types of vehicle and any restricted speed limits for the road they're on
- adjust their speed to take account of road, weather and traffic conditions
- choose the appropriate speed where there are pedestrians and in traffic-calmed areas
- know the stopping distance for the car in different conditions and how to calculate a safe separation distance from the vehicle in front

## **Skill 12: Other traffic**

Your pupil needs to be able to deal safely and confidently when meeting, crossing and overtaking other vehicles.

Your pupil needs to be able to deal with:

- meeting oncoming traffic when there are parked cars or obstructions on their side of the road
- meeting oncoming traffic on narrow roads with passing places
- crossing the path of other traffic when turning right

- overtaking legally and safely

They need to know:

- the MSM and PSL routines
- why and when to give way – they should not cause another road user to slow down or alter their course when they have priority
- the significance of passing places, warning signs, road markings and how to deal with obstructions
- the importance of planning and anticipation, and acting safely on what they see
- how to drive on all road types, including a one-way or two-way road, a three-lane two-way road, a dual carriageway and a motorway

## **Skill 13: Fuel-efficient driving**

Everything from the type of car and its fuel consumption to the way in which we drive influences the environment. Your pupil needs to understand how to minimise the negative effects and how to contribute to keeping the air we breathe cleaner.

Your pupil needs to understand how driving affects the environment and be aware of:

- the effect that vehicle exhaust gases have on the climate and health
- how to reduce fuel consumption by changing their driving style
- new technologies offering clean alternatives to fossil fuels

To minimise their effect on the environment, your pupil needs to know how to:

- reduce their fuel consumption by planning ahead and using the highest possible gear without making the engine struggle
- make sure the car is serviced as per manufacturer's recommendations and is in a good condition
- check the car's tyre pressures – tyre pressure can have a significant effect on fuel efficiency
- dispose of vehicle waste (like spent oil, old batteries and used tyres) correctly

## **4. Junctions, roundabouts and crossings**

Skills in this group:

- [skill 14: junctions](#)
- [skill 15: roundabouts](#)
- [skill 16: pedestrian crossings](#)

## Skill 14: Junctions

There are many different types of junction. Your pupil needs to be able to negotiate any junction on any type of road safely, without holding up other traffic unnecessarily.

Your pupil needs to deal safely and confidently with all types of junction, on all types of roads. This includes:

- T-junctions and Y-junctions
- crossroads
- slip roads
- unmarked junctions

They need to know:

- MSM and PSL routines
- rules for turning at, entering into and emerging from a junction
- ways other road users turn right at crossroads
- the significance of advance warning signs and road markings, and acting correctly on what they see
- rules of priority, especially when dealing with unmarked junctions
- the importance of good observation

## Skill 15: Roundabouts

Your pupil should be able to deal with roundabouts safely and confidently. They should have a thorough understanding of the rules that apply when approaching and negotiating them.

Your pupil needs to be able to safely negotiate different types of roundabout, including:

- standard roundabouts
- mini-roundabouts
- multiple and satellite roundabouts
- traffic-light-controlled roundabouts

They need to know:

- how and when to apply the MSM and PSL routines
- the importance of effective observation and awareness of other traffic
- how to position the car correctly and which lane to use
- who has priority
- the procedure for leaving a roundabout

## **Skill 16: Pedestrian crossings**

Your pupil should be aware of the basic rules that apply to all pedestrian crossings and know the differences between each type of crossing.

Your pupil needs to be able to safely negotiate different types of crossing, including:

- crossings controlled by lights
- zebra crossings
- school crossing patrols
- split crossings

They need to know:

- the importance of effective scanning as they approach a crossing
- how to recognise the different types of crossing
- how to apply the MSM and PSL routines
- the correct speed at which to approach the crossings
- the rules on overtaking
- the rules on parking near crossings
- when to stop for pedestrians who are waiting to cross
- the times and places where there's likely to be high risk
- the effect that different weather conditions have on the ability to see and stop safely

# 5. Manoeuvres

Skills in this group:

- [skill 17: reversing](#)
- [skill 18: turning the car around](#)
- [skill 19: parking](#)
- [skill 20: emergency stop](#)

## Skill 17: Reversing

Your pupil should be able to reverse smoothly and safely while under complete control. This includes reversing to the left and right around sweeping curves and sharp corners.

Your pupil needs to be confident reversing:

- around a left and a right corner – including square and gently curved corners as well as on the straight
- on a level road
- on a gradient
- on a narrow or wide road
- on a flat road or one with a camber
- on the left and right-hand sides of the road
- into driveways
- into and out of parking spaces

They should know how to:

- reverse accurately and smoothly
- steer in the correct manner
- make use of effective all-round observation
- reverse without undue delay
- take account of the way the car moves when they're reversing

## Skill 18: Turning the car around

To turn the car around, it's often easiest and safest to use a roundabout or reverse into a side street. However, if these options are not available, your pupil should be able to turn the car around in the road.

Your pupil needs to be able to turn the car around:

- on a flat road or one with a camber
- under full control
- accurately judging the width of the road
- while looking for and responding to other road users
- without running into or mounting either kerb

They should know how to:

- observe carefully all around throughout the manoeuvre, especially checking their blind spots
- respond safely to other road users
- coordinate the hand and foot controls so the car moves smoothly
- steer in the correct manner while turning as tightly as possible

## **Skill 19: Parking**

Your pupil should be able to park safely at the side of the road or using a bay in a car park.

They need to be able to:

- coordinate their hand and foot controls well, so that the car moves smoothly
- keep a reasonable distance from other vehicles
- observe all around while manoeuvring and not just rely on mirrors
- know where they're allowed to park so that it's legal, safe and convenient
- perform this manoeuvre accurately, signalling when they need to
- park without becoming a danger or obstruction to other road users

## **Skill 20: Emergency stop**

Your pupil should be able to scan and read the road ahead to cut down the risk of having to make an emergency stop.

When carrying out an emergency stop, they should be able to brake as quickly as possible while keeping the car under full control.

Your pupil needs to know:

- how to coordinate the brake and clutch pedals so that the car comes to a stop under full control
- the limitations of anti-lock braking systems (ABS)
- how different road and weather conditions can affect stopping safely
- how to control a skid if one occurs
- how to move away safely again after they've made an emergency stop

## 6. Road types

Skills in this group:

- [skill 21: country roads](#)
- [skill 22: dual carriageways](#)
- [skill 23: motorways](#)

### Skill 21: Country roads

Country roads vary from trunk roads, carrying heavy traffic, to narrow lanes, where there's only room for single-file traffic. Unless signs show otherwise, the national speed limit will apply but that limit is the maximum speed your pupil may drive – it does not indicate that it's safe to drive at that speed. They must determine the safe speed using their judgement, while taking account of the visibility, signs, hazards and other traffic, as well as road and weather conditions.

Your pupil needs to be able to deal with:

- poor visibility due to bends, hedgerows and steep roadsides
- gradients and camber
- junctions and entrances
- vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders
- slow-moving agricultural machinery
- darkness and various weather conditions



They need to know:

- the MSM and PSL routines
- what the different road signs mean
- the importance of forward planning
- how to scan ahead to anticipate hazards that could be just out of sight
- how to use passing places

## Skill 22: Dual carriageways

Some dual carriageways share the same speed limit as motorways and you join some dual carriageways from a slip road, in a similar way to joining a motorway. Your pupil should be aware that unlike a motorway, dual carriageways can have junctions and roundabouts where traffic can join, leave, cross and turn right from the carriageway.

Your pupil needs to be able to:

- drive safely on urban and rural dual carriageways and clearways
- join a dual carriageway
- choose the correct lane
- turn right off a dual carriageway

They need to know:

- the MSM and PSL routines
- the various speed limits that may be used on dual carriageways
- how to respond to advance warning and information signs
- what they should do if the car breaks down, including the use of hazard warning lights and warning triangles
- how the weather can affect driving on dual carriageways

## Skill 23: Motorways

Learner drivers can have driving lessons on motorways but only with an approved driving instructor (ADI) and in a car fitted with dual controls that's clearly displaying L plates.

Motorway driving is not part of the driving test. The Highway Code has specific rules about motorway driving, though many of the other rules apply to motorway

driving too. It's recommended that your pupil only takes lessons on the motorway near to the end of their training, when they're ready to take the driving test.

Your pupil needs to know how to:

- join and leave motorways, using acceleration and deceleration lanes
- use their mirrors effectively
- look and plan further ahead than they would on single carriageways
- respond to other road users
- use the correct lane
- keep a safe separation distance
- respond to signals, road signs and markings
- avoid fatigue, and use service areas
- overtake
- deal with side winds and turbulence
- recognise and use smart motorways
- deal with contraflows and roadworks
- deal with accidents and breakdowns
- use the hard shoulder

## 7. Driving conditions

Skills in this group:

- [skill 24: driving in the dark](#)
- [skill 25: weather conditions](#)
- [skill 26: passengers and loads](#)

### Skill 24: Driving in the dark

There are many factors that make driving in the dark more hazardous. Judging speed at night can be difficult, so your pupil needs to be particularly careful at junctions.

Your pupil needs to be confident driving on:

- urban roads

- rural roads
- single and dual carriageways

They should know:

- how darkness limits their visibility and therefore their speed, especially in bad weather
- when they need to use their lights, which lights to use and the importance of keeping them clean
- when they can use the horn at night
- how to park safely and legally when it's dark

## **Skill 25: Weather conditions**

Your pupil needs to be aware of the effect some weather conditions, such as fog and low sun, can have on visibility. Other conditions, such as ice, snow and rain, can affect the way that the car handles.

Your pupil should be confident in all weather conditions, including:

- fog
- ice and snow
- bright sunshine
- wind
- rain

They need to know:

- the way that different weather conditions affect their visibility, speed and stopping distance - they need to demonstrate that they can respond to these conditions safely
- the car's capabilities and how to use its features
- the warning signs and signals that may be used
- the causes of skidding and aquaplaning, and how to control them if they do occur
- when to use their lights and which lights to use in poor daytime visibility

## **Skill 26: Passengers and loads**

Your pupil needs to understand the responsibilities that they have to any passengers (including adults and children), and how to secure any items they're transporting.

When carrying passengers and loads, your pupil should be aware of:

- their responsibility to other adults, children, babies and animals in their car
- the safest way to carry loads in and on the car
- how to load trailers safely

They need to know:

- the rules concerning the use of seat belts
- the importance of not putting a rear-facing baby seat into a seat that's protected by an airbag
- the importance of checking that all doors are shut properly and that animals are safely restrained
- how to stow luggage or load it securely and the importance of distributing weight evenly

## 8. Following routes

There is one skill in this group:

- [skill 27: independent driving and using a sat nav](#)

### Skill 27: Independent driving and using a sat nav

Independent driving is an exercise your pupil will have to carry out during their driving test. They'll have to follow directions from a sat nav or follow a series of traffic signs. This gives them the chance to experience what it will be like to drive after they've passed their test.

Your pupil can acquire this important skill while learning, so that they're ready to drive alone.

To drive independently and keep full control, your pupil needs to:

- plan ahead so they do not have to make any late decisions
- be able to follow sat nav directions and traffic signs

- use the MSM and PSL routines
- position the car correctly and in good time
- understand the correct use of lanes, both with and without directional information
- respond correctly to other road users
- know and respond to traffic signs and road markings

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