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Department of Transport

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# What you need to know about driver licensing

This leaflet contains general information about driver licensing. You will find information grouped under the following headings:

- A Entitlement to drive or ride
- B Applying for a licence
- C Physical and mental fitness
- D Learning to drive or ride
- E Driving abroad
- F Endorsements and disqualifications
- G Lost licences and change of name or address
- H Enquiries

A. Entitlement to Drive or Ride

1. What licence do I need?

- (i) If you have never held a licence before (or last held one over 10 years ago) you should apply for a provisional licence. If you wish to ride a motor bicycle you should ask for this entitlement to be included on your licence. There is no separate provisional licence for motor bicycles.
- (ii) If you have within the last 10 years:
  - (a) held a full GB licence, or a full one issued in Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man or Channel Islands
  - or (b) passed a GB driving testyou should apply for a full licence. Most full licences serve also as a provisional licence for other vehicles (but see B3 (ii) which explains about provisional motor bicycle entitlement on full licences).
- (iii) You may also apply for a full licence if you have been resident here for less than 1 year and surrender a valid full licence issued
  - within the European Community (including a British Forces Germany licence) or
  - in Australia, Austria, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cyprus (Republic of), Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Kenya, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Zimbabwe.In time other countries' licences may be recognised for exchange purposes.
- (iv) If you wish to drive heavy goods or public service vehicles you need a heavy goods or public service vehicle licence as well as an ordinary licence—see B6

2. At what age can I drive?

The minimum ages for driving and riding are:

- 16 years old** — Moped, invalid carriage below, (or car driven by a person receiving mobility allowance for a disability), small agricultural tractor, small mowing machine, small pedestrian-controlled vehicle;
- 17 years old** — Motorcycle (including three-wheeler), motor car with up to 8 passenger seats, goods vehicle up to 3.5 tonnes laden, large agricultural tractor, small road-roller;
- 18 years old** — Goods vehicle up to 7.5 tonnes laden and if a "trainee" as defined below, heavy goods vehicles; public service vehicles (under the terms of the licence, or if under instruction);
- 21 years old** — All other vehicles, including vehicles with over 8 passenger seats, heavy goods vehicle (over 7.5 tonnes laden), large road-roller.

Definitions

**Small agricultural tractor:** mounted on wheels and specially licensed or exempt from vehicles excise duty. Any trailer drawn must have 2 wheels (or 4 close-coupled). Tractor and trailer must not be over 8ft wide.

**Small mower or pedestrian-controlled vehicle:** with up to 3 wheels and not over 410kg unladen.

**Small road-roller:** not steam-powered, unladen weight not over 11.68 tonnes, not made to carry loads, and with metal or other hard rollers.

**Trainee:** in the approved scheme for young heavy goods vehicle drivers.

3. How do I decide which group I need on my licence?

Vehicles are divided up into different groups. This table shows you how to work out which driving test group includes the vehicle you want to drive.

To drive	You need a licence for group	You are already covered if your existing licence includes groups:
Moped	E	A, B, C or D
Motor bicycle (with or without side-car) or scooter	D	
Motor car, goods vehicle, or bus (manual and automatic)	A	
Motor car, goods vehicle, or bus (with automatic transmission only)	B	A
To drive heavy goods vehicles (over 7.5 tonnes laden) or public service vehicles while in service (except minibuses used on a minibus permit or community buses) an additional licence is needed—see advice in Section B (6)		
Motor tricycle, three-wheeled car or van	C	A or D

To drive	You need a licence for group	You are already covered if your existing licence includes groups:
<b>Special Vehicles</b>		
Invalid carriage	J	
Agricultural tractor	F	A or B
Mowing machine; pedestrian-controlled vehicle	K	A, B, C or F
Road-roller	G	
Tracked vehicle	H	
Electrically-propelled vehicle	L	Group containing vehicle type
Duty-exempt vehicle	N	Group containing vehicle type

Definitions

**Moped:** a motor cycle which cannot exceed 30 mph, weighing not over 250kg, and (if with a petrol engine) not over 50cc.

If first used before 1 August 1977:  
a motor cycle not over 50cc which can be moved by pedals.

