

*test  
guidelines*

*the LGV  
test*



**RoSPA  
Advanced  
Drivers'  
Association**



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# **Taking the advanced test in Large Goods Vehicles (LGV): guidance for candidates and training officers**

## **What is advanced driving?**

It is a safe, thoughtful and methodical way of driving. Advanced drivers are more observant and better at anticipating changes in the surrounding conditions. Because of this they are able to plan their driving to deal with any circumstances.

## **Why should you be interested?**

We are often asked by people why they should be interested in advanced driving. Here are some of the reasons which we think make it worthwhile:

- Motoring costs can be noticeably reduced by improved driving techniques. As a company driver this makes you a more valuable resource
- You will feel more relaxed when driving.
- You will become a safer driver. You will be seen as the professional driver that you are.
- Your driving may one day save someone's life - it could be yours.

## **What makes a better driver?**

By looking carefully, analysing accurately what they see advanced drivers have learnt to anticipate and plan so as to be able to manage situations safely. The best drivers do this by driving systematically.

There are only two things you can change while driving a vehicle by operating the controls: you can change its direction and its speed. It is as simple as that.

In becoming a better driver you learn the overriding importance of safety, both of yourself and others. You learn how to drive more safely by learning more skill in how, why and when to change your direction and your speed.

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Many drivers drive badly because their errors usually cause no ill effects, thus their errors are reinforced. The average driver does not associate crashes with careless and thoughtless driving. But poor planning promotes poor performance. Advanced drivers aim positively to cut down their risks of being involved in someone else's crash while minimising risks from their own driving. At best a crash is inconvenient but at worst it will result in serious injury or death.

So advanced driving is achieved by driving to a system which is simple, efficient, effective, always applicable and gives those precious gifts of space and time in which to deal with hazards. The advanced driver is never taken by surprise. The word 'suddenly' should not appear in the driving vocabulary. With all this in place the advanced driver will be able to make unobtrusive, planned progress consistent with safety and the law.

### **Test procedure**

Since 1970 it has been necessary for new entrants to the trade to take and pass the DTp (DETR) LGV Driving Test, for the relevant Class. The majority of existing drivers at the starting date were able to claim their licence (grandfather rights) without taking the test. Drivers who gained their LGV licence by passing the test will, in all probability, have undergone a course of training, since the test is a stringent one. Such candidates may reasonably be expected to perform well on an advanced test.

It is not necessary for LGV test candidates to produce Insurance documents to the examiner at the start of the test. Examiners should check ordinary and LGV licences, the latter for validity (correct coverage for the class of vehicle being driven, date of expiry and signature).

As with car test candidates LGV candidates will be expected to check the vehicle before moving off. The examiner will ask you to tell him what daily checks you carry out. These should include the following items:

- a documentation displayed on windscreen,
- b fluid levels,
- c tyres: pressure and condition. Where twin tyres are fitted the examination should include looking for stones, bricks etc. jammed between the tyres. Few LGVs these days are fitted with spare wheels and tyres but where these are fitted they should be included in the checks,

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- d wipers and wiper blades,
  - e security and correct fitting of airline and electrical connections between vehicle and trailer or between tractor and semi-trailer with taps or valves in the correct running position,
  - f all mandatory lights and indicators functioning correctly,
  - g correct registration plate firmly fixed to trailer or semi-trailer,
  - h all sheets, ropes, etc, firmly secured on vehicle,
  - i any load carried should be correctly distributed and properly secured,
  - j no air leaks and no major leaks on the ground beneath a vehicle which has been standing for some time,
  - k where the test vehicle is articulated the static check must include checking that the trailer landing legs are fully retracted, the winding handle properly secured and the trailer parking brake fully released. A check should also be made that the fifth wheel coupling lock or drawbar connections are properly secured.

Following the above static inspection the driver should start the engine and check the pressure gauges for build-up rate, correct operation of warning instruments etc. When all pressures are normal, operation of the brakes will ascertain drop and rebuild rates and is the first indication that the brakes are functioning. It does not replace the normal low speed moving brake test which should be carried out as soon as possible after moving off.

