

The Top 10 Reasons why people **FAIL** the Driving Test



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Introduction

In the years I've been teaching people to drive since 1996, it has to be said that I've seen more driving tests failed than passed! On the up side I will add that the vast majority of those who failed went on to pass with another attempt.

Many candidates find it easier the second time round. They know what to expect and they know what sort of things the examiner is looking for. More importantly, they know what could cause them to fail. By avoiding the faults from their previous test, many go on to a more successful attempt next time.

This ebook is designed to share with you some of the more common reasons for driving test failure. The examples given are real examples experienced by my own pupils over the years. By sharing their experiences, I hope to defend you from making the same mistakes.

The statistics referred to throughout the book were kindly supplied with permission to reprint from the Driving Standards Agency (DSA). They are the real facts and figures averaged over the last 7 years. I was going to produce a separate book for each year, but the story was the same. Candidates seem to fail for the same errors time after time, year after year. Don't be one of them.

At this point I would like to dispel the myth that the DSA have set pass rates and quotas. If you take a driving test on a Friday afternoon, you have just as much chance of passing as if you had taken it on a Monday morning. They do NOT run out of pass certificates mid-week and have to fail the rest. I've heard all the rumours - they are NOT true.

The truth is that if you are competent enough and safe enough and good enough, then you will pass the driving test no matter when you take it. However, if you commit any serious or dangerous faults, or accrue more than 15 driver faults during the driving test, you will be failed on that attempt.

So what is a fault, and why are there three categories?

A driver fault, of which you are allowed 15, is an action (or inaction) which was not entirely correct but at the time was not considered to be dangerous or even potentially dangerous. Although it didn't cause any significant problem at the time, it is pointed out to allow you to improve your driving style in the future.

A serious fault is something which was considered to be either potentially dangerous or just blatantly incorrect. Just one of these would result in a fail and for good reason. If you allowed yourself to make such a mistake on test, where your concentration is supposed to be extremely high, what sort of errors would you be likely to make when the pressure is off?

A dangerous fault is something that at the time was ACTUALLY dangerous. In many cases the examiner would have been required to take some action, either verbal or physical, to avoid disaster. There is no excuse for dangerous driving at any time, let alone on your driving test. These faults are given a separate category simply to highlight the severity of the error.

What follows is a list of the top 10 reasons why people fail the driving test, with examples of the faults they committed and explanations as to what they should have done to avoid the errors.

Take note and good luck.

1. Act properly at road junctions with regard to observation

During the year, a total of 155805 tests were failed due to lack of observation at junctions. To put it another way 14.27% of all candidates failed because of this fault. That is a staggering 1 in 7!!

So what happened?

The driving test explanation report states: *“You should be able to judge the correct speed of approach so that you can enter a junction safely and stop if necessary. Position your vehicle correctly. Use the correct lane. If you are turning right, keep as near to the centre of the road as is safe. Avoid cutting the corner when turning right. If turning left, keep over to the left and do not swing out. Watch out for cyclists and motorcyclists coming up on your left and pedestrians who are crossing. You must take effective observation before moving into a junction and make sure it is safe before proceeding.”*

The above statement is of course true, and any candidate driving correctly throughout the test will have passed. But this report is concerned with what can and does go wrong all too often.

The main reason why candidates fail due to an observation fault can be summed up in just one word - Familiarity. This can mean either lack of familiarity with a particular junction or more commonly, over-familiarity. If you get used to a junction being clear, you may find that you don't check as often as you should. You can almost guarantee there will be a car approaching when you didn't look. By the time you do see it, it's too late and the fault is already committed.

Another very common situation can be found where cars are parked near to the junction. As you approach the junction you can't see, but all too often the thought is 'I can't see any cars coming, so I'll go'. Ask yourself this: If there was a car coming, would you be able to see it anyway? If you can't see a clear road, you can't go yet.

To correct this fault and remain safe, you must be able to see a clear road to drive into before proceeding. No guesswork. No assumptions. Just facts. If you can't see from where you are, edge forwards slowly until you can see. Wait until you are sure it is safe to proceed, then you can go.