**Motor-tricycle** (or three-wheeled car or van): unladen weight not over 450kg (heavier three-wheelers are classed as cars, goods vehicles, or large passenger vehicles); invalid carriages are not in this group.

**Tracked vehicle:** track-laying vehicle steered by its tracks.

**Duty-exempt vehicle:** one that is exempted from vehicle excise duty because it travels no more than 6 miles a week on roads, and then only in passing between pieces of land in its owner’s possession.

B. Applying for a Licence

1. How do I apply for an ordinary licence?

Obtain an application form D1 from a post office. Send your application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre; Swansea. Add the postcode SA99 1AD if it is your FIRST APPLICATION, otherwise please use the postcode SA99 1AB.

2. When may I start driving?

- (i) If this your first application, you must wait for your provisional licence to come. Normally this takes at least 3 weeks, but if you have a medical condition it may take longer than that.
- (ii) If you have held a licence before, are not disqualified, and are in good health, then you may drive as soon as your application has reached DVLC. If you have developed a medical condition which might affect your fitness to drive or if your health has worsened since you told DVLC about it, you should consult your doctor if you are in doubt about whether you should drive
- (iii) If you are a visitor to this country or a new resident you may drive on your current foreign licence or an International Driving Permit for up to a year after your latest entry to the country or becoming resident. If you are a new resident you should take a driving test as soon as possible. If you do not pass the test in the first year you will have to apply for a provisional licence and drive under restricted conditions until you have passed the test (BUT see A1(iii)).

3. How long does a licence last?

- (i) A full licence lasts until your 70th Birthday, or for 3 years if it is issued when you are 67 or over. But if you have certain medical conditions, you may be given a licence lasting for one, two or three years. These 1—3 year licences are renewable so long as your medical condition remains satisfactory. Renewal in these circumstances is free of charge.
- (ii) A provisional licence will normally last until you are 70, like a full licence: but provisional entitlement for a motor-cycle or scooter will only be included on a licence if you ask for it. This entitlement will then last for a period of two years, after which you must wait one year before applying to renew it for a further two years—and so on until you pass the test. But if you wish to give up this entitlement during the two years “on” and tell DVLC so, or if a break is imposed, you may claim the balance later (subject to certain minor limitations). If you have had a year “off” a new two year period will be granted.

(If you have passed the test for a motor car, motor tricycle or moped, your full licence will give you provisional motor-bicycle or scooter entitlement for the duration of the licence. If you have a full licence for Groups F, G, H, K or L, provisional motor-bicycle or scooter entitlement will only be given if asked for and will then be subject to the “on/off” period referred to above).

4. **How do I renew a licence?**

DVLC will normally send you a form to renew your licence in good time before it expires (so it is important to notify any change of address—there is a space on the back of the licence to do so). Use the reminder form for renewal if you can, but if it has not arrived, you should apply, using the form D1; allow at least three weeks for the new licence to come. Do not delay until the previous one expires.

5. **What does an ordinary licence cost?**

**Provisional Licence**

First Provisional licence	£15
Renewal of provisional licence issued before 1.10.82 (Free for future renewals)	£15

**Full Licence**

First GB full licence (but if you have already paid £10 or £15 for your provisional licence)	£15  FREE
Renewal of full licence if last full licence was:	
● issued before 1.1.76 (free for future renewals)	£15
● issued after 1.1.76 (not being an exchange licence and no additional entitlement claimed)	FREE
<b>Duplicate Licence</b>	£5
<b>Exchange Licence</b>	£5

6. **How do I apply for a heavy goods or public service vehicle licence?**

If you wish to drive a heavy goods or public service vehicle, you will need to apply for a licence to the local Traffic Area Office. The address is in the telephone directory under “Transport, Department of”. They can let you have an application form. You must first hold an ordinary licence which includes groups A or B.

C. **Physical and Mental Fitness**

1. **Can I have a licence if I have a disability or medical condition?**

This will depend on the disability and the outcome of any medical enquiries which may be made by the DVLC. Any application for a licence must include details of any disability or medical condition, physical or mental which might affect your ability to drive safely either now or in the future.

If during the currency of a licence a disability develops or worsens you must inform Drivers Medical Branch, DVLC, Swansea SA1 1TU **at once**. But you need not declare a health condition which is likely to last only 3 months or less, such as a sprained ankle or a broken arm. If in doubt whether a condition should be reported, consult your doctor.