All LGVs are required to be fitted with tachographs and before moving off the candidate should insert the driver's chart and switch the instrument to the correct mode.

If it is necessary to select a test route the driver must be careful to avoid possible hazards - not normally a consideration in car test routes. These include, for example, bridge weight restrictions, width restrictions, low bridges and areas forbidden to heavy vehicles. Where a route is pre-selected we advise examiners to double check when they know the size, height and weight of the test vehicle.

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The guidance notes for car tests about the grading of tests also apply to LGV candidates. However, the following guidance notes may influence examiners to make slightly different judgements when comparing LGV and car test candidates.

At the end of the drive the oral questions on mechanical and safety matters will not be too technical and will not relate to hours of work, permitted maximum lengths, weights and height. We emphasise that this is an advanced driving test and not a test of the candidate's ability to fulfil the vocation of a LGV driver.

Whilst we recognise that the driver is deemed to be responsible for the legality of the vehicle he or she is driving questions relating to mixes of tyre types are not really suitable (even though valid) for LGV candidates since companies normally have contracts with professional tyre concerns who fit, repair and replace goods vehicle tyres and who are unlikely to break the law.

As with car tests a commentary by an LGV candidate is optional. In many cases the in-cab noise levels will be high enough to render a commentary well nigh impossible.

### **Test reports**

We use the standard RoADA test report form. Reports will follow the pattern for car tests, but the following points may be helpful:

#### **Clutch**

A few LGVs have a clutch stop fitted which comes into operation when the pedal is fully depressed. The stop slows the heavy flywheel and allows the driver to make a quicker gear change. It is not mandatory to use the clutch stop but it offers a clear advantage when moving off a heavy vehicle uphill.

#### **Gears**

Modern LGVs with diesel compression ignition engines have a fairly small optimum range in the engine revolution band (giving maximum power at minimal fuel consumption). Some manufacturers provide driver guidance in this respect by marking the optimum range on the face of the tachometer (rev counter). Whilst the driver should aim to keep the needle within this optimum band, he should also remember that the build and characteristics of diesel engines are such that they are capable of pulling considerable weight at comparatively low r.p.m. In similar circumstances a petrol engined vehicle would be described as labouring. Such a comment is not necessarily accurate when testing an LGV driver.

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In order that maximum use can be made of the narrow optimum rev band the modern LGV transmission incorporates a multiplicity of gear ratios.

On the more modern goods vehicles the gearbox/two-speed axle configuration has been largely superseded by 'splitter' or 'rangechange' type gearboxes and it is not unusual to find that the driver has twelve or more gears from which to choose.

The gold standard driver will be the one who demonstrates his or her ability to make best use of these gears in all conditions of load, road speed and traffic. This will be apparent by their maintaining an engine speed within a relatively small band on the tachometer - neither over-revving (wasting fuel) or excessively labouring.

Finally, the modern LGV does not require an excessive amount of brawn on the part of the driver. Many drivers who complain about the difficulty of 'their' vehicle's transmission may be compounding their difficulties through incorrect use of the controls and/or a mistaken impression that physical force is required.

## **Brakes**

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not necessary to 'pump' the footbrake pedal. This practice merely reduces the levels in the brake reservoirs. Braking, as with non-air brakes, should be achieved by progressive pressure on the pedal until just before coming to a complete stop the pressure should be eased to reduce the 'lurch'.

Air operated parking brakes, particularly the lock actuator types, can quickly exhaust the reservoirs resulting in the vehicle's remaining stationary until the pressure is once again built up. It is therefore standard practice to avoid applying parking brakes unless the vehicle is to remain stationary for some time or when stopped on a gradient. Where the vehicle is fitted with a 'dead mans handle' type of emergency brake it is quite usual for this to be used in preference to the main parking brake during brief halts.