In more unusual cases the road layout may be a bit confusing. One of the roads in my local area fits this description. As you look down the road it appears to head toward a set of traffic lights, but on closer inspection, there is a give way line some sixty metres before the lights as the through road curves in from the right and up to the lights. You are in fact in the side-street and need to yield. Although I deliberately take all of my pupils to this junction for the experience, a couple of them have still been caught out due to bad weather conditions or lack of concentration.

For example, as one pupil headed toward these lights waiting for a direction to be given, the examiner had to apply the brakes in time to stop before the give way line. The result is a failure due to lack of observation, in that case the candidate had not even seen the junction, let alone checked to see if it was clear to proceed. That particular pupil even told me he thought it was unfair to fail him for that, as it was raining and a puddle had covered the road markings! Needless to say, that argument didn't get him very far.

There was a road sign on the left that was not covered by a puddle warning of a give way junction ahead and the basic result could have been very dangerous if the examiner hadn't applied the brakes. There was after all a junction there, he just hadn't seen it. I pointed out that in real life, in his own car, he may have crashed. He got my point.

The only method I know to avoid this kind of error is to take each road in hundred metre stretches. Look down the length of the road and assess the possible hazards. Look at, and take notice of all the road signs, they are there to help. And if in doubt about what lies ahead, ease off your speed and have a better look. I don't know of any failure due to 'excessive' observation at junctions.

The third main cause of this fault is simply bad judgement. To be able to join a roundabout safely without stopping every time takes more than just the knowledge of how a roundabout works. It takes experience and good judgement of the speed and distance of other vehicles. This comes with time and practice. There is no quick fix here.

In simple terms, if you are having trouble assessing spaces on roundabouts; stopping when the junction is clear, or being stopped by your instructor because the approaching car was too close, then you are not ready for a driving test. But the problem is that too many candidates fail the driving test because they are not ready to take it yet. They apply too early without spending enough time practicing and gaining the experience.

I am sure there will be a lot of people who think I'm only saying this to get more money out of the pupil for the extra lessons. But, 155805 candidates failed for this fault in 2000/2001. Were they ready? There is no substitute for actual driving experience. With experience comes judgement, and a higher chance of passing.

2. Reverse park under control

In the year there were 99038 fails due to an inability to correctly perform the reverse parking manoeuvre.

In most cases this is due to nerves on the day or lack of practice with the manoeuvre. In many cases the fault seems to have been given as a secondary fail mark, accompanying one or more serious driving faults. The serious fault was given to highlight a 'scrappy' attempt. In other cases a candidate may not be given a fail for a 'dodgy' manoeuvre if the main bulk of the driving test was satisfactory. This can be at the individual examiners discretion.

But the real question is: How bad does the reverse park need to be to deserve a serious fault?

The driving test explanation report states: *“Control you vehicle smoothly making proper use of the clutch, accelerator, brakes and steering.”*

There are many different methods for achieving a successful reverse park, and your individual method doesn't matter so long as it works. The aim is to finish in a parked position within about 2 feet or half a metre from the kerb, and within a car and a half length from the parked car.

In a few areas, this manoeuvre may be done in a car park, reversing into a parking bay. Naturally, the accuracy is limited by the white lines marking the bay and the straightness of the car when finished. In other words, the car needs to be parked in the parking bay!

The usual causes of a fail would involve either hitting or mounting the kerb, which would have resulted from an incorrect angle of approach or excessive speed during the manoeuvre. Hitting the parked car; which is very rare in my experience. Or, an inability to get the car straight and stopped at the end of the manoeuvre, snaking down the road and eventually coming to a stop either too far from the kerb, not straight or over 2 car lengths from the parked car.

A gentle touch or roll into the kerb does not necessarily mean a fail, you have the chance to correct the mistake by pulling forward and repositioning yourself. But this is easier said than done as panic takes over. If the manoeuvre is not properly corrected and continues to go wrong, then failure can be expected. But, if the mistake is calmly corrected and the manoeuvre continued without further error, most good hearted examiners would give a minor fault at the most. Not a fail.