2. **What conditions must I report?**

There are too many to list them all, but here are some examples:

giddiness, fainting, blackouts, epilepsy, diabetes, strokes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, heart disease, angina, ‘coronaries’, high blood pressure, arthritis, disorder of vision, mental illness, alcoholism, cardiac pacemaker fitted, drug-taking and loss of a limb (or use of a limb).

3. **What if I wear glasses or contact lenses?**

There is a minimum eyesight standard. You must be able to read in good daylight (with glasses or contact lenses, if worn) a motor-vehicle number-plate—

75ft away with symbols 3½in high, or 67ft away if they are 3⅛in high. (These distances are reduced to 45ft and 40ft for tests to drive a pedestrian-controlled vehicle or a mowing machine).

If you need glasses or contact lenses to meet these standards, you must wear them every time you drive. It is an offence to drive when your eyesight is not up to the standard.

#### **4. What happens if I tell DVLC about any of the disabilities mentioned overleaf?**

The Medical Advisory Branch at DVLC will ask your permission to get a report from your doctor. If the condition is likely to affect your driving, you may find that:

- (i) you are given a licence for only one, two or three years so that your condition can be reviewed regularly;
- (ii) your licence may be restricted to vehicles suited to your disability;
- (iii) your licence may be refused or withdrawn.

You have a right of appeal against these decisions.

### **D. Learning to Drive or Ride**

#### **1. Learning to drive a car**

You are recommended to learn to drive from an Approved Driving Instructor and to study the Highway Code and the booklet "Your Driving Test" which you will receive with your first provisional licence. Professional driving instructors have to be approved by the Department of Transport. They have to prove that they are good drivers and capable teachers.

Someone else may be willing to teach you, but his or her driving technique could be out of date, or he or she may not be good at getting the message across.

Remember—anyone who is charging you for lessons must be approved by the Department of Transport, or licensed as a trainee instructor. Ask to see his or her official certificate or licence.

#### **2. Learning to ride a motor bicycle, scooter or moped**

Whether you ride a motor bicycle, scooter or moped get yourself properly trained as soon as you can.

If you are a learner motor bicycle or scooter rider, you have only a limited time to pass the two-part driving test (see also 4 below): otherwise you risk having to stop riding your machine on the road. To avoid this take training NOW—with one of the motor bicycle training organisations which the Department of Transport has appointed to carry out Part I of Part I of the test.

Part I is a machine-handling exercise. You can take it with an appointed organisation when they have trained you. Their courses are designed to make you fully competent on the road.

Full training and passing Part I will make you a better, safer rider. You should then be ready for Part II of the test—conducted by the Department of Transport examiners and very much the same as the previous L test. Part I of the test can also be taken at the Department of Transport's Heavy Goods Vehicle driving test centres.

Find out about training now. Contact the local ROAD SAFETY OFFICER. (He works for your local council, or in some parts of Scotland the Police). He can give you details of the training organisations in your area appointed to conduct Part I of the test. Get in touch with him or a training organisation straight away. DON'T LEAVE IT TOO LATE—take training and put the driving test behind you.

#### **3. What are the restrictions on learners?**

You must display L-plates visible from the front and back of the vehicle. Please remove them when the vehicle is not being driven by a learner.

If the vehicle is designed to carry a passenger (but is not a moped or a motor bicycle, with or without a sidecar) you must be supervised. That is, someone who holds a full GB licence for that kind of vehicle must accompany you.

If you do carry a pillion passenger on a solo motor bicycle, he or she must have a full Group D licence.

Unless you are a member of the armed forces on duty or are riding a motor bicycle with sidecar, you are restricted as a learner to riding machines up to 125cc with a maximum power to weight ratio of 100kW/tonne and a maximum power output of 9kW. If the machine was first registered before 1 January 1982 only the 125cc limit applies.

You must not draw a trailer (except with an agricultural tractor or articulated vehicle).

If under 17 and learning to drive an agricultural tractor, you are allowed on the road only when going to and from a driving test, and while taking it.