An LGV may be fitted with an exhaust or thermal brake. This is usually operated by a floor mounted button. Although not having the same retarding effect as the normal footbrake, such a device, when combined with extended forward observation and accelerator sense, is frequently sufficient to vary subtly the speed of the vehicle. It also has the advantage of neither wearing out brake shoes nor exhausting the air reservoirs.

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## **Stopping and moving off**

In addition to the usual observations, signals and procedure, examiners will watch for the ‘artic’ driver who, through an excess of revs and poor clutch control, causes the tractor unit to pitch upwards when moving off. This puts an undue strain on the king-pin, the only thing which holds the tractor and semi-trailer units together. Moving off should be smooth and progressive as this is the period when most fuel can be wasted.

## **Application of the system**

*The Roadcraft* system of vehicle control should be used at all times if a gold is desired. However, one small modification to this system may be considered justifiable and concerns the third and fourth phases. Whereas the system recommends reducing the vehicle speed to the correct speed for negotiating the hazard and then matching the gear to that speed, it might be considered better practice with some LGVs to duplicate those two phases, i.e. reduce the speed to approximately half that required for the hazard, match the gear to suit that speed, complete the reduction of speed and finally match the gear.

In the case of a multiple speed gearbox you may be required to block change when slowing, in order to maintain your flexibility. With too high a gear engaged it can lead to an unacceptable amount of coasting in order to avoid the engine pulling against the brakes.

It is of major importance not to select too low a gear leading to engine braking when the clutch is re-engaged. This is particularly important if the vehicle is articulated, since excess braking effort on the wheels of the tractor driving axles can cause the vehicle to jack-knife.

Any test candidate who repeatedly engages too low a gear for the road speed of the vehicle should be considered a prime case for failure, particularly if the test vehicle is articulated.

## **Positioning**

The examiner will observe where you position your vehicle on the road and this will probably vary according to the length and width of the vehicle.

## **Cornering**

*The Roadcraft* teaching about cornering will apply in general. However, examiners will not look for an exaggerated road position on the approach to left hand bends where the vehicle is long and/ or articulated. Road speeds of LGVs are restricted and the need to take up an exaggerated position is not usually necessary and may even be

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seen as unsafe in certain conditions. A long 'artic' travelling at a relatively slow speed and confronted by a speeding sports car cutting across the corner from the opposite direction may have difficulty in getting out of the way. The driver may get the front end over to the left but the back end will still be hanging out.

Where the test vehicle is long and articulated examiners will look for trailer 'cut-in' causing trailer wheels to mount or clip the kerbs when cornering. As in the DETR test when this occurs it should be viewed as at least a potentially dangerous fault for which a candidate should be failed. In an exceptional case the candidate might be required to make a very tight turn and because of street furniture such as parked cars or similar hazards may be prevented from completing the turn without touching the kerb with the trailer wheels. Only in such a case should the examiner use his discretion whether or not to fail the candidate. To be acceptable such a manoeuvre must be done at very low speed with full, all round observation and with every effort made to avoid contact between wheels and kerb.

### **Signalling**

Examiners will use their usual judgement about signalling, paying particular attention to unofficial hand or headlamp flasher signals. These should be discouraged and may legitimately be given as a sole reason for awarding a silver grade instead of a gold.

### **Reversing**

In the larger LGVs it may be difficult or inconvenient to test the candidate's ability to reverse and this should normally be left until the end of the test. It is an important skill, particularly with articulated vehicles, and only candidates who can demonstrate their ability to reverse accurately, who maintain a slow, steady speed and who maintain continuous all round observation during the manoeuvre should be considered for the award of gold. If the opportunity to assess this skill during the test does not arise the candidate should be asked to perform the manoeuvre on returning to the yard.

### **Progress**

The examiner will judge the candidate's progress and will note the candidate's ability to make progress from stationary, for example, emerging from a side road or entering a busy roundabout. Whilst candidates should not take advantage of their vehicle's size to dominate other road users, examiners will remember that LGV drivers are restricted in daily driving time which makes maintaining progress an important driving skill.

