

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN TO DRIVE SAFELY



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The best way to learn to drive is to take professional lessons with an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) and additional private practice supervised by a parent or a friend.

This helps the learner to practise what they are being taught in their professional lessons in a wider range of driving situations. It will also help them to pass the driving test. However, the aim is not to help the learner driver to pass the test as quickly as possible, but to help them to get as much supervised driving experience as possible while they are learning.

The more driving experience they get at this stage the better. Research shows that the more driving experience learners obtain, in a wide range of driving situations, the safer they are likely to be after they have passed the Driving Test and start to drive on their own.

This guide provides advice about helping learner car drivers during private driving practice.

Before Starting

Prepare Yourself

Valid Driving Licence

To supervise a learner driver, you must:

- be at least 21 years old
- have a full, valid driving licence, which you have held for at least 3 years, for the type of car (automatic or manual) being driven



If you have ever been disqualified from driving, the period of the disqualification does not count towards the 3 year requirement, because your licence was not valid while you were disqualified. For example, if you gained your full licence 3 years ago, but were disqualified for 6 months during the last 3 years, you will only have had a valid licence for 2 years and 6 months. In this case, you cannot yet supervise a learner driver. But, if you gained your full licence 10 years ago, but were disqualified for 6 months during the last 10 years, you will have had a valid licence for 9 years and 6 months. In this case, you can supervise a learner driver.

Insurance

Make sure the learner driver is insured to drive the vehicle they are using for private practice. If the vehicle is owned by the supervising driver or by another person, make sure that the motor insurance policy covers the learner. Take note of any restrictions.

If the vehicle is owned by the learner, the supervising driver will usually be covered on the learner driver's insurance. However, some insurers require supervising drivers to be over 25 years old, so check the details with the insurance company before starting to supervise the learner.

Eyesight

In good daylight, you must be able to read a vehicle number plate from 20 metres (five car lengths), with glasses or contact lenses if you need them. Before supervising a learner driver, it's a good idea to have an eyesight test at an opticians.



Update Your Driving Knowledge

Before starting to supervise a learner driver, take a driver assessment or advanced driving course to refresh your own skills and knowledge.

At the very least, read the latest edition of the Highway Code.

Set a good example in the way you drive.

It is much harder to convince a learner, if she or he sees that you don't practise what you preach.



Talk to the learner's instructor and ask when the learner is ready to begin private practice. Keep in contact with the ADI throughout the learning period, and if possible, sit in on some lessons, so that what happens in the private practice and in the professional lessons supports each other.

Remember, you may not be driving, but you are 'in control' of the vehicle. It is illegal to be over the drink drive limit, or to use a hand-held mobile phone, while supervising a learner driver.

Payment

It is illegal to receive any payment for accompanying a learner driver, unless you are an Approved Driving Instructor.

Prepare Your Learner

Make sure the learner has a valid provisional driving licence and that they are insured to drive the car. They must also meet the minimum eyesight standard for driving.



Ensure the learner has mastered the basic car control skills, including the emergency stop. They should take some lessons with a professional instructor in a dual-controlled car before starting private practice.

Discuss the purpose of the private practice – it is to help the learner practise what they are being taught in their professional lessons, and to increase the amount of driving experience they gain before their test. This will help them to pass the test and reduce the chances of crashing afterwards.

Prepare Your Car

Make sure the car is in a safe condition. Involve the learner in the basic vehicle checks (*tyres, lights, oil, coolant, windscreen wash*). They will be asked to demonstrate this knowledge in the driving test, and of course, they need to know how to do these checks when they have their own vehicle.

If possible, the car used for the private practice should be a similar size and power to the instructor's car and should have the same type of gears – manual or automatic.

Make sure the car displays L plates (or D Plates in Wales) while the learner is driving, but remove or cover them when you are driving.

Buy an interior rear-view mirror for the passenger side to help you see what's happening behind while the learner is driving.



Telematics

Consider fitting telematics in the vehicle. Many motor insurers offer telematics policies that involve the driver having a small device (a 'black box') installed or using an app on a smartphone. Some policies begin with an app, as a way of trying it, before having a black box fitted.

Telematics record the way the vehicle is being driven and provide feedback about the driving, advice on improvements and a risk rating. The feedback is usually provided online or by an app, and can be helpful when discussing practise drives with the learner.

Prepare the Drive

Plan the routes in advance at first, especially during the early part of the learning period. Remember that learners cannot legally drive on the motorway.

Discuss the best sort of routes and driving conditions to include in the private practice with your learner's instructor.

Start with short and less demanding drives – learners get tired and lose concentration easily. Initially, try to avoid traffic situations and roads the learner may find difficult; for example:

- Narrow Streets, as the learner may find it hard to judge the width of the car and it's road position
- Busy Roundabouts, heavy traffic on a roundabout can be daunting
- Dual carriageways, if your learner is new to driving then they may find it daunting to drive at higher speeds
- Bad weather conditions with poor visibility

As your learner gains more experience, introduce them to a wider range of situations. Gradually increase the difficulty and include longer drives in a range of conditions:

- Daylight and Darkness
- Dry and wet (avoid severe weather conditions)
- Built-up and non-built up roads
- Single and dual carriageway roads (not motorways)
- Roads with different speed limits



A good way to increase private practice is to let the learner drive you on joint trips, to the shops, for example. As they gain experience, let them plan the routes.

Make sure that there are no distractions, such as children or loud music, that will reduce the learner's concentration.

If you have telematics in the car, use it to record the drive so you and the learner can review the feedback about it later.

Use the '[Driver's Record for Learner Drivers](#)' to help plan and record private practice drives, assess progress and identify areas that need more practise.



