

Special needs accommodations for the practical test:

Special needs notification: DVSA may require this in order to plan for any necessary reasonable adjustments for candidates with any of the following:

- If they are deaf without speech or have a severe degree of deafness.
- If a BSL interpreter is required (must be arranged by the candidate or ADI).
- If they have reading or learning difficulties and accommodations are required.
- If they are in any way restricted in their movements e.g. restricted neck movements.
- If they have any physical disability or missing limbs.
- If driving adaptations or other aids are required.

Following special needs notification DVSA may decide that extra time is required for the test, this is sometimes referred to as a “double slot” test. The “double slot” will give the examiner the additional time required to talk to the candidate and find out how their medical condition affects their driving, they would also be able to discuss any driving adaptations and other aids (such as extra mirrors) that may be required. The decision as to whether a “double slot is necessary is made by DVSA.

It would be advantageous for the examiner to be aware in advance of any other special requirements e.g. the need for specific methods of communication or hand gestures to give directions (for those with special educational needs or hearing difficulties). Clarification should also be made if there is any difficulty with the operation of any of the secondary controls required for the “show me” question and/or if there is any difficulty with either of the methods used to navigate for the independent driving section of the test. Notification of these requirements when booking the test is therefore encouraged.

It should be noted that the elements of the practical driving test remain the same for all test candidates. The extra time does not mean that the drive will be any longer; it merely allows extra time for the additional discussion needed and provides extra time to allow for breaks if they are required. The “double slot” will also allow the examiner extra time to complete the additional paperwork required for some special needs tests. No extra charge is made for a special needs test.

Booking the test: If special needs notification is required it should be declared when booking the test. Make sure that the medical condition and any physical restrictions are detailed along with describing any driving adaptations and other aids used. Requirements for specific methods of communication or giving directions should be noted along with explanation of any difficulties the candidate may have carrying out any aspects of the test e.g. demonstrating certain secondary controls for the show me question or a difficulty using one or other method for the independent drive.

The preferred method of booking a special needs test is on-line at <https://www.gov.uk/book-driving-test> or via the DVSA Trainer Booking Service; make sure that the special requirements sections of the booking form are completed; DVSA should then automatically select a “double slot” if this is needed.

It may though be more convenient to make these bookings by telephoning the DVSA call centre (0300 200 1122). “Double slots” are allocated in advance on the booking diary, but it is possible that there may not be a pre-allocated slot available if one is required. Booking via the call centre would allow the staff to combine two single test slots to make a “double slot” if none are allocated in advance; if the booking is made on-line and there are no “double slots” allocated, the system will merely state that there are no test slots available and suggest that you choose an alternative test centre.

Confirmation: Once the special needs requirements have been received by DVSA they would then be entered onto the examiner’s journal and sent to the allocated examiner at the specified test centre in advance of the test, so the examiner should be aware of any requirements in advance. DVSA do though advise ADIs to contact test centres a few days before the test to confirm any special needs requirements.

Procedure on test

Following notification in advance of any special needs requirements, DVSA has agreed to make any necessary reasonable adjustments to accommodate these special needs, providing that this can be done without undermining the test. The examiner will discuss the special needs requirements and any adjustments with the candidate before starting the test.

Candidates with mobility problems may stay in the car at the start of the test and read the number plate without getting out if necessary; test centre staff may advise where to park to facilitate this.

Eyesight test: DVSA have stated that “reasonable adjustments” may be made for the eyesight test if required, when they are made aware that a candidate has dyslexia or similar reading difficulties.

The DVSA DT1 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/01-the-practical-driving-test-and-extended-test-for-cars> section 1.20 states that: “Black on Yellow number plates are ordinarily easier to distinguish by most dyslexic candidates. They understand that some candidates may read back to front or in a non-uniform order and may have difficulty distinguishing between certain images, for example B and 8, D and O, 5 and S. They may find it easier to write down the letters and numbers rather than reading them out - these are all deemed to be reasonable adjustments.

The eyesight test is a legal requirement and the correct procedure must be carried out. However, providing the test is not undermined, common sense should be applied where the numbers or letters are ambiguous.”

The following special needs accommodations were originally agreed by DVSA in advance of the introduction of the revised practical test in December 2017:

Show me question: If physical disability or using adapted controls compromises the ability to operate any secondary controls needed for the “show me” question on the move this should be confirmed with the test centre, stating which controls cannot be safely operated.