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## **Department**

The majority of modern LGVs have powered steering, and this, combined with the large wheel and sometimes its difficult angle may encourage a hand position lower than the expected ten-to-two or quarter-to-three.

Examiners will use their discretion in deciding what is acceptable in the circumstances. In all other respects the normal judgement of steering applies.

## **Consideration and constraint**

There are occasions when the driver of a large, heavy, long vehicle will be required to demonstrate an even greater degree of consideration and restraint than that expected of an advanced car driver. Examiners will look especially for LGV candidates holding back to allow a smaller vehicle to emerge from a side road which he or she wishes to enter. Such consideration easily avoids the possibility of a collision at the junction through trailer cut-in.

Examiners will report any tendency for an LGV candidate to get uptight through the actions of other road users either under this heading or the section that deals with temperament.

## **Speed**

Candidates must comply with all road and vehicle speed restrictions according to the prevailing conditions. There may be extenuating circumstances where the benefit of the doubt may be given to the candidate; for example, when approaching an incline and where a little added impetus on approach will reduce the number of downward gear changes necessary thus possibly avoiding being reduced to a crawl in a low gear to the hindrance and annoyance of following traffic.

## **Vehicle sympathy**

Quite apart from the physical handling of the vehicle's controls, the size and weight of LGVs demand that the driver demonstrates vehicle sympathy in other ways to avoid damage and costly repairs. Examiners will look for measures taken to avoid potholes, speed adjustment before crossing ramps which may exist at roadworks, extreme care and slow speed when crossing unmade ground etc.

## **Observations**

The driver in the cab of an LGV will normally have a vastly better view than a driver in a car. Examiners will watch for evidence that the candidate makes the best use of this; for example, in heavy slow moving traffic does he or she react to the vehicle immediately ahead or to one much further ahead in the queue, does the candidate use

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the higher seating position to look across corners for oncoming traffic and clues to severity of bends, and if another large vehicle is seen coming from the opposite direction does the candidate adjust the speed to ensure that they do not pass on the apex of the bend?

**Judging distance** ‘Tailgating’ or following too closely can be dangerous and to do so may result in a fail.

### **Commentary**

If you wish to give a commentary the examiner will be pleased for you to do so though this is not essential. The examiner may ask you to think aloud for a few minutes to illustrate how you are using the system when approaching a hazard. This will help him to judge your observation and planning. If you choose to give a commentary it should describe what you see, your assessment and anticipation, and your proposed driving plan.

### **Concentration**

Concentration and alertness are the keystones of good driving. Distractions are a part of life with which we must cope. Do not fix on one view but scan the surroundings constantly.

### **Motorways and dual carriageways**

Joining the motorway can be from either lane of the slip road and the choice will depend on traffic conditions and which lane gives the best view. You should use the different elevations of slip road and motorway to give the best view. You should use acceleration sense to achieve an appropriate merge speed. Speed and following distances should be appropriate for the conditions. When leaving the motorway you should be in lane 1 before the 300 yards marker and, if necessary, signalling that intention.

### **Questions**

To conclude the test the examiner will ask you questions on *The Highway Code* which you should know thoroughly and general motoring matters, perhaps including knowledge of *Roadcraft*. There will be some questions on basic car mechanics. Your vehicle handbook should provide enough information to answer these.

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### *After the test*

At the end of the test the examiner will discuss the test and tell you if you have passed and at what level. He will send a report to the Regional Senior Examiner who then has one week in which to clarify any details and return it to us. We shall type your report and issue a certificate. We shall also send you our brochure of regalia from which you may wish to purchase a badge and other items.

### **Driving grades**

‘Advanced driving is the ability to control the position and speed of the vehicle safely, systematically and smoothly, using road and traffic conditions to progress unobtrusively with skill and responsibility. This skill requires a positive but courteous attitude and a high standard of driving competence based on concentration, effective all round observation, anticipation, and planning. This must be co-ordinated with good handling skills. The vehicle will always be at the right place on the road at the right time, travelling at the right speed with the correct gear engaged and can always be stopped safely on its own side of the road in the distance that can be seen to be clear.’

