L GETTING STARTED

Cockpit drill

DSSSM: Doors, Seat, Steering, Seatbelt, Mirrors, then blind spots

LESSON PLAN

Agree the goal

By the end of the session the pupil can set the car up on their own, so they can reach every control comfortably and see all around them.

Find out what they know

- Have you sat in the driver's seat of any car before?
- Do you ride a bike or a motorbike? What do you check before you set off?
- Before we move, what do you think needs adjusting?

Check they've got it

- Why does the head restraint matter?
- Why does a car in the door mirror look further away than it is?
- Where are your blind spots, and how do you check them?
- Who has to make sure a 12 year old passenger wears a belt?

Talk it through

Doors Show where the door-open light is. Practise opening with the far hand and looking over the shoulder first. Passengers' doors are the driver's job too.

Seat Clutch (or brake, in an automatic) fully down with the knee still slightly bent. Ask what goes wrong if the seat is too close or too far back.

Steering Wrists on top of the wheel with the shoulders against the seat. Every dial in view.

Seatbelt Flat, low on the hips, across the middle of the shoulder. Passengers under 14 are the driver's responsibility.

Mirrors Flat interior mirror, curved door mirrors. Stand in a blind spot outside the car so they can see you disappear from the mirror.

Fuel Show the gauge and the range reading. Agree who checks it before each lesson.

Watch for

- Seat so far back the clutch can't go all the way down
- Head restraint left down at neck height
- Twisted belt, or belt across the neck
- Mirrors adjusted by pressing on the glass
- Door opened without a look behind

To finish

Ask the pupil to run the whole drill on their own, out loud. Ask what felt easy and what they'd like to go over next time.

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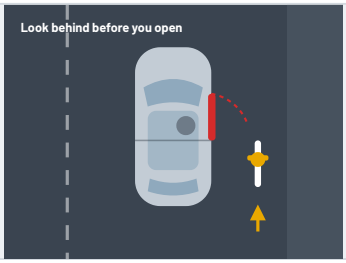
SHOW YOUR PUPIL

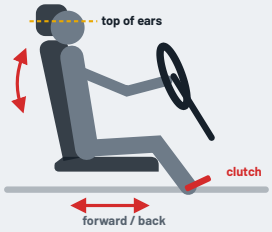


Doors

Every door shut, and yours opened safely.

1. Look along each door edge. If you can see a gap, or the door-open light is on, it isn't shut.
2. Before you open your door, check your mirror and look over your shoulder for cyclists and cars.
3. Open it with your left hand. It turns your body so you look behind without thinking.

WHY IT MATTERS
The Highway Code says you must not open a door into anyone's way. A door opened in front of a cyclist can throw them into traffic.

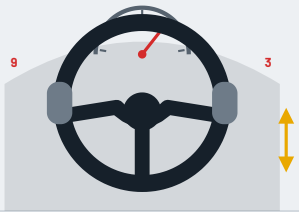


Seat

Reach every pedal, see over the wheel.

1. Slide the seat so you can push the clutch right down (the brake, in an automatic) with your knee still slightly bent.
2. Raise it until you can see clearly over the wheel and the bonnet.
3. Set the backrest fairly upright, so your shoulders stay against it.
4. Head restraint: the top level with the top of your ears or higher, close to the back of your head.

WHY IT MATTERS
If you're hit from behind, the head restraint is what stops your head snapping back. Too low and it makes the injury worse.

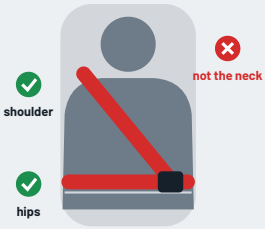


Steering

Wrists on the top, dials in view.

1. If the wheel adjusts, set its height and reach so your wrists rest on top with your shoulders still against the seat.
2. You should be able to see every dial through or over the wheel.
3. Hold it at ten to two or quarter to three, whichever feels comfortable.

WHY IT MATTERS
Slightly bent arms let you turn quickly and smoothly, and keep a safe gap between you and the airbag.

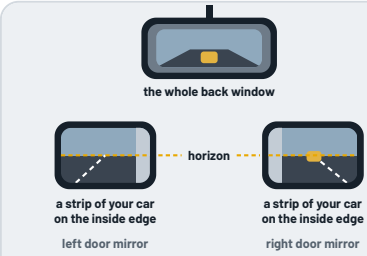


Seatbelt

Flat, low on the hips, across the shoulder.

1. Pull it across slowly. If you tug it fast it locks.
2. The lap part sits low across your hips. The diagonal goes across the middle of your shoulder, never your neck.
3. Keep it flat, not twisted. After the click, give it a pull to check it's locked.

WHY IT MATTERS
It's the law, with a fine of up to £500. As the driver you're also responsible for any passenger under 14.

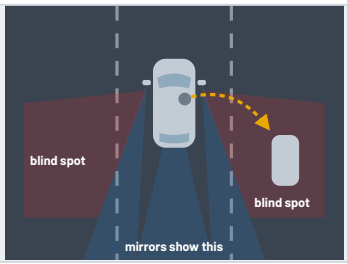


Mirrors

Set each mirror so it shows you what is behind.

1. Interior mirror first. Hold it by the frame, not the glass, and move it until the whole back window fills it.
2. Door mirrors: a thin strip of your own car on the inside edge, and the horizon across the middle.
3. Door mirrors are curved, so cars in them are closer than they look.

WHY IT MATTERS
You check your mirrors every time you change speed or direction, so they need to show the right view before you move off.



Blind spots

The areas no mirror can show you.

1. The red areas beside and just behind the car are blind spots. A car or cyclist there will not show in any mirror.
2. Before you move off or change lanes, look over your shoulder into the blind spot on that side.

WHY IT MATTERS
A cyclist in your blind spot is invisible in the mirrors. A quick look over your shoulder is the only way to see them.

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