If necessary, adaptations should be available to allow controls to be operated safely on the move; controls for sounding the horn and operating the front wash/wipe (along with those for the indicators) are considered to be safety critical and must be able to be operated at any time whilst driving. The headlamp on/off switch is also considered to be safety critical but if this cannot be safely operated on the move the dipped headlamps could be switched on before starting the drive and left on until the end of the drive, this would overcome the problem of not being able to operate the switch on the move. The other secondary controls for heating/demist operation, heated rear screen, the switches to open and close the side windows and switches to operate the rear wash/wipe are not considered safety critical and so do not *have* to be operated on the move.

If a particular secondary control cannot be safely operated on the move, DVSA have agreed that the examiner will ask for an alternative control to be demonstrated for the “show me” question. The ADI/candidate is not permitted to specify which control the examiner should ask for the “show me” question, they should merely declare if any of the secondary controls cannot be safely operated on the move. See DVSA DT1, section 1.21 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/01-the-practical-driving-test-and-extended-test-for-cars>

Independent driving: If the declared medical condition compromises the ability to navigate by either following written directions on road signs or by following directions given via sat-nav this should also be declared when booking the test, stating that the medical condition causes difficulty with either specified method.

Section 7.36 of the DVSA DT1 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/07-general-operational-matters> states that if the examiner is made aware that a candidate has a disability or other special need (such as dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty) they will ask the candidate which is their more able method, either following directions from sat-nav or following traffic signs; if the examiner is aware of this prior to the test commencing they would be able to bring both a sat-nav and the peripherals to cover either scenario.

Candidates with hearing difficulties may also need to declare similar difficulties with one or other method.

The ADI/candidate is not permitted to dictate to the examiner which method of independent driving should be used but it is perfectly acceptable to state that there is a difficulty with one or other method due to the declared medical condition.

COVID-19 restrictions

There are certain precautions that are more the responsibility of the driving instructor e.g. ensuring that their tuition car is maintained in a clean condition and that it is effectively sanitised when drivers change over in between lessons. This is also important in preparation for the practical test but the examiner will also sanitise the passenger area of the car before starting the test and will ensure that the interior of the car is well ventilated before getting in; on arrival at the test centre wait in the car for the examiner to come to you, both front doors should be opened if possible whilst you wait for wait for the examiner. Follow the instructions given by the examiner and have a pen with you to sign the form provided by the examiner.

During the drive it is important that the car remains well ventilated by having all four windows partially opened.

If you are taking your practical test in your own vehicle and are being accompanied by a parent or friend be aware that you will be responsible for the cleanliness of the vehicle, if the interior has clearly not been cleaned the examiner may refuse to conduct the test.

Face coverings: these should normally be worn by both the pupil and the instructor during driving lessons and on test it is a requirement that they are worn unless the pupil has good reason not to; this may be: having a physical or mental illness, impairment or disability or if wearing a face covering would cause severe distress. In Scotland it is now (from November 2020) a legal requirement to wear face coverings on lessons and when taking a practical test

It is essential that DVSA are notified in advance if you cannot wear a face covering, this should be done when applying for the test. When asked if you have any special requirements select "Special learning or educational needs" (even if you cannot wear a face covering because of a physical reason) then state that you cannot wear a face covering and give your reason. Your test will be cancelled if you come for test without a face covering and you did not say that you could not wear one when you booked it.

Dyspraxia and other physical disabilities could make the fitting or adjustment of face coverings difficult or impossible especially whilst driving. If a candidate finds it difficult to ensure that their face covering remains over their mouth and nose for the duration of the drive and they struggle to adjust or re-fit the covering on the move, the option of applying to take a test without a covering should be considered. If DVSA agree to this and the examiner is prepared for taking the test without the candidate wearing a covering it would not be an issue if the candidate's mask slipped off during the drive. If no application had been made and the mask was repeatedly slipping off their nose or coming off completely this may result in the test being terminated especially if the candidate had difficulty re-fitting or adjusting it.

A deaf candidate may require the examiner to remove their face covering so that they can lip read to understand what the examiner is saying. This should be permitted so long as DVSA have been notified in advance by declaring it on the test application.

Deaf candidates: The driving instructor or an independent BSL interpreter may accompany the candidate at the start of the test to help with the initial discussion and with the "tell me question".

If necessary, for Deaf candidates who use BSL to communicate, they may also accompany the candidate and sit in the rear of the vehicle to act as an interpreter during the drive. The interpreter can either be the candidate's ADI or an independent interpreter. As stated above a deaf candidate may require the examiner to remove their face covering so that they can lip read to understand what the examiner is saying.

Adjustments necessary because of COVID-19 restrictions MUST be requested at the time of booking the test to ensure that DVSA can match the candidate with an examiner who is willing to comply with the request. As driving examiner schedules are now staggered throughout the day it is not possible to swap one test for another. Requesting these adjustments on the day may result in the test not going ahead.