

INDEPENDENT DRIVING EXPLAINED

Your practical driving test will now include a 10 minute section of independent driving.

During your test you'll have to drive independently by either following:

- a series of directions
- traffic signs
- a combination of both

To help you understand where you're going, the examiner may show you a diagram. (see example right).

It doesn't matter if you don't remember every direction, or if you go the wrong way - that can happen to the most experienced drivers.

Independent driving is not a test of your orientation and navigation skills.

Driving independently means making your own decisions - this includes deciding when it's safe and appropriate to ask for confirmation about where you're going.

THE INDEPENDENT DRIVING ROUTE

If you ask for a reminder of the directions, the examiner will confirm them to you.

If you go off the independent driving route it won't affect the result of your test, unless you commit a driving fault.

If you go off the route or take a wrong turning, the examiner will help you to get back on the route and continue with the independent driving.

If there are poor or obscured traffic signs, the examiner will give you directions until you can see the next traffic sign - you won't need to have a detailed knowledge of the area.

You can't use a sat nav for independent driving as it gives you turn-by-turn prompts. Independent driving tests how you make your own decisions.

SPECIAL NEEDS

The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) has procedures to identify special needs and disabilities when tests are booked online or over the phone. The examiner then knows which type of special needs you have so reasonable adjustment can be made.

For the independent driving section, this could be by asking you which method you prefer - following traffic signs or a series of directions (a maximum of three), which are supported by a diagram. In some cases this may be shortened to just two directions.

Driving examiners are very experienced at dealing with candidates who speak little or no English. For example, sometimes they will write place names so it is clear to you where you're being asked to drive to. You can have an interpreter along with you on your test if you wish. Your approved driving instructor can act as your interpreter.

FAQS

Q. If I go off route during the independent driving section, will the test be terminated or would it be a fault?

A. No. Wherever possible the examiner will get the candidate back on route and continue with the independent driving section. Your test will not be terminated and going off route does not constitute a fault.

Q. During the independent driving section, if I ask for a reminder of the directions, will the examiner help me out?

A. Yes. The examiner will be happy to confirm the directions for you.

Q. If I'm following traffic signs and I approach a junction but there are no signs to the destination the examiner specified, how will I know where to go?

A. In this instance the examiner would say something like: "There are no signs here, just continue ahead please," and then after the junction: "Now carry on following the signs to..."