During Practice

- ✓ Be calm and positive.
- ✓ Offer advice and tips.
- ✓ Use 'Praise – Constructive Criticism – Praise', which is a good training method.
- ✓ Remember, the learner does not have your driving experience and will make mistakes.



- ✗ Do not shout (except in an emergency) or be sarcastic as this will increase the learner's stress and reduce their confidence.
- ✗ Don't smoke during the drive, even if you think it keeps you calm.
- ✗ Don't use a mobile phone while supervising a learner.

Try not to contradict what the professional instructor is teaching the learner. If you disagree with it, discuss this with the instructor later.

Give instructions and directions well in advance. Be clear and specific.

As your learner gains experience, get them to drive and navigate at the same time without giving them step by step instructions on the route, and to use a Satnav. This 'independent driving' forms part of the Driving Test and is much closer to the normal driving conditions they will face after their test.

Young drivers, especially men, tend to be over confident. They are very good at controlling the vehicle and have fast reactions, but are poor at assessing risk and slower at identifying potential hazards. Ask questions to assess what they are 'seeing' as they drive (what seems obvious to you may not be obvious to them). This will indicate how well they are spotting something that may develop into a hazard.



Encourage the habit of **Mirrors – Signal – Manoeuvre**.

Remind them to check the speedometer regularly. On different types of roads, periodically ask what the speed limit is, and how they know. Encourage a positive attitude towards speed limits – they protect everyone, especially pedestrians, cyclists and children.

Give advice on how to get back on the right route if they take a wrong turn. Stay calm and don't suggest sudden changes in direction. Work your way round at the next suitable junction(s).

If the learner does something dangerous, find somewhere safe to stop and calmly discuss what happened.

Coaching Tips and a Coaching Checklist for Practise Drives are available on RoSPA's [Young Drivers' Hub](#).

Review Practise Drives

Review each drive after it is over, but be positive. If there are several faults to address, deal with the higher risk issues first and leave the others for later to avoid discouraging the learner.

If you have telematics, use the analysis of the driving it recorded to help discuss the drive with the learner.

Record details of the practise drives in the '[Driver's Record for Learner Drivers](#)'.

Before the next drive, briefly review the main issues from the previous one – be positive.



After the Test

Now the learner is a fully licensed driver, this is where the real risk begins. Learner drivers have few accidents while they are under supervision, but, once they start to drive unsupervised, their chances of crashing increase dramatically. It is useful to continue some supervised driving for a period after they passed the test; one way is to let them drive you when you are travelling together.

Safe Driving Agreement

Safer Driving Agreements involve parents and young drivers agreeing some rules in return for allowing the young driver to use the family car. They are not about being over-protective or unreasonable but to help the new driver during the initial high risk period while they build up their experience. For more information see RoSPA's '[Safer Driving Agreement for Parents and Young Drivers](#)'.

Choosing a Car

- If it's a second hand car, get it checked by a qualified mechanic before buying to ensure it's legal and safe.
- Reduce the risk of buying a stolen, or written off, car by using the DVLA's online [vehicle enquiry service](#).
- Check its [MOT status](#) and [MOT history](#).
- Check its [Hire Purchase Information \(HPI\)](#) to make sure there is no outstanding finance on the car.
- Check its safety performance in [Euro NCAP](#) tests and if possible, choose a car with four or five stars.
- the insurance group will significantly affect the cost of insurance.



For more advice see "[Choosing Your First Car](#)".

Insurance

The new driver will almost certainly find their motor insurance premiums have increased substantially and are very expensive in their first few years of driving. This is because new drivers make more insurance claims, and more expensive claims, than experienced drivers. However, there are ways to reduce the cost.

Telematics

Encourage the new driver to use an insurance policy that involves telematics as this will help them to drive safely and avoid high risk situations because how they drive will affect their insurance premium. However, it is important that the driver regularly views the feedback the telematics provides. It is also very useful if the parent(s) regularly sees and discusses it with the young driver.



Pass Plus

Encourage the new driver to take a [Pass Plus](#) course. This involves extra driving practice with a Pass Plus registered professional instructor in different conditions (including motorways). There is no test, and drivers may be able to obtain reduced insurance premiums from some insurance companies after taking Pass Plus.

Further Training

It would be a good idea for both of you to consider joining a local driving group, such as [RoSPA's Advanced Drivers and Riders](#) to develop your driving skills.



P Plates

Green 'P' plates can be displayed to indicate to other road users that there is an inexperienced driver at the wheel.

Motorway Driving

Many new drivers find driving on motorways for the first time stressful. It helps if you accompany them on the motorway the first few times.

Penalty Points

Make sure your new driver knows that if they get six or more penalty points within two years of passing their driving test, their licence will be revoked. They will have to obtain a provisional licence, drive as a learner (i.e., display 'L' Plates and be supervised) and pass the theory and practical driving tests again. For more details see <https://www.gov.uk/penalty-points-endorsements/new-drivers>.

Remind them that the penalty for using a hand-held phone is £200 and six penalty points, which means they could lose their licence for a single offence.

Useful Websites

[Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency](#)

[HPI Check](#)

[Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency](#)

[Pass Plus](#)

[Eyesight Standard for Driving](#)

[EURONCAP](#)

[Driving Lessons and Learning to Drive](#)

[The Highway Code](#)

[Find Driving Schools, Lessons and Instructors](#)

[RoSPA Road Safety Advice](#)

[National Driving Standard for driving cars and light vans](#)

[RoSPA Young Drivers Hub](#)

[The Driving Test](#)

[Helping Learner Drivers](#)

[Driver's Record](#)

[RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders](#)

[Learning to Drive Books](#)

[Top Ten Tips To Stay Within the Limit](#)

[DVLA's online vehicle enquiry service](#)





accidents don't have to happen

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