

Know Your Car - Part One

Controls

So it's your first time in the driver's seat. Before you turn the key in the ignition, let's discover what's around you.

- **Indicators** – identify the indicators and familiarise yourself with the windscreen wiper switches and how they work.
- **Gears** – have a look at the gear shift. Practice moving the gear into each number. How would you put the vehicle in reverse?
- **Vehicle security** – what security is on the vehicle? How does the immobiliser work? How do the windows work? How do you lock or unlock the car?
- **Handbrake** – lift the handbrake and lock it again.
- **Pedals** – identify the brake pedal, the accelerator and the clutch pedal.

Cab Drill

When you sit behind the wheel, it's important to make sure everything is ready for you to get started. Run through this mental checklist known as the **cab drill**:

- **Doors** – make sure all doors are closed.
- **Seat** – adjust the seat to suit your needs.
- **Seatbelt** – make sure that your seat belt is on and all passengers have theirs fitted too.
- **Mirrors** – adjust the interior rear view mirror and make sure that both door mirrors allow you to see appropriately.

Make sure it is obvious to your supervisor and/or your assessor that you complete the cab drill when you get into the car.

Seating Position

Most seats should slide forward and back and you may be able to tilt the back rest. Some seats can be raised or lowered and some allow the angle of the base to be adjusted.

Sit up straight in the seat; press your back against the back of the seat. Place both hands on the steering wheel in the nine o'clock and three o'clock positions. Arms should be slightly bent at the elbow.

If your elbows are close to your chest, then your arms are probably bent too much and you will be too close to the wheel. If your arms are straight you are too far away from the wheel and will find turning the wheel difficult.

Quick checklist:

- ✓ How much do you need to extend your leg to push the clutch pedal to the floor? If you are extending your whole leg then you will need to slide the seat forward and tilt the back rest.
- ✓ The top of the head restraint should be level with your eyes.
- ✓ If possible, adjust the steering wheel height. If your hands are held too high they will tire quickly, causing your hands to slide.



Mirrors

- Every person is different, so the mirrors should be adjusted each time you sit in a vehicle.
- The windscreen mounted rear vision mirror should be adjusted so that you can see the entire rear window.
- The side mirrors should let you see along the side of the vehicle. In your view, you should see only a little part of your vehicle. If the view is mainly of your vehicle you will create a blind spot.

Blind spots

What is a blind spot? The blind spot is an area at the side or rear of the vehicle that you can't see in any of the mirrors. To see in the blind spot area you will need to look back over your shoulder.

Why do you need to be aware?

Blind spots can hide other cars, motorcycles and bicycles. If you don't check your blind spot you could make a manoeuvre such as changing lanes without realising there is another vehicle next to you, which could cause an accident.

Steering Wheel

- Both hands should remain on the wheel at all times, unless operating vehicle controls.
- Hold the steering wheel from the outside – never grip the inside of the wheel or the spokes in the centre. If something goes wrong the steering wheel could jerk and cause injuries.
- Your grip needs to be gentle, with your palms on the outside and fingers curled around the wheel and thumb resting along the top edge not rapped around the inside. If your knuckles are white, loosen your grip. As long as the wheel isn't slipping through your fingers, your grip will be tight enough.

Hand position

- Imagine your steering wheel as the face of a clock. Have your right hand on three and your left hand on nine. This brings the hands lower and allows quite a bit of turning movement before you have to reposition your hands. You will be in a better position to operate indicators and wipers just by moving your fingers.
- Positioning both hands together at the top, or bottom, or one at each, will give you little or no control of the vehicle and you will be marked down in your assessment.



Steering

There are two different steering methods that you can use and both methods are correct:

Push Pull

The “push pull” technique can be used on any occasion, though it is best suited to country road curves or bends, where less than one complete turn of the wheel is required to complete the manoeuvre.

How do you do it?

Hands should remain close to the nine o'clock and three o'clock positions.

- The wheel is turned by feeding it through the hands.
- It is pushed up with one hand and pulled down with the other.
- While one hand is pushing or pulling, the other is sliding back to the nine o'clock or three o'clock position ready to grip the wheel again and turn it some more. The wheel is straightened in the same way.

Hand Over Hand

The “hand over hand” technique can be used on any occasion.

- *How do you do it?*
- When turning left, turn the wheel 90 degrees to the left.
- The right hand continues turning while the left hand lets go and crosses over the right hand to take grip at the one o'clock position and starts to pull the wheel.
- The right hand moves down to the three o'clock position and starts to push the wheel as required.
- Remember when straightening the wheel, never let the steering wheel self centre by letting it go of it. You can let it slide between your fingers, but always retain some control.