COGNITION
HOW OUR BRAIN EFFECTS OUR DRIVING

ISSUE TEN 2019
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THE VIRTUAL DRIVING SCHOOL
Carly Brookfield shows you how to take learning from the road to the information superhighway.

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Kev and Tracey Field from Confident Drivers look at how a learner driver’s attention might influence their driving lessons.

ON EQUAL TERMS
James Whalen gives an overview of equality and diversity and outlines relevant legislation and examples of different forms.

MONTH IN NEWS
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DIAMOND COMMENT
Chloé Denny gives us her top tips for driving safely at Halloween, the spookiest time of the year.

KEEP THE WHEELS TURNING
Auto Express asks if your wheel bearings are becoming unbearable and offers a handy guide that teaches you all you need to know.

FINAL WORD
Depression, stress and anger can make drivers more likely to have accidents, says Carrot Insurance.

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Driving examiners to say goodbye to the clipboard and pen

Successful learners will receive their full driving licences quicker as driving examiners start marking the car driving test digitally, DVSA has announced.

Driving examiners are now using tablets to mark the driving test digitally as part of a phased roll out. A specially developed app is replacing the clipboard and pen.

Shifting to the paperless test report will mean learners will receive an electronic summary report of their test that they can review with their instructor, pass or fail, to discuss which areas of their driving could be further improved.

The driving test and what learners are assessed on is not changing.

Chief driving examiner Mark Winn said: “DVSA’s priority is to help everyone through a lifetime of safe driving.

“We’re committed to providing the best possible service for customers. By investing in technology and replacing the clipboard and pen we are helping speed up the time it takes a new-qualified driver to receive their driving licence.

“The app will modernise the way our examiners work, making it easier for them to carry out their jobs.”

Carly Brookfield, DIA’s CEO said: “It’s good to finally see the digitisation of the practical test fully launched.

“Thousands of people hours were spent on the previous manual inputting of test data. With examiners now able to key test results straight into a digital framework via an iPad in the vehicle, the delivery and accuracy of test results, and ultimately someone’s licence, will be vastly improved. We’ve been closely involved in the development of the app and welcome its introduction.”

Driving examiners currently use a paper form (DL25) to record the results of the 1.9 million car driving tests they carry out each year. The form is tick box based and is used to mark against pre-set driving assessment standards, such as control of the vehicle and observations.

Currently, DVSA manually collates test results and then sends them electronically to the DVLA who issue the licences. The app will remove the need for a paper trail and help to reduce the time it takes DVSA to send test results to DVLA.

The app has been designed in line with government digital service standards and is set be rolled out to all DVSA examiners by the end of the year.

ADIs and other accompanying drivers such as friends and family, are not allowed to use a tablet while supervising a learner driver as it is illegal.

DVSA will continuously improve how the app works for car tests, and look to roll it out to other test categories later.
33 new drivers a day have licence revoked

Data from last year shows 33 new drivers a day had their licence revoked after reaching six penalty points within two years of passing their driving test.

This data was obtained by road safety charity Brake from the DVLA by a freedom of information request. The FOI revealed that 11,953 new drivers had their licence revoked under the New Drivers Act in 2018, with drivers aged 17-24 making up almost two thirds (62%) of the total.

Drivers aged 17-24 are disproportionately at risk on Britain’s roads. They represent nearly a fifth of all drivers killed and seriously injured on the roads but make up only 7% of all licence holders.

Under the New Drivers Act, drivers who get six or more penalty points within two years of passing their test have their licence revoked. If they wish to drive again, they are required to re-apply and pay for a new provisional licence and pass both theory and practical parts of the driving or riding test again.

Joshua Harris, director of campaigns for Brake, said: “It’s shocking that so many new drivers are racking up enough penalty points to have their licences revoked so soon after passing their test, in particular those in the 17-24 age bracket. It clearly demonstrates that we need to make our licensing system more robust so that when a driver passes their test, they have all the necessary tools and knowledge to drive safely on all roads and in all conditions. Fortunately, there is a proven solution which can deliver this, Graduated Driver Licensing.

