

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?

Example	Why?
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.