
YOUR FIRST DRIVING LESSON (This will not apply if you're already familiar with driving, but still worth a read just in case you've forgotten :))

Don't worry about being nervous, you wouldn't be human if you wasn't.

The first thing your instructor will do is drive you to a safe quiet location, asking questions mainly about you, and what you're interested in, don't worry they're making you feel comfortable not interrogating you.

Once there you will park up and swap seats, now you will begin your first lesson:-

THE COCKPIT DRILL

The cockpit drill involves your instructor explaining and demonstrating car safety procedures and what the various pedals and levers do, plus how to operate them. They may also use a book containing diagrams for such things as the clutch to help you understand easier. They may ask you a few basic questions during the cockpit drill, but nothing to worry about.

Basically, they want you to operate the controls whilst the car is turned off. Make sure you ask to repeat anything you do not understand (they won't mind) as this will help when it comes to actually driving the car.

On your first driving lesson, the cockpit drill will include:

* Car mirror adjustments * Blind spots * Steering the car * How to change gears * When to use the handbrake

Once the basic Cock-Pit Drill is done we will move onto:-

MOVING THE CAR OFF AND STOPPING

Before you drive the car, your instructor will explain to you the procedure of moving the car off and stopping. Again, they may use a book to help explain how to move the car off using the various equipment in the car and also how to do it safely by use of mirrors and blind spot checks, followed by how to park the car up on the left alongside the pavement using the cars equipment and again, how to do so safely. After explaining this, you will then be given the chance to drive the car for the first time.

Your instructor will explain everything again – real-time as you are driving the car. During the moving off and stopping procedure, they will explain to you:

* Moving off * Clutch control * Clutch bite point * When to signal when moving off and when driving

* When to change gear * Stopping the car * Curbside parking

This is often a nervous time for learner drivers, but you will only be travelling a short distance down the road before you stop, plus it is usually in a straight or reasonably straight line. Also, don't forget that your instructor has dual controls so if anything goes wrong, they can take full control. You are likely to have a few goes at this before the end of the lesson. Don't worry if you stall the car, this is common, especially on the first driving lessons.

So now you have an insight to your first lesson.

Your Driving Lessons

The way people learn to drive is evolving...

You might be expecting to sit beside a driving instructor who takes full control of your learning. An instructor who tells you exactly what to do and why you need to do it.

An instructor who decides on what you're going to learn and how long you're going to spend learning it. An instructor who teaches you using the methods they prefer to use.

You may well pass a driving test with that approach, but there is a down side to learning in this way-

you may not feel totally equipped or prepared to drive on the roads by yourself once you pass. You may 'forget' what to do in certain situations or you may come up to situations you have never encountered on your lessons and be forced to deal with them.

This is because an instructor - led approach is a passive learning method - it removes your need to be fully aware, to make the correct choices and to be responsible for the outcome of those choices

An active learning approach is more engaging and interesting for you. It keeps you motivated and ensures you become a fully aware, safe and responsible driver...

Many of today's instructors involve you in the learning process much more. You'll be actively encouraged to take more control of the direction of your learning. Your instructor is still there to provide structure to your lessons of course, but they will encourage you to express your thoughts on what you'd like to cover and maybe to even find out how long you would like to spend learning that skill or topic before moving on to something else. You'll be asked to think about situations that have developed on your lessons, to reflect upon and learn from situations,

opportunities and mistakes (YES - mistakes are essential part of learning!). A driving instructor who adopts an active learning approach will help you learn using methods which work well for you – this might include the use of visual aids, videos, demonstrations, or just more on - road practice.

If you're encouraged to be an active participant in the learning process, you'll be able to problem-solve more efficiently and confidently, ready for when you've passed your test and are out on the road on your own.

'Real driving' skills are an essential part of learning to drive...

To get you ready for driving solo once you've passed your driving test, you can expect some 'real driving' skills to be included on your lessons too.

Your instructor will initially help you to learn the basic car controls before progressing on to help you learn some basic road skills such as turning left and right at junctions. Once they're mastered, you'll work on some more complex things, such as larger roundabouts, busy town roads, faster rural roads and dual carriageways.

But there are other skills that many instructors don't typically include on driving lessons because they're not tested as part of the driving test. We've listed a few examples of these skills below. Remember, the more situations you experience on your driving lessons, the better overall driver you will become.

It won't take any longer to learn these skills, as many of the tasks you'll be able to cover whilst you're learning the skills from the driving syllabus. If there's anything else you really want to cover, or something you don't want to do, just let your instructor know. They're your lessons after all - what do you want to be prepared for on the roads after you've passed?

Programming the satnav. Following guidance from a satnav may be a part of your driving test, but it's also a good idea to get used to programming it for destinations you are likely to visit, understanding its terminology, and knowing what to do if you go the wrong way.

Independent route planning and driving. This may be on your driving test too, but your instructor may stretch you further than the regular test requirements, such as asking you to plan the route for the lesson and maybe even navigate your way to places you'll visit when you drive solo. You'll be encouraged to use signs whenever they are available, rather than relying on your instructor's directions or a satnav.

Freestyle Manoeuvres. You've turned down a cul-de-sac, took a wrong turning or missed the junction you meant to take - how are you going to get out or turn back? Instead of the instructor telling you what you need to do, you'll be encouraged to problem - solve and decide independently where and how to turn around.

Drive Throughs. These can be really narrow with damage - inflicting high kerbs and metal posts; do you really want to bash your first car the first time you order a burger?

Filling up. It's a good idea to make sure you know the importance of using the correct fuel, how to fill up safely and how to avoid spraying the forecourt with petrol!

Music. Listening to music, talk radio channels or audiobooks can be a distraction. Why not learn how to manage that level of distraction during your driving lessons?

Driving with passengers. The additional weight from carrying additional passengers can affect the handling of the car. Also, passengers can be quite distracting - it's good to experience this type of distraction whilst learning so that you can develop safe strategies to manage it.

Advanced parking skills. Not just how to reverse into a bay or drive forwards in empty car parks; you could be asked to park in between two cars in busy car parks and navigate the tight turns and steep ramps of multi - storey car parks, too.

Here's a summary of the benefits of active learning...

- It enhances your involvement and makes lessons more engaging and fun
- You become more responsible for learning and for your choices
- You will have greater confidence in your own driving and safe decision - making skills
- You'll feel much better prepared for driving solo

With more of an active learning style, your instructor may...

- Ask you what you feel you are doing well with and what you feel you want to improve on – sometimes you may appear to be doing things well, but if you don't feel confident or are anxious, your instructor can help you by knowing what you 're thinking and how you're feeling.
- Ask for your input on what you want to work on – this may be something listed on the syllabus or something you feel you need to achieve, like getting onto roundabouts without panicking!
- Encourage you to learn from mistakes and challenge you to work out how to do things better next time – this is a quicker way of learning so that mistakes are not repeated as often. If you'd prefer the traditional instructor - led way of being taught, then that's fine. Just let your instructor know.

They're your lessons, you 're the customer and your instructor will work with you to find out how you learn best. Whichever approach you decide to use your instructor will always be aiming to help you become the best and safest driver you possibly can be.

Hope this helped you into the insights of your first driving lesson and how we scale things up at your pace. If you have any questions please do get in touch, we would love to hear from you.

Regards

Mark Jordan