“The government’s announcement that they will explore the issue of GDL further is welcome. Swift and decisive action must, however, be taken to introduce GDL across the UK, as a priority to ensure new drivers have the skills and experience they need and to end the tragedy of young people dying on our roads.”

Birmingham toughest place to pass driving test

Birmingham is the most difficult place to pass your test in the UK, a new survey has found.

Veygo analysed pass rates from every test centre in the UK and found Birmingham (the Pavilion) has the lowest pass rate in the country at 29.6%. Birmingham (South Yardley) has the second lowest pass rate at 32.3%.

Inverary has the highest pass rate at 84.9%, followed by Mallaig at 83.3%.

The survey also found that 53% of drivers think that the age limit on learning to drive should be raised to 18. It also revealed that 47% of drivers believe that drivers shouldn’t have to retake their tests at any point, while 20% think a retest should occur every 20 years.

The amount of drivers that pass their test first time is 42.4%, with 17-25 year olds having the highest first time pass rate at 46.6%.
High numbers of learners harassed on the roads

New research from Marmalade has found that 77% of UK driving instructors regularly experience abuse and intimidation from other road users when teaching students.

The survey of 610 driving instructors also found:

- 31% experience abuse and intimidation on a daily basis
- 91% of learners have been subjected to overtaking
- Two thirds (66%) of learners have been subject to abusive hand gestures
- Half (49%) have experienced verbal abuse on the roads

Respondents also revealed how this behaviour affects their students. They said:

- 85% of learners who are trying to deal with this abuse become more nervous and start making more mistakes
- Almost a quarter (22%) of UK learners have cried as a result
- A third have had to pull over to compose themselves
- 8% have become too scared to carry on learning to drive entirely. 1.5% have been involved in an accident as a result

Almost all of the driving instructors surveyed (93%) claimed they were treated differently when they had L-Plates on the car, despite them being fully qualified drivers, and there being no change in their driving ability to when they drive without an L-Plate, where they don’t get abused.

Three in 10 motorists witnessed physical abuse

This news comes as the RAC revealed that three in 10 motorists say they have personally witnessed some form of physical abuse related to a driving incident in the past 12 months.

The RAC’s 2019 survey also found that almost half report that they have seen verbal abuse dished out to another motorist this year.

There is a widespread feeling among drivers that standards of behaviour on our roads have deteriorated significantly: 76% of drivers believe that motorists are less patient today than they were in 2009, while 60% say they witness a greater number of road-rage incidents than they did 10 years ago.

The proportion of motorists who say that their single biggest fear is the aggressive behaviour of other drivers has doubled – from 4% to 8% – over the past 12 months.

The menaces on Britain’s roads – ranging from tailgating and texting at the wheel to drink-driving and road rage – have never been greater than they are today, RAC’s research suggests. The equivalent of more than 14 million car owners (36%) say that their top motoring-related concern is some form of illegal, anti-social or dangerous behaviour on the part of other drivers – behaviour that has the potential to put the lives of all other road users at serious risk.
Driving Instructor

The transport secretary has suggested the proposed 2040 petrol car sales ban could be implemented sooner.

Speaking at the Conservative Party conference in Manchester, Grant Shapps said: “We must go further to protect our environment and improve our competitive edge. As you may know, we’ve already committed to ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2040. However, if we’re to become the world leader in green technology, we must always be looking to expand our ambitions.

I’d therefore like to see government look again at the 2040 target, and thoroughly explore the case for bringing this date forward. The government’s advisory Committee on Climate Change has said 2035 is a date for which we should aim. We will need to test the arguments and work in partnership with industry to examine how to proceed.”

His comments follow calls to move the ban forward. The Committee on Climate Change said the government’s strategy would not be enough to meet environmental targets, and suggested moving the ban to 2035.

