

Supervising Learner Drivers



An indispensable guide for parents

Experienced drivers make driving look easy, but for the learner - trying to coordinate the controls, observing activity around them and deciding what to do - driving can be difficult and potentially very dangerous.

If you are a parent you will want to ensure that your child is kept safe whilst learning and goes on to become a safe and competent driver. Providing extra practice by taking the learner out in your own car can help them gain experience, but that experience needs to be positive and that means that the supervisor must be prepared.

This simple guide will help you, but I would also encourage you consider buying one of the books recommended on my website - www.rwsdriving.co.uk/eshop.php.

The legal bit

As a supervisor of a learner driver you must be 21 or over and you must have held a full driving licence for at least 3 years. You need a vehicle that is taxed and, if appropriate, has a valid MOT certificate. You must have insurance for the learner and yourself to drive the vehicle. You need to display L plates when the learner is driving; cover them up or removed them when the learner is not driving. Although not a legal requirement you are strongly advised to obtain an additional rear view mirror. A suction mirror can be obtained from a motor store like Halfords for around £5 or check out my eshop. Place it close to the centre mirror so that you can clearly see the road behind.

Lessons

The learner will follow a series of lesson plans during their time with their instructor, but the order in which the lessons are dealt with will depend on the geographical area and on which situations they are likely to meet first. If you are going to take the learner out for practice ensure that the learner communicates this to their instructor so that the 'emergency stop' can be taught early on.

Practice

It is very important that you do not take the learner into situations that they have not already encountered with their instructor, as they are unlikely to know how to deal with it and could panic. For example, if they have only covered left and right turns stick to quiet roads and do not ask them to drive around roundabouts. It is unlikely that you will have dual controls, so you must instruct the learner early and ask them to slow down in plenty of time for any junction or hazard. Do not be afraid to grab the steering wheel if necessary and if you need to stop the car at low speeds (5-10 mph) you can use the handbrake. Practice the emergency stop early on so that you both know what to do should you need the learner to stop quickly. In the early stages avoid going out in wet or icy conditions.

Remain calm

It is often said that family should not try to teach their spouse or children to drive because arguments often occur. You can avoid this by remaining calm and ensuring that you do not put the learner into unfamiliar territory. Most problems occur when the car is travelling too fast for the learner to cope. Remember, as supervisor you need to retain control of the practice session and you do need to correct faults, but you do this through positive encouragement.

Your driving ability

The chances are you will be a very experienced driver. This means that you will have picked up various habits along the way that could be counterproductive. Instead of helping the learner you could confuse them and actually increase the time it takes to get them to test standard. A good move would be to get your own driving assessed through a 1 hour session with a qualified instructor. This will help you to ensure that you are teaching the learner appropriately and so possibly reduce the amount of lessons they have to pay for; making the overall experience cheaper in the long run. In addition, brushing up your own driving skills ensures that you remain a safe driver.

Remain safe

I know that all learners want to pass their test quickly and they especially want to reduce the cost of learning as much as possible. But you need to bear in mind that driving can be dangerous, especially for young people. An emphasis is placed on safety during the lessons however, there are aspects of driving that cannot be covered until the learner has passed their test, such as motorway driving. Therefore, you should encourage the learner to take their Pass Plus when they have passed their test. This will involve a further 6 hours of lessons and obviously increases the cost, but many insurance companies will reduce the cost of insurance significantly, which will more than compensate for the cost of the Pass Plus lessons.

For more information, or to book an assessment, contact
Robert W. Smith on 0798 593 1760
www.rwsdriving.co.uk

