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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
DRIVING

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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO DRIVING

Road signs, rules and regulations can be confusing; there's so much to remember and even if you've been driving for years, it's easy to forget ones you don't see or use regularly. We've put together a guide to remind you of the basics, so whether you've just passed your test or you're an experienced driver, it's always a good idea to brush up on your knowledge.

From recognising road signs to understanding speed variations, Complete Cover Group has you covered.

RECOGNISING ROAD SIGNS

There's no avoiding road signs; you pass them every time you're in the car. And whilst they're in place to help you on the road and guide you with driving, it can be difficult to remember what they all mean – especially if it's been some time since you last refreshed your driving knowledge. Look at it this way: if you're 58 and passed your driving test at 17, that's 41 years that you've been on the road without refreshing your knowledge. While you may recognise

the ones you see every day, such as speed limit indicators or warning signs, could you remember the less common road signs if you came across them? Let's take a look...



Order Road Signs

Signs that are circular are there to give motorists orders and they must be followed. If you ignore them, you are breaking the law and could end up with points on your licence or a fine. In the UK, the majority of order signs are circular and white with a red outer ring.

Warning Road Signs

Signs that are shaped like equilateral triangles are there to warn you of any hazards in the road ahead. Similar to the order signs, being white with a red outer border, these signs will protect you on the road if you adhere to them.

Speed Limit Signs

Quite simply, speed limit signs are put in place to save lives. If you see a circular sign with a number in it – usually 10, 20, 30, 50 or 60 – then you must drive no faster than this. In the UK, these signs refer to speed in miles per hour.

If you're on a motorway or dual carriageway, you will come across a circular sign with a black line through it, which means that the



road runs to the national speed limit. For these types of road, it's 70mph. The line does not mean there is no limit.

Blue Road Signs

Blue road signs offer guidance, instruction and information to road users and pedestrians, such as a roundabout ahead or a one-way road.

Brown Road Signs

Brown road signs usually give tourist information and they're sometimes accompanied by a picture to help you navigate to your destination.

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White Road Signs

For directional signs to non-primary roads, or other accompanying signs, you'll find white road signs.

Road Works and Temporary Yellow Signs

It's imperative that you follow temporary yellow signs and road works signs properly. Failure to do so could result in the injury of road workers, and put you and your passengers in danger. You may find these signs on a single carriageway, dual carriageway or motorway – they can be used on any road.

Bus Lane and Bus Stop Signs

These are quite simple signs that indicate roads and lanes on which only buses can travel, as well as where bus stops are located.

Parking and No Parking Road Signs

There are a range of parking road signs that help direct you as a driver. They can

indicate car park locations, and prohibited parking, no waiting and no stopping zones.

Direction Signs

Depending on their location, directional road signs come in a variety of colours.

Low Bridge Signs

Signs depicting a restriction in height, such as a low bridge sign, are warnings that vehicles of a certain height will be unable to drive through specific areas or under certain bridges – something unlikely to affect you in a standard-sized vehicle, but good to know.



LEGAL ALCOHOL LIMIT WHEN DRIVING

In some countries, there is a zero-tolerance policy on consuming alcohol and driving a car. In the UK, whilst it's illegal to be drunk when driving, it's possible to have a certain amount of alcohol in your system and still be within the legal limit.

It's crucial that, as a nation, we understand our laws. However, given that the number of deaths caused by drink-driving is at a high, we ideally wouldn't drive at all after alcohol has been consumed.

What is the Drink-Driving Limit in the UK?

So, what is the drink-driving limit in the UK? According to the government, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland it's 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, 35 micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath, or 107 milligrams per 100 millilitres of urine.

It's difficult to know what these quantities amount to in terms of drinks, and it gets even more confusing, as there are many variables to consider which can affect their measurement, including:

- Your weight, age and sex
- Your metabolism
- The type and amount of alcohol you're drinking
- What food you've recently consumed
- Your stress levels at the time

How Alcohol Affects Driving

Whilst it can be easy to think that you're not drunk after a few drinks and are therefore capable of driving, the fact of the matter is you're not. Alcohol can impair your system in many ways and will therefore absolutely affect your ability to drive.



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The effects of drinking alcohol can include:

- The brain taking longer to receive messages from the eye, and the processing of that information becoming more difficult
- Instructions to the body's muscles being delayed, resulting in slower reaction times
- Blurred and double vision, affecting your ability to see things clearly whilst driving
- Taking potentially dangerous risks, because you act on urges you would normally repress

What's the Penalty for Drink-Driving

The law is simple, and the rules are strict. If you're caught over the limit, you can land yourself a driving ban, a fine up to £2,500 and even a prison sentence, especially if you cause death by careless driving whilst under the influence. These repercussions can be life-changing for you, as well as anyone else affected by your drink-driving.

If you end up having an alcoholic drink, play it safe and get a cab home – it's not worth the risk.

For more information on drink driving, read our [in-depth blog](#) on everything you need to know on UK drink driving laws.



SPEEDING

Speed limits vary on UK roads depending on many factors, the main one being the road type.

Essentially, if you've been caught speeding on any road, you're likely to be served with an SP30 or SP50 conviction and therefore an increase in your insurance policy.

As well as the conviction, you may also receive points on your licence, a fine and/or lose your licence, depending on how fast you were going and on which type of road.

So, why does the type of road affect your penalty, and what is the difference between SP30 and SP50 speeding convictions?