#### **4. Taking a driving test**

- (i) You will receive the booklet "Your Driving Test" (DL68) with your first provisional licence. (You can also obtain a copy, free of charge, from the Driver Enquiry Unit, DVLC, SWANSEA SA6 7JL).
- (ii) You can obtain an application form for a test appointment (DL26) from most post offices or from Traffic Area Offices; the address can be found in local telephone directories (under "Transport, Department of") or obtained from a post office.

- (iii) If you are a motor bicycle or scooter rider you will, unless you are riding a machine with a side-car, have to take a driving test in two parts. Until you have passed the first part of the test you will not be able to apply for the second part.
- (iv) If you are a disabled driver you will be given priority in booking a driving test.

## E. Driving Abroad

### 1. As a visitor

If you wish to drive abroad, check with your local AA, RAC or RSAC Office whether you need, and are entitled to, an International Driving Permit (IDP). Where appropriate, these organisations will issue an IDP. You do not have to be a member, but you will need to show your full driving licence or prove that you hold one. IDPs are not available from any other source.

### 2. As a new resident

If you go to live permanently in another country you may be able to apply to exchange a valid full GB licence for that country's licence. EEC countries permit an exchange (on surrender of your GB licence) within one year of becoming resident. For other countries check with the driver licensing authorities on arrival.

## F. Endorsements and Disqualifications

1. For many driving offences, Courts have power to disqualify you or to order your licence to be endorsed with penalty points. If you accumulate 12 or more penalty points within 3 years you will be disqualified. For a few offences, Courts are required to disqualify you unless they find special reasons not to do so.

### 2. How can I regain my licence after my disqualification has ended?

You must apply for a new licence, even if your old licence had time to run—DVLC will send you a reminder. Medical enquiries may be made before your licence is renewed if you have been disqualified twice within 10 years for certain drinking and driving offences. DVLC will let you know if these arrangements apply to you. If you do not receive a reminder you should apply on Form D1, obtainable from any post office. If you are in any doubt about when your disqualification ends you are advised to contact the Court(s) which last disqualified you.

### 3. How can I get a disqualification lifted?

If you have been disqualified in total for a period of more than two years, you can apply to the Court which ordered the latest disqualification for it to be lifted after a minimum period. The minimum period is:

- 2 years if the disqualification period is less than 4 years;
- half the period of disqualification if it is over 4 but under 10 years;
- 5 years, if disqualification is for 10 years or more.

### 4. How can I get endorsements removed?

You can apply for the removal of a penalty point endorsement after 4 years from the date of the **offence** (4 years from date of **conviction** for reckless driving offences). You can apply for the removal of an endorsement of disqualification 4 years after the date of **conviction**. (The period is increased to 11 years for drinking and driving offences). You should apply on form D1. If you renew your licence later, time-expired endorsements will automatically be removed.

## G. Lost Licences and Change of Address/Personal Circumstances

### 1. What do I do if my licence is lost, stolen, defaced or destroyed?

Take great care of your licence, and keep a separate note of the driver number (which is in the top left hand corner) but;

- (i) if it is lost or stolen you should tell the police;
- (ii) if you cannot recover it or it is defaced you can apply for a duplicate, using form D1 (obtainable from any post office) and paying the fee;
- (iii) if your licence is recovered and you have already received a duplicate, you **MUST RETURN THE ORIGINAL TO DVLC**.

### 2. What must I do if I change my address or name?

You should tell DVLC by completing section 1 and/or 2 on the back of your licence and return it to DVLC Swansea SA99 1BN—evidence of change of name may be requested. A replacement licence will be issued free of charge. You may continue to drive while you are awaiting your new licence, provided you have not been disqualified or debarred on health grounds from driving in the meantime.

### 3. What action should be taken when a licence-holder dies?

The person responsible for dealing with the effects of a deceased person should return any driving licence to the issuing authorities shown on the licence.

## H. Enquiries

You can obtain further driving licence information from the Driver Enquiry Unit, DVLC, SWANSEA SA6 7JL. (Telephone: 0792 72151 between 8.15am to 4.30pm on Monday to Thursday and 8.15am to 4.00pm on Friday. A call queuing system is in operation. If a ringing tone is obtained please wait for an answer as calls are taken in turn). Please quote your Driver Number whether you write or telephone.