The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee suggested moving the ban to 2032, as well as rewording it so hybrid vehicles were incorporated into the ban. That would mean all new cars would have to become fully electric or hydrogen-powered when the ban comes into force.

However, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), labelled the committee’s plan “unrealistic”, saying the 2040 ban is already “extremely challenging”. The RAC said a 2032 ban would need government support to make it feasible.

Petrol car sales ban could be brought forward
Driving instructors are being offered some of the cheapest car insurance quotes on the market, but police and community support officers are top of the class, pushing driving instructors down to second place.

New research by Quotezone.co.uk found that the median insurance quote for driving instructors and examiners in the UK comes in at £615, while police and community support professionals are top of the class with a median quote of £499.

Nurses, who historically could expect the lowest car insurance quotes in the UK, have fallen to third place.

The findings are based on over 60,000 car insurance quotes across 15 specific professions across the UK. While each of the quotes the company analysed were for personal car insurance policies rather than commercial policies, a driver’s occupation can still have a significant effect on their premium.

Discussing the potential impact of a driver’s occupation on their car insurance premium, Greg Wilson, founder of Quotezone.co.uk, said: “Insurers use a wide range of variables when they’re calculating premiums, and your occupation is one of them.

“That’s because your occupation has the potential to say something about your risk appetite and your driving style, in much the same way as your age.

“In addition, insurance companies have built up a huge volume of data relating to which occupations are least likely or most likely to make an insurance claim, which can then be used to assess the risk of a new policyholder with a particular occupation making a claim.

“With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that driving instructors and examiners benefit from some of the cheapest car insurance quotes in the UK, given the fact that an approved driving instructor is required to be a ‘fit and proper’ person who has a high standard of driving and a high level of regard for all aspects of road safety.”
MPs investigate road pricing to replace fuel tax

MPs are to investigate if drivers should be charged on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Experts believe ministers must think about road pricing as motoring taxes are likely to decline as people stop using conventionally-fuelled vehicles.

Road pricing covers a range of measures including tolls, congestion charges, HGV levies, workplace parking levies, and low emission and clean air zones.

Lilian Greenwood, who chairs the Transport Committee, said: "It’s been almost 10 years since the last real discussion of national road pricing. In that time, we have become much more aware of the dangers of air pollution and congestion.

"We cannot ignore the looming fiscal black hole. We need to ask how we will pay for roads in the future and in answering that question we have an opportunity for a much wider debate about our use of road space, cutting carbon emissions, tackling congestion, modal shift and how we prioritise active travel.

"Tackling the climate emergency is essential but this is about more than what we must do to meet that challenge. It’s also about our health and the sort of towns and cities we want to live in."

AA president Edmund King, responding to the Transport Committee’s announcement, said: "We do need a national debate about how we pay for our road infrastructure to bridge the taxation gap between falling fuel duty revenue and the electric vehicle revolution.

"However, the British public will never vote for national road pricing so we need greater imagination to sell the public something that they actually want."

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said: "For the Treasury, the beauty of fuel duty is its ease of collection and difficulty of evasion.

"Whatever replaces the existing system is bound to raise new challenges and complexities, will take time and effort to establish, and could potentially be difficult to explain to the public."

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There has been an increase in road deaths among older motorists and child pedestrians.

Figures released by the Department for Transport (DfT) show that the number of people aged 60 and over killed in reported road accidents has increased by 5% from 559 (2017) to 588 (2018), with a rise in the number of drivers and riders of motorcycles over 50cc being killed accounting for this. The number of child pedestrians killed rose from 22 in 2017 to 28 in 2018.

Overall the new figures point to a lack of significant progress towards reducing road deaths. In 2018, 1,784 people were killed on Great Britain’s roads compared to 1,793 in 2017. This represents a reduction of just 1%.