Conviction: SP30 Exceeding Statutory Speed Limit on a Public Road

A public road is any road that is not a motorway, and drivers exceeding the speed limit on this type of road attract the most

common speeding offence. You'll be hard-pressed to avoid speed cameras on this type of road.

As public roads include those in built-up areas, there has been a push to increase safety and, as such, more speed cameras have been introduced. Traffic police also regularly patrol these roads to reduce the risk of speeding.

Conviction: SP50 Exceeding Speed Limit on a Motorway

An SP50 speeding conviction relates solely to exceeding the speed limit on motorways. This is classed as a different conviction because the speed you'd have to drive to exceed the limit on a motorway is higher than on a public road. In the UK, it means that a driver would have to drive faster than 70mph and the damage that can be caused at that speed is more severe than on a public road.

How Do I Qualify for the Driver's Awareness Course?

If you are caught speeding, you may be invited to attend the National Speed Awareness Course (NSAC). These courses are designed to re-educate and change drivers' behaviour and bad habits, with the aim of preventing drivers from reoffending, rather than punishing them with fines and points on their licence.

However, if you're caught going above the speed limit, you don't automatically

get enrolled onto this course: there are limitations.

To meet the requirements for the NSAC, the driver's speed needs to be within certain limits. For example, if you're in a 30mph zone, you must be within 35mph and 42mph, whilst on a motorway, you'll need to be doing between 79mph and 86mph in a 70mph zone. Anything above those ranges, and you won't be entitled to the course – instead you'll find yourself with points on your licence, a fine and potentially losing your licence.

You will also not be offered the NSAC if you have taken it in the last three years.

The NSAC is a popular choice, with government statistics showing that 1,207,570 drivers opted to take it as an alternative to fixed penalty points and a fine.



CHILD CAR SEATS

Whilst it can feel hard to keep up with the ever-evolving laws that surround child car seats, the newest regulations state that manufacturers aren't allowed to introduce new models of backless booster seats designed for children shorter than 125cm or weighing less than 22kg. This is because it has been determined that a backless car seat offers much less protection in the event of a collision.

This rule, which has been brought in across Europe, will change how backless booster seats and cushions are made. However, these changes do not affect existing models – seats bought prior to this change in regulation are not unsafe or illegal.

If you're still not completely sure, the [Department for Transport offers](#) advice on these rules.

Essentially, until a child is 12 years old (or older) or 135 centimetres tall (whichever comes first), they must use a child car seat. Afterwards, they do not need a specific seat, but must wear a seatbelt.

Children's Weight

0–9kg Group 0 - If your child weighs less



than 9kg, use a lie-flat or 'lateral' baby carrier, or rear-facing baby seat using a harness.

0–13kg Group 0+ - If your child weighs less than 13kg, use a rear-facing baby carrier or rear-facing baby seat using a harness.

9–18kg Group 1 - If your child weighs between 9kg and 18kg, use a rear- or forward-facing baby seat using a harness or safety shield.

15–36kg Group 2 and 3 - If your child weighs between 15kg and 36kg, use a rear- or forward-facing child car seat (high-backed booster seat or booster cushion) using a seat belt, harness or safety shield.

“ESSENTIALLY, UNTIL A CHILD IS 12 YEARS OLD (OR OLDER) OR 135 CENTIMETRES TALL (WHICHEVER COMES FIRST), THEY MUST USE A CHILD CAR SEAT.”

MOBILE PHONE DRIVING LAWS

Most drivers have probably been guilty of using their mobile phone from time to time at the wheel, whether stationary or otherwise – even though it's illegal, and has been since 2003.

Well, in 2017, the law got even stricter. With smartphones taking over and being used as in-car music players and sat-navs, it's no wonder that it's more tempting than ever to grab your phone whilst driving.

Studies have shown that many of us have been using our phones for much more than this, including checking social media, taking calls and sending texts. The law is simple: you must not touch or check your mobile phone whilst operating a vehicle, stationary or otherwise.

You can still use your phone for navigation, providing you set up the journey before you start driving, and you



may also still use hands-free kits; these must also be set up properly before you embark on your journey.

This law applies to cars, buses, motorbikes and any other motorised vehicle.

As part of the crackdown, if you're caught using a mobile phone at the wheel you could lose your licence – this is a particular risk if you've had your licence for less than two years. If you've been driving for longer than that, you may still lose your licence, but you could also be taken to court, be fined up to £2,000 or receive six points on your licence. In more serious circumstances, such as if you were to cause death by careless driving, you could end up in prison.

For more information about the newest mobile phone driving laws, check out our [comprehensive guide](#).





DRIVING ABROAD

European driving laws are often overlooked when planning a trip that involves driving on the continent.

Remember to check changes before you travel so you're not caught out, as it's not just driving on the opposite side of the road that's different.

Depending on the country you're driving in, you may also have to make alterations to your car, especially in winter conditions. Ensure you carry the following, so you're not caught out when driving:

- Your full valid driving licence
- A copy of your DVLA driver record and licence check code, if needed
- An international driving permit, where necessary
- Your original vehicle's registration document (V5c)
- Your motor insurance certification (you may also need to inform your

insurer of when you're going and amend your policy)

- Your passport
- Your travel documents

It's important to note that you may also need a visa when travelling to certain countries.

[If you are planning to drive in Europe, make sure you read our guide to Europe driving laws.](#)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Whilst the majority of road regulations remain the same, some rules of the road are ever evolving and it's important to stay up to date. We regularly update [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) with industry news and important changes to driving laws. Follow along to avoid missing out.