3. Reverse into a limited opening under control

For those of you who don't understand the full title, this is the reversing around a corner manoeuvre. Usually around a left corner but there is an option for the examiners to get you to reverse around a right corner, very rare in a car test, this may be used if the test is being taken in a small van or other vehicle with limited visibility from the rear window. If you are taking the test in a car and your instructor has not shown you how to reverse around a right corner - don't worry about it.

People fail this manoeuvre for virtually the same reasons as the reverse park. Lack of control, accuracy or patience. I have taught many pupils who have told me from the start that they can't reverse around a corner, and as long as they believe this, they won't be able to. The first step to a successful reverse, is the belief that it can be done.

Don't worry; I'm not going all spiritual. But you need to convince yourself that reversing around a corner is no more difficult than driving around forwards. After all, it is the same car, the same corner, you need the same amount of steering and the same level of control. But, you have more time because you can do it slower. This gives you the time to check the accuracy and of course do the additional observation that you need.

So why does this manoeuvre go wrong so often? The driving test explanation report states: *“Whenever you are reversing a vehicle, you will need to control your speed. Steer a course reasonably close to the kerb. Remember that your vehicle will swing out as you turn the corner. Avoid hitting or mounting the kerb, or steering too wide.”*

A gentle tap into the kerb or gradual rubbing of the kerb can be corrected, but hitting the kerb from a relatively steep angle or at speed will gain faults. Faults are also given for a car drifting 'too wide' from the kerb. How wide is too wide? A rule of thumb is to keep within 2 feet of the kerb, 3 feet is tempting fate!

However, in my experience, many faults are picked up after the car has turned the corner. It is necessary for you to get the car straight, straighten the wheels and proceed down the road in a straight line close to the kerb. The steering wheel should be kept still during this phase as any movement will result in 'snaking' or weaving down the road. It is this lack of control that the examiner would pick up on, and depending on the severity of the inaccuracy, he would have a reason to fault you.

4. Make proper use of steering

Something as simple and obvious as steering costs over 90,000 people their driving tests each year. What could possibly be so wrong with your steering that could cause you to fail the test?

The driving test explanation report states: *“Avoid harsh steering, or steering too early or too late as it may cause you to hit the kerb or swing out towards another road user.”*

There are in fact many reasons why an examiner would mark this section of the form. It could be for under-steer or over-steer, bad hand position on the wheel, crossing the hands or allowing the wheel to spin freely. All the usual bad habits that most drivers have, but the majority of these would be considered minor faults and wouldn't cost you the test unless repeated too many times.

The more serious faults are committed when bad steering causes other problems with the car's position or direction. Possibly the most common error is to allow the car to swing out wide while turning a left corner. If the car was to encroach onto the centre line without good reason, i.e. parked cars in the way, then the position of the car is becoming dangerous for oncoming vehicles.

When approaching a T-junction to turn left, it is important to commit to the steering well in advance. Most of the steering should be done before the give-way or stop line, before 1st gear is selected and if necessary before the car is stopped. This leaves you in a trouble-free position when pulling away, allowing you to remain close to the kerb.

As the pupil gets more confident with the control of the car, the temptation is always there to try to perform more tasks at the same time. A particularly dangerous example of this is steering whilst trying to change gear. The feeling is that as the speed of the car increases, so the gear HAS to be changed. In a sense this is true, but there is never any real urgency over the gear change.

If you are going around a corner, you can wait until after the car is straight before changing, or if the corner is particularly wide the gear can be changed at the half way point, as the steering is set but before the straightening manoeuvre. There is always the option of keeping the speed down slightly so as not to be tempted. So long as the gear is not changed while the wheel is actually being physically turned then there should be no problem.

5. Make effective use of mirrors/rear observation well before changing direction

Almost 85,000 casualties as a result of this fault, and the first mention of the use of mirrors. It is the usual stereotype that learner drivers are constantly being told to check their mirrors. It has become a joke by many qualified drivers who hear that a friend is learning - 'Don't forget to check your mirror, ha ha'.