DSA, RoADA, IAM, 1997

It is difficult to lay down precise specifications for the association’s three gradings as it is very much a matter for the expertise and overall judgement of the examiner. It is important, however, to provide guidelines on how the various grades are determined to ensure consistency, understanding and above all confidence in the grading system. The grade decided by the examiner will not be changed, although any appeal in writing will be reviewed by the chief examiner, who may offer a retest or comment on any points raised. Examiners operate under strict national guidelines to ensure that the association’s very high standards are maintained. The following guidelines about the requirements for each grade are intended to help you to understand better the criteria applied when awarding a grade.

### **GOLD**

This grade is recognised as the highest driving award available to the public. It will be awarded only to the driver who displays a complete understanding and appropriate application of the principles outlined in *Roadcraft*. With all this in place the gold standard driver will have the confidence and the ability to make unobtrusive, planned, polished progress consistent with safety and within the law.

The performance must be consistent throughout the whole of the test and so any lapses may result in a lower grade. Awards of this grade must therefore be reserved for the very best drivers.

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## **SILVER**

This grade will be awarded to drivers who are well above average. These drivers will consistently drive safely and systematically but without the final polish, flair and smoothness of the gold driver. They will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the system of vehicle control. Candidates must be able to drive up to the permitted speed limit where it is safe to do so and vary speed according to circumstances and conditions. It must be emphasised that silver is an extremely high grade and a commendable achievement.

## **BRONZE**

This grade will be awarded to drivers whose driving performance is significantly above the standard required to pass the DSA test. These drivers will show a basic knowledge of *Roadcraft* but lack the ability to apply the system consistently throughout the test. The drive should be entirely safe, observing traffic signs, responding correctly to hazards and should display advanced driving techniques.

## **FAIL**

Candidates who fall below the minimum pass will fail. Drivers will fail if they display potentially dangerous faults, persistently infringe speed limits, commit violations of Road Traffic Law or the rules contained in *The Highway Code*. If the candidate fails to reach the pass standard, the examiner will offer advice on improvement and encourage further training.

Occasional minor infringements with perceived acceptable reasons should not result in failure on their own but may be a reason for a lower grade. As a general rule, the examiner will consider whether the candidate is a driver worthy of displaying the badge of an advanced driver, i.e. someone who will consistently drive according to the principles of *Roadcraft*.

## **Overall comments**

Holders of LGV licences consider themselves to be professional drivers since these are vocational as opposed to ordinary driving licences. We are approaching the stage where the majority of such drivers will have attended a formal training course and taken and passed a stringent examination in order to obtain the licence. It is issued by the Traffic Area Officer who is empowered to withdraw it without court action if, in his considered opinion, the holder is no longer a fit person to hold such a licence. Notwithstanding this, there are still LGV drivers around whose standard of competence leaves something to be desired. Examiners should not be wary of awarding a fail if the drive warrants it. They are asked, however, to exercise the maximum of tact in both their verbal advice to candidates and in their written reports. In the majority of cases LGV candidates will be taking the advanced test as a result of being persuaded to do so by their employers.

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Many will appreciate the value of passing at a high grade; but a few may resent being asked to take a test since, in their eyes, they consider themselves advanced drivers through having passed the LGV test. They are reminded that although the LGV test is a demanding examination it is not an advanced test. A DSA LGV test candidate is permitted to accrue some minor errors and providing there are no dangerous or serious errors marked a pass may be awarded. A candidate who commits a series of minor errors during RoSPA's advanced test is unlikely to achieve a higher grade than a bronze - and may easily fail.

### **Summary**

LGV drivers are professionals and they should appreciate the chance to demonstrate that level of their professionalism which a high grade in the RoSPA test denotes, While on the other hand, the approach and competence of the examiners will reflect the level of RoSPA's professionalism.

We offer you our good wishes for a successful test.

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