The DfT report also revealed that the number of motorcyclists killed on Great Britain’s roads rose from 349 in 2017 to 354 in 2018.

Commenting on the latest statistics, Nick Lloyd, acting head of road safety at RoSPA, said: “It is disappointing to see there has been little to no improvement in the number of fatalities on our roads. In light of this, we continue to urge the government to implement road safety targets to help prevent tragedies in the coming years.

“It is particularly concerning to see an increase in the number of older drivers and riders being killed and also a rise in the number of older road users being killed or seriously injured – which was up by 9%.

“Last year, RoSPA called for greater emphasis to be placed on pedestrian training for children. This remains a priority for us, as the number of child pedestrians killed in road accidents has risen from 22 in 2017 to 28 in 2018.

“It is important that everyone plays their part in helping reduce accidents. Drivers should exercise caution by reducing their speed when passing through built-up areas where vulnerable road users are likely to be about, allowing older people and children more time to cross the road and giving cyclists and motorcyclists plenty of space when overtaking.”

Highways England’s head of road safety Richard Leonard also commented on the report. He said: “Our aim is to provide a network where no one is killed or injured while travelling on our roads – today’s report indicates there is still much more that needs to be done.

“The numbers are very concerning and while over the last 15 years safety has improved and our roads are amongst the safest in the world, each incident is a tragedy for the individuals and the families involved.

“Improving road safety needs safe roads, safe vehicles and safe drivers. Safety is our top priority and we’re working hard to improve England’s motorway and A-roads and we need your help. We all have a role to play to make sure we all get home, safe and well and we’re asking all drivers to make their own safety, and that of other people, the most important thing to think about when they travel. Remember to check your vehicle, obey all signs and think about other drivers.”
16 serious injuries on the roads for each rainy day

Every rainy day sees an average of 16 serious injuries on UK roads.

Analysis of road accident data by car insurance firm Churchill found that, over the past two years, just under 5,000 crashes on wet days have resulted in serious injuries or death – the equivalent of 16 per rainy day.

The company’s analysis of more than 27,000 vehicles over a 48-hour period found that drivers reduce their speed by just 0.7% when it rains. In wet conditions, with surface water on the road after rainfall, the research found that drivers reduce their speed by just 0.8%.

This data, Churchill says, shows that drivers are failing to reduce their speed by any significant amount in wet conditions, despite the Highway Code telling drivers that stopping distances “at least” double in wet weather.

The research also found that almost half (48%) of the vehicles observed by Churchill were exceeding the speed limit in wet or rainy conditions, with 7% topping 80 mph.

Churchill surveyed more than 2,000 people, and found that more than half (55%) admitted to not slowing down in the rain. Similarly, 38% said they don’t slow down in windy conditions, while almost a third (31%) don’t slow down on wet roads. And strangely, those who rate themselves as poor drivers are less likely to adapt their speed for bad weather.

Speed zones not effective if they are sign only

Speed limits of 20mph are only effective in areas with speed humps, new research suggests.

Queen’s University Belfast reviewed DfT studies from last year. It found roads which enforce ‘speed zones’ using humps or chicanes as well as signs reduce collisions by 41% and serious and fatal injuries by up to 46%.

Previous Department for Transport (DfT) data, has suggested that road signs alone are not a sufficient deterrent.

Dr Ruth Hunter, of the Centre for Public Health at QUB, said: “Our findings show a growing body of evidence to support the use of 20mph zones, showing them to be effective in reducing the number and severity of collisions and casualties.

“Our research also found an increase in participants walking and children cycling spontaneously in 20mph zones, indicating the potential indirect positive impact on physical activity.”

The Department for Transport’s end of year report in 2018, however, found that 20mph zones in England failed to reduce air pollution or increase the uptake of walking or cycling over a four year-period.
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Equity release is a viable option for some ADIs in meeting the challenge of financing a retirement.

WHAT IS EQUITY RELEASE AND WHO IS SