

Steering: Start with your hands at ten and two O'clock, now move both hands up to 12 o'clock, then slide both down to 6 o'clock. That's the way your hands should be moving around the wheel, one gripping the wheel—either pushing up or pulling down—the other sliding, following, both hands opposite each other, like a mirror image. So, when you're steering to the right, start with both hands at our ten-to-two position, then slide the right hand up the wheel, grip, and pull down toward 6 o'clock, the left hand sliding down the opposite side of the wheel.

Indicators: The indicator stalk follows the direction of the steering wheel. So if you imagine turning the wheel to the right, that's the way the indicator goes. Switch the indicators on with one finger, without releasing the steering wheel. After a turn the indicators should self cancel, that is, turn themselves off, but if you've only used them to, say, change lanes, they won't, so you'll have to switch them off yourself.

Handbrake: The handbrake connects only to the rear wheels and is either, simply, on or off. So, when the handbrake's on, the rear wheels will be locked tight and won't move. To apply the handbrake, try to remember to press in the little button on top of the lever and pull the lever up. When the handbrake's on, we say it's set. When it's off it's released. To release the handbrake, pull the lever up slightly, hold the button in, then lower the lever, keeping the button pressed in.

The handbrake has three uses. The first is as a parking brake—to keep the car still when you get out! The second is as a way of controlling the car on hills, to enable you to release the foot-brake without the car rolling. And the third is as a safety device, as a way of making sure the car won't move accidentally, so, for example, when you're waiting for traffic to pass or a traffic light to change.

Gears: The gears allow you to match the engine speed (basically, the sound it's making) to the speed your car's doing—your road speed. The gears are passive, they don't speed you up or slow you down, the gas and brakes do that, so, generally, you speed up then change up, slow down then change down.

Change up in numerical order based on the sound of the engine. Change down selectively—so, say, from 4th to 2nd—based on the speed of the car. Which gear for which speed? Don't get too wrapped up in this, you'll soon get the feel of it, and, anyway, all cars are slightly different, but, basically, drop the '0' from the speed you're doing—so at 30 use 3rd—we'll call that the sweet spot.

Then each gear has a range of speeds it works over. Again, this differs between cars, but, as a guide, allow about 15mph above and below that sweet spot—so, in 3rd that's from 15mph to 45mph.

Gear Changing: Start by deciding which gear you're in and what gear you're intending to change into, and consider the effect of the spring in the gearbox, the one you feel when you're in neutral. 1st and 2nd are over to the left, 3rd and 4th in the middle of the gearbox, and 5th over to the right. So, changing up from 1st to 2nd you'll have to hold the gear-stick over to the left as you move it.

Also remember to steer! The car goes where you look, so, when you're changing gear, don't look down—continue to look where you're going! Okay, changing up: it's hand down, clutch down, off the gas—change gear—then it's clutch up, 1, 2 ; gas back on ; 3. Sequence is crucial. Hand down, clutch down, off the gas. When you're changing down, presumably you'll already be off the gas, to slow the car down, so just stay off the gas, then: reach down, clutch down—change gear—clutch up, 1, 2, 3 ;

Accelerator (The Gas): This pedal controls the flow of fuel into the engine. Press it down, you speed up, lift off, you slow down. When you're stationary and you press it down, you'll see the large dial next to the speedo move. That's the Rev Counter, the higher the number the more power the engine's making.

Foot-brake: Same as the gas, this is also used by the right foot. And, same as the gas, it only needs a light pressure from your foot. The more you press the pedal, the quicker your car slows down. Try to brake progressively, that is, steadily increase the pressure on the pedal until you're slowing down enough, then, just before you stop, gently decrease the pressure on the pedal, bringing you to a nice smooth stop.

Clutch: When you ride a bicycle, the chain connects the pedals to the back wheel—as you turn the pedals, so the chain turns, turning the wheel. In a car the clutch takes the place of the chain, connecting the engine to the wheels. The difference, though, is that you can control the clutch—when you press the clutch pedal down you break the chain, separating the engine from the wheels.

When your car's moving, then, and you press the clutch down, we say that your car's coasting—it keeps on moving but it's not being driven by the engine, it's freewheeling, relying on momentum to keep it going. So, when your car's coasting it's directly affected by any gradient—if you're going uphill it'll stop, but if you're going downhill it'll speed up.

There are three occasions when you press the clutch down. Firstly, just before stopping; secondly, to change gear; and thirdly, when you want to coast—that would mainly be when you're coming up to a junction. When you press the clutch down, push it quickly, all the way down. Now, lifting the clutch back up.

Firstly, always lift it slowly. Think of it like a bathroom tap, but instead of controlling the flow of water, it controls the flow of power, from the engine to the wheels—as you lift the clutch, you open the tap, but, just like a tap, at any point you can keep your foot still, keeping the flow of power constant.

Ancillary Controls: Lights, horn, wipers, demisters ; you'll need to know where these controls are and how they work. Usually, during a course of driving lessons, you'll find out by using them, but, as you approach your test, if you're not sure about any of the controls, ask

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