There is a serious side to this though as 84,915 candidates found out that year. Here's what the driving test report recommends. *"You should use your mirrors often, including exterior mirrors where necessary, and always be aware of what may be in your blind spots. Just looking is not enough. You must know what is happening all around you and act sensibly and safely on what you see. You must always check carefully before; signalling, changing direction and changing speed. Use the Mirrors Signal Manoeuvre (MSM) routine. Do not signal or act without first using the mirrors."*

Specifically then, what falls into the category of 'changing direction'? You need to think of examples of times the car will be changing direction or position, without necessarily needing to signal or change speed as these instances may be covered by other fault areas.

A few examples include - Changing lanes, passing a parked car or obstruction, dealing with a bend or curve in the road, or any time the steering wheel needs to be turned.

In my experience the first of these examples is the most common cause of a fail. When you intend to change lanes, it is vital that you have checked behind and to the side of the car for other vehicles as there is always the possibility that someone else may be in the way. To ignore this may result in a collision.

The most dangerous lane change is a sudden change too close to a junction. Perhaps you failed to notice the road markings at traffic lights until you were almost on top of the junction and then decided to swerve into the new lane - dangerous.

Or maybe you were moving around a roundabout and drifted from one lane to another without actually realising. Naturally, other faults are emerging here but the bottom line is that you changed position without first checking that it was safe to do so.

The same problem may occur if you found yourself in the right hand lane of a dual-carriageway, realised you need to be in the left hand lane and then switched with no warning. With the stress of the driving test, mistakes like this are all too common.

The only way to be sure not to fall into these traps is to pay attention to the road ahead and plan what needs to be done in advance. Most road markings can be seen at least fifty to a hundred metres before a junction, ample time to prepare the correct lane

using the MSM routine. This eliminates the need to suddenly change lanes, but if worst comes to worst and you do find yourself in the wrong lane, stay in the wrong lane until a suitable, safe time to correct the position. Never make any sudden or erratic movements.

Lesser examples of this fault include checking the mirrors before passing parked cars or obstructions. The observation is needed so that you can be sure that no one else is attempting to overtake you at the time. It may also be a good idea to give a short signal if the obstruction is a little unusual, like a cyclist or road works that cars behind may not be aware of.

An individual situation would have to be unusually hazardous to warrant a fail on its own, but repeated minor faults in this area are responsible for many failures. A repeated or habitual fault occurs when the candidate makes the mistake more often than they get it right. In general, if you make the same minor error more than four or five times within the forty minutes of the test, you need more practice and should be failed.

To correct this problem, you should treat each road separately throughout the test. Look down the length of the road and assess the possible hazards. Then plan your approach to each hazard starting with a clear and effective look in the mirrors before any other action.

Looking at this fault from another angle, I remember once that a pupil of mine was marked down on a driving test not for lack of use of mirrors and rear observation but for incorrect use of rear observation. In this example, the candidate was accelerating along a slip road joining a 60 mph dual-carriageway.

As he went to merge onto the main carriageway, he looked over his shoulder to see if the lane was clear. This is something that many experienced drivers do every day, so what was dangerous about this. At the time the car was travelling at almost 50 mph, the driver was looking out of the side and rear windows. He was not looking where he was going.

At that speed the road ahead changes very quickly but he wouldn't have seen it. There is also the tendency for an inexperienced driver to turn the wheel while looking around or subconsciously change the speed. The last thing needed is to swerve or wobble at 50 mph. This would not only be dangerous but would seriously scare the novice driver who may not then be able to regain control. So how should he have done it?

First let me state that the speed of 50 mph is fine, it is matching the speed of the traffic on the main carriageway and allows merging to take place effectively. The observation should be done much earlier, as soon as the main carriageway is visible. Make use of the rear view mirror and importantly the right wing mirror. If the wing

mirror is set correctly, a clear view of the left lane of the main carriageway should be seen.

You may check to the side through the window, but make sure to keep your shoulders square to avoid any unwanted steering. Do not attempt to check the blind spot as this is not safe at such speeds.

Make use of the full length of the slip road, this gives other vehicles a chance to see you and make allowances for you. When you are happy that the way is clear and that any other road users have seen you, merge onto the carriageway and make progress to an appropriate speed for the road conditions (see next section).

6. Make progress by driving at a speed appropriate to the road and traffic conditions

Here's the proof. Driving too slowly causes more candidates to fail than driving too fast! Almost 73,000 fails due to slow driving in various situations. This compares with less than 46,000 who failed for excessive speed.

So why is driving too slowly considered serious? Surely slow is safe, and the speed limit is the maximum speed permitted on that road not the suggested speed. These are just some of the arguments I hear daily.

The driving test report suggests: *“In order to pass your test you must show that you can drive at a realistic speed appropriate to the road and traffic conditions. You should be able to choose the correct speed for the type of road, type and density of traffic, weather and visibility.”*

So what is safe driving and when does it become over cautious driving? Naturally, if you were driving down a narrow back street with parked cars scattered on either side, you would not immediately accelerate to 30mph. Some care has to be taken. But if you are driving down a fairly wide stretch of road with a 40mph speed limit, it would be considered inappropriate to drive at 25mph holding up the traffic behind.

Quite often, I find that these faults appear when particularly fast stretches of road are being used. National speed limits and wide dual-carriageways. The first reason I suggest is that the candidate did not know what the speed limit was!

You need to be able to recognise the National Speed Limit sign with its black diagonal stripe and apply the speed limit to the type of road you are on at the time: 60mph on single carriageways and 70mph on dual carriageways for cars and motorcycles.

But do you have to reach top speed? Possibly. It depends on the road and traffic conditions. But if you have a good road surface, good weather conditions and light traffic, then why not? After all you should be confident to handle the car at speed, you've had enough practice - haven't you?

On a couple of the test routes in my local area, a small winding lane is used. National speed limit (60mph) applies but you would need to be a professional rally driver to achieve such speeds safely. However, I have had pupils failed for driving too slowly along that stretch of road. The pupil was naturally upset because he thought it would be dangerous to drive faster on such a twisting lane.

He does have a point. But there is a better way of getting along that road without sticking to 30mph. It is a little technique called reading the road. If you look well ahead you will be able to see the road layout. If the road is fairly straight for a few hundred metres - speed up. If you can see curves up ahead, ask yourself how sharp

they are. Look for clues to indicate a sharp bend; extra paint on the road, triangular warning sign, black and white arrow boards, etc. The more warnings there are, the sharper the corner will be.

Adjust your speed accordingly. With a little practice, driving faster when safe and slower when needed, you will find your average speed increasing whilst remaining safe. Good road perception will add brownie points when out on your test, whilst at the same time making the examiner feel comfortable and confident with your driving. This is what he needs to see.

7. Make proper use of gears

Knowing which gear to use and how to change the gears is a fundamental part of learning to drive a manual car. Each and every pupil is taught from a very early stage, not only what the gears are for, but how to change them and make proper use of them. So how could anyone possibly get something so basic wrong on the test?

Answer: Gears are not basic. They can be very complicated, especially when there are other distractions or unexpected happenings. It is in fact very easy to make errors involving gears. 68338 candidates managed to get something wrong here!

What follows are just a few examples of the sort of things to go wrong, but the driving test report suggests: *“Select the correct gear to match the road and traffic conditions. Change gear in good time but not too soon before a hazard. Do not allow the vehicle to coast by running on in neutral or with the clutch down. There should be no need to look down at the gear lever when changing gear.”*

Let's start with something simple, that almost all of us were guilty of at some point: Looking at the gear stick before a gear change. On its own and as a one-off fault, it probably would not result in a fail. However, repeated looks at dangerous and inconvenient positions certainly would.

