

Coaching hints and tips

To help make your coaching experience more positive, we've compiled this list of coaching tips and tricks.

DRIVE



Use a professional driving instructor – if you can

A professional driving instructor can be useful at any stage, but particularly at the start. They can help your learner get through the basics efficiently and ensure they set up good habits.

It's really important to sit in the back of the car for the lesson, if you can, so you can pick up what the instructor is trying to get across.

Professionals can also be helpful if you find you and your learner are struggling to make progress on a particular aspect of driving (reverse parallel parking is a common one).

The ideal way to use a driving instructor is two or three lessons at the very start, then a few check-in lessons along the way before a lesson to prepare for the restricted test.



Expect mistakes – they're an essential part of learning

Remember that mistakes are OK. Your learner won't be perfect first time. They'll make mistakes – and that's an important part of learning. Your job is to help them through those mistakes, and to make sure any mistakes they do make don't put anyone in danger.

If your learner is starting to make so many mistakes that either of you is getting flustered or distressed it could be a sign that either the driving task is getting too demanding or that the lesson has gone on too long. It's better to stop the lesson and try again another day than carry on and make things worse.



Make sure instructions are clear and early

During the lesson give plenty of warning about what you want them to do and keep any instructions simple and short.

You need to allow your learner enough time to take in what you say and then follow your instruction (while still controlling the car). Use clear hand signals to indicate left and right to back up your verbal instructions.



Plan your lessons beforehand

This is very important – especially when your learner is still mastering the basics.

Make sure you've worked out a route that's appropriate to their ability, experience and confidence. Work out what skills you want to work on so you're not trying to cover too much in each session.

Don't start doing opportunistic driving (i.e. getting the learner to drive on trips you were going to do anyway) until they've mastered the basics and can drive around other traffic competently.

Once you're confident of their ability get them building experience in a range of challenging conditions, like driving in the wet, at night, and on rural roads. It's a lot safer if you're there to help them the first time they encounter difficult situations like these.



Don't make lessons too long

Try to keep initial lessons short. Thirty minutes can be a long time for someone to concentrate behind the wheel, especially if they're new to driving. Your initial lessons can be as simple as talking through the controls in the car and driving around the corner a few times.

Once your learner has got the basics and can indicate correctly and check mirrors without being prompted, then you can extend lessons out to about an hour.



Make sure you know what 'good' looks like

It's much easier to set up your learner to do things properly from the start than trying to correct any 'bad habits' just before the restricted test.

You should have a good understanding of the current rules so you're reinforcing the right things and the types of skills that will be assessed in the restricted test. This helps you make sure you've covered everything in your practice sessions.