

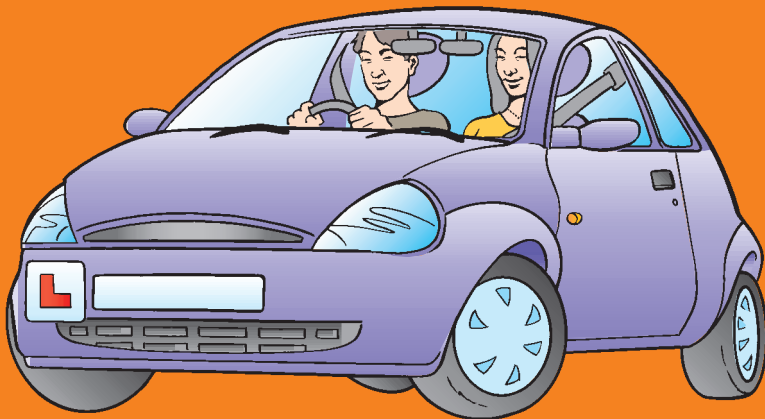
Helping Young People Learn To Drive Safely



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The best way to learn to drive is to take professional lessons with an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI), supported by private practice supervised by a parent or friend. This helps the learner to practise what they are being taught in the professional lessons in a wider range of driving situations. Research shows that the more driving experience learners obtain, the safer they are likely to be when they start to drive on their own. Private practice will also help them to pass the driving test.

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



Before starting

Prepare Yourself

Check you are legally entitled to supervise a learner driver. You must:

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

It is illegal to receive any payment for accompanying a learner driver.

Check that the motor insurance policy allows the learner to drive the car, and the insurers know the learner's age.

Take a driver assessment or advanced driving course to refresh your own skills and knowledge (*see Useful Contacts*).

At the very least, read the latest edition of the Highway Code, and if possible, 'Driving – the essential skills' (*see Useful Reading*).



Set a good example. 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 during the learning period (if possible, sit in on some lessons) to support the instructor. It is very useful to keep a record of the private practice by using 'The Driver's Record' or 'The Official Guide to Accompanying L Drivers' (*see Useful Reading*).

Remember, rules such as the drink drive laws and the ban on using a hand-held mobile phone while driving, apply to anyone supervising a learner driver. Although you may not be driving, you are 'in control' of the vehicle.

Prepare the Learner

Make sure that the learner has a valid provisional driving licence.

Ensure the learner has mastered the basic car control skills, including the emergency stop. He or she should take some lessons with a professional instructor in a dual-controlled car first.

Discuss and agree with the learner that the aim is to help them practise what they are being taught in their professional lessons.



Prepare Your Car

Make sure the car is in a safe condition. Involve the learner in the basic mechanical or vehicle checks (*lights, tyres, oil, coolant, windscreen wash*). He or she will be asked to demonstrate this knowledge in the driving test.



If possible, the car used for the lessons and the one used for practice should be of similar size and power. They 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, but check with the vehicle manufacturer that it will not affect the deployment of any passenger airbag.



Prepare the Drive

Plan the routes in advance at first. Start with short and less demanding drives – learners get tired and lose concentration easily. Gradually increase the difficulty of the driving and include longer drives in a range of conditions:

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

As the learner gains experience, let them plan routes.

The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) produces the 'Driver's Record' (see Useful Contacts) which is based on the official learning to drive syllabus. Use this to help plan private practice, assess progress and identify areas that need more practice.

During practice



Be calm and positive. Offer advice and tips. Follow the formula, 'Praise – Constructive Criticism – Praise', as this is one of the best training methods.



Do not shout (except in an emergency) or be sarcastic as this will only increase the learner's stress and reduce their confidence. Remember, the learner does not have your driving experience and will make mistakes. Don't smoke during the drive, even if you think it keeps you calm.

Do not contradict the driving techniques taught by the instructor, even if you disagree with them.

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

Ask questions to assess what the learner is 'seeing' and when they are spotting something that may develop into a hazard (what seems obvious to you may not be obvious to them).

Young drivers, especially men, tend to be over confident. They can be very good at controlling the vehicle and have fast reactions, but they are poor at identifying potential hazards and assessing risk. It takes new drivers up to two seconds longer to react to hazards than more experienced drivers.

During practice

Encourage the habit of Mirrors – Signal – Manoeuvre



Remind the learner to check the speedometer regularly. Periodically, ask what the speed limit is. Encourage positive attitudes 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 during the drive, find somewhere safe to stop and discuss what happened.

Review

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.

Record brief details of the drive in 'The Driver's Record'.

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

After the test

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 – one in five new drivers crash within a year of passing the test.

It is useful to continue some supervised driving even after the learner has passed the test. One way is to let them drive you when you are travelling together.

Motorway Driving

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

Pass Plus (www.passplus.org.uk)

Encourage the newly qualified driver to take a Pass Plus course. This involves extra driving practice with a professional instructor in different conditions (including motorways). There is no test, and drivers can obtain reduced insurance premiums from some insurance companies after taking Pass Plus.

Why not both join a local driving group, such as the RoSPA Advanced Driving Association (see www.rospace.com/drivertraining).

If the new driver is going to drive the family car, consider agreeing some rules with them. For suggestions, see RoSPA's leaflet 'Parents and Young Drivers'.

Green 'P' plates can be displayed on the vehicle to indicate to other road users that there is an inexperienced driver at the wheel. They also remind the new driver that they are inexperienced.

Penalty Points

If a driver acquires six or more penalty points within two years of passing their test, their licence is revoked. They must then get a new provisional licence, drive as a learner (display L Plates and be supervised) and pass the theory and practical driving tests again.

Useful Reading

*(available from bookshops or
The Stationery Office on
0870 600 5522)*

The Highway Code

The Official Guide to Accompanying Learner Drivers

The Official Theory Test for Car Drivers and Motorcyclists

Driving – the essential skills

Driver's Record

Available from www.dsa.gov.uk
(Go to the Instructors section and
click on Driver's Record)

Parents and Young Drivers

(available from [www.rospace.com/
road/young/youngdrivers.pdf](http://www.rospace.com/road/young/youngdrivers.pdf))

Useful Contacts

Driving Standards Agency

www.dsa.gov.uk

Pass Plus

www.passplus.org.uk

RoSPA

www.rospace.com

www.rospace.com/drivertraining

RoSPA Advanced Drivers Association

www.roadafreeserve.co.uk

Young Driver of the Year Competition

www.rospace.com/youngdriver

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