In my experience, a pupil looks down at the gear stick just before changing down the gears, not up. This suggests they were on the approach to a junction or hazard and really should have been looking somewhere more useful - like at the junction. If your attention is diverted just at the point a decision was to be made, then the outcome could be disastrous.

If you have this problem, my advice is to force yourself out of the habit. Deliberately stare at something in front of you when you reach for the gear stick. To begin with, your observation may not be very constructive, but you will get out of the habit of looking down. Once you kick the habit, you will be able to look anywhere - to the junction, the lights, the cyclist, etc. You will also appear to have much more time to assess the situation and make your decision.

Having dealt with a repeated minor error, what could cause a serious fault in its own right?

Others gear faults might include: Picking the wrong gear for the situation, too high or too low. Changing gears too early or too late. Not making use of the gear once you have picked it, accelerating onto a roundabout for example. Failing to change gear at all, when a new gear was needed.

Whether any of these faults would be upgraded to a serious fault or not, depends on the road and traffic situation and the outcome of the error. Much of the test result will

depend on how the Examiner saw it. It is his (or her) experience and judgement that will decide the severity of the fault.

I mentioned accelerating onto a roundabout a moment ago. This is an example from personal experience.

In my local area there are many multiple lane roundabouts with fairly quick moving traffic. My pupil had waited for a sufficient gap to pull out into, but then eased away and didn't get up much speed. As a result, other vehicles soon caught up and started overtaking. This caused some confusion and a little panic. What he should have done was to make proper use of his gears, and use the higher powered lower gears to create a little more acceleration. With extra 'pick-up' he would no longer have been causing a hazard on that roundabout.

This fault could also be seen as failing to make progress I suppose, but its full title would have to be failing to make progress through the incorrect use of the gears and accelerator. Whatever you call it, it is still a common fault. Some other basic gear faults are a little more obvious. Not even the pupil committing the fault can argue if the car stalls because the wrong gear was used. If you are trying to pull away from a give way line in 3rd gear instead of 1st, you may experience problems. Similarly, if 4th is picked instead of 2nd before a sharp turn. Simple errors like these can make the whole drive look really messy, and at the end of the day, presentation counts.

So here is my advice, and it is very simple advice.

Firstly. Use the full MSM PSL routine before every junction. This will set you up for an easy gear choice at the vast majority of junctions.

Secondly. Whenever you need to change gear, take your time. A good gear change should take about 3 seconds. If you try any quicker, you may get the wrong one and have to start again. Get it right first time and there is no mistake.

And thirdly. Always match the gear to the speed of the car, not to the junction that you see ahead. The junction may be clear, but if your speed is less than 5mph then 2nd gear will probably cause you to stall. Use the gear that matches the actual speed (5mph = 1st gear).

8. Act properly at road junctions with regard to position before turning left

Positioning your car correctly before turning left is one of the first manoeuvres you learn as a beginner. It is the simplest junction to practice whilst you gain control of your car. So why do so many candidates fail for this procedure each and every year?

On average, 68190 test candidates fail their test due to a fault in this area.

The driving test report states: *“Position your vehicle correctly. Use the correct lane. If turning left, keep over to the left and do not swing out.”*

So what have they done to warrant a fail?

A common cause of fault is position at a T-junction when turning left. The candidate approaches too straight instead of following the kerb line and as a result is forced to swing out into the new road. If the amount of swing causes them to cross the centre line of the new road, then a serious fault can be expected, especially if there is an oncoming car.

Where the junction is tight, it may be the case that the candidate got too close to the kerb and has mounted the kerb with the rear wheel whilst turning.

Careful consideration has to be taken to avoid these faults. Understanding how the car reacts when it is turned. Imagine you are driving a longer vehicle that needs more room to swing. Also consider the size and shape of the junction. Are parked cars in the way? Can drivers in the new road see you waiting? Make it obvious what your intentions are and make the manoeuvre easy for yourself.

When dealing with a left turn into a side road, a new set of faults appear, but I am sure you can see some similarities.

All too often, a candidate will drift to the right on the approach to a left turn. Maybe they feel this will give them a better view of the corner. They fail to see the oncoming car and the tiny gap that has been left for them. The correct approach should be 1m (or 3ft) from the kerb, holding a steady line around the corner.

Turning too early or too late for the turn would normally be regarded as a steering fault, unless the overall position was incorrect to start with. Confusion is sometimes caused by parked cars too close to the junction.

Unfortunately these things are sent to test us and they just have to be dealt with. Ideally, you would be able to pass the parked car and then return to the correct position before turning the corner. However, sometimes the car is parked at the junction, so careful positioning with extra observation is needed to proceed around the corner without creating more of a hazard.

9. Position vehicle correctly during normal driving

Correct and safe driving is all about dealing with a continuous series of situations, each requiring a routine which needs to be followed and usually a decision to be made. The outcome of this decision is inevitably the difference between a pass or fail.

The situations you may be faced with are numerous and widely varied. They include junctions, hazards, other cars, pedestrians, crossings, road marking variations, etc. The list could go on. But there are times when there would appear to be nothing to do except drive in a straight line.

When this is the case, I always tell my pupils - *“When there is nothing else to deal with, deal with your speed and position”*. This ensures that you will always be concentrating on something, rather than nothing.

In 2000/2001 there were 64387 cases of driving test failure due to bad positioning.

The test report states: *“You should position the vehicle sensibly, normally well to the left. Keep clear of parked vehicles and position correctly for the direction that you intend to take. Where lanes are marked, keep to the middle of the lane and avoid straddling lane markings. Do not change lanes unnecessarily.”*

So what could be wrong with your position that could result in a serious or dangerous fault on a driving test?

I am not talking about driving on the wrong side of the road, or mounting the pavement - if you are doing this, you shouldn't be going for a test yet. But there are some very common examples of incorrect driving position which can cost you your test, which, with a little concentration and planning can be avoided altogether.

In my experience, there are four usual suspects when this fault has been given.

Driving too close to the kerb can be extremely dangerous given the wrong set of circumstances. Debris collects in the gutter which could easily damage your tyres, especially if there is broken glass or sharp stones. This debris could be flicked out by your tyres and cause injury to pedestrians or property.

When it's been raining, puddles form in areas of poor drainage. It is now an offence to splash a pedestrian; you can be booked for common assault! Besides the fact that the puddle could be concealing some other form of trouble; hidden debris or a pothole for example.

On the other extreme, driving too wide can be equally undesirable. The closer you get to the centre line, the closer you are to oncoming traffic. Actually crossing the centre line would put you directly in the path of traffic and could easily cause a head-on crash if the other driver isn't paying attention. There are of course times when it is

necessary to straddle or even cross the line, when passing parked vehicles for example, but when this is the case, extra care needs to be taken to ensure the manoeuvre is carried out safely.

If you are on a dual-carriageway and happen to stray too close to the dividing lane line, you are putting yourself in danger from the vehicles approaching to overtake you. The slightest tap at higher speed could cause both you and the passing vehicle to leave the road.

The correct position for normal driving is 1 metre (or 3 feet) from the kerb. This puts you in a safe position, away from danger on either side. Naturally there will be times when you have to adjust this position, to deal with hazards, pedestrians, parked cars, etc. But you must always return to this safe position once the hazard has been passed.

Far too many times, I have heard the explanation of this fault given as cutting a right hand bend. This is where the road ahead curves to the right, different from cutting a right hand corner into a side road. I have heard several of my pupils refer to this as “The racing line”...! It may be alright in Formula 1 but not on the public road.

If the road curves to the right, the chances are that the view of the road ahead is blocked by the corner. If you were to take the short cut across the corner, you wouldn't see someone coming the other way until it was too late.

Again, you should remain in position 1 metre from the kerb and drive around the outside of the curve. I ask my pupils to imagine a bus coming around the corner towards them... that keeps them over to the left.

And finally... The most common cause of incorrect position in my experience: Straight-lining a roundabout. This involves cutting across the roundabout rather than driving around it.

When you are dealing with a multiple lane roundabout, you have to imagine where the lane markings would be if they were painted all the way around. Sometimes they are, but usually the markings end at the give-way line. The rest is left to the imagination.

If there are two lanes approaching the roundabout, there must be two lanes going around it. Where there are three or more lanes approaching, there are three or more lanes going around. It is very important that you stay in your lane position as you travel around the roundabout so as not to move across in front of another vehicle.

OK if you are turning right at the roundabout, you will need to move across to the left side of the roundabout before exiting. But this is done carefully, with effective use of the mirrors. The faults are given out when unplanned movements are made without due care and attention.

10. Make progress - avoiding undue hesitancy

Number 10 on the list is the issue of hesitancy, which very often causes confusion and problems for learner drivers; A yearly average of 59331 problems for learner drivers to be exact. So exactly where is the dividing line between caution and hesitancy?

The driving test report explains: *“You should approach all hazards at a safe, controlled speed, without being over cautious or interfering with the progress of other traffic. Always be ready to move away from junctions as soon as it is safe and correct to do so.”*

So what does this mean?

I had one pupil who failed two consecutive tests on the same roundabout. First time, he pulled out onto the roundabout whilst another car was coming towards him. The examiner thought he should have waited. Whereas, on the second attempt he waited for a larger gap. The examiner thought he waited too long and should have taken an earlier gap. Clearly he went from one extreme to the other.

As a basic rule which you can apply to roundabouts and other junctions, such as pulling out of a side road or turning right into a side road, I suggest to my pupils that they think like a pedestrian!

Ask yourself if you would have enough time to walk across the road. If you think you would, then you should have enough time to drive across. In real terms, this means that you need a gap of about 5 seconds in between oncoming cars; on a roundabout you should have a clear space beyond the entrance to your right.

If any vehicles are within this safety zone, then you should wait. But the question is - For how long?

In a situation where you have come to a complete stop, you need to get yourself ready in 1st gear and be prepared to release the handbrake and move forwards. Don't look at the approaching cars, but at the space behind them. Try to assess whether that space would be big enough to use. If so, get your car moving as soon as the passing vehicle is clear of your position. Follow it out.

It is always safer to follow someone out than to pull out in front of them. Just so long as you don't leave it too late.

Another major cause of failure due to hesitation is the 'false start'. This is where the candidate almost goes but then decides to pull back. This may seem like the safe option if cars are approaching a little faster than you first thought. However, the vehicle behind you will have seen your initial movement and might naturally think you have pulled away.

The next thing you know the car behind crashes into your rear bumper. Possibly their own fault, but did you give out the wrong signals? Besides, if your observation was better, you wouldn't have tried to pull out in the first place!

Conclusion

Over the years, I have taught many pupils who have had lessons previously with another instructor. Some have had genuine reasons for leaving their old instructor, due to illness, retirement or general conflict of personality. But others have told me that they failed a test with their previous instructor so wanted to try a new one. As if it was the instructor's fault that they failed! I am sure I have lost a few pupils for the same reason.

In my experience, however, it is very unlikely to be the instructor's fault. If they were that bad an instructor, the pupil would not have been able to complete the driving test at all. They must have been able to drive to a reasonable level, to the credit of both the pupil and their instructor.

The driving test is not quite so straight forward as to pass everyone who can 'drive' though. It only takes one mistake through a short lapse in concentration and it's game over. Success or failure depends on one main factor - how the pupil performs on the day.

I've seen really good, natural drivers fail the test and somewhat mediocre drivers pass with flying colours. Perhaps the driving test itself is flawed or unfair, but it is consistent and gives each candidate the same chance to prove themselves.

So what makes the difference between pass and fail?

Answer: The Three 'C's - **Control, Consistency and Concentration.**

Do you have The Three 'C's'?

By deliberately following a set routine, the candidate maintains concentration.

With each of the routines being so similar, consistency is achieved.

With concentration and consistency, control can be mastered.

I sincerely hope you have found the information in this ebook useful. If you can avoid all the examples given here, there really can't be much left to go wrong!

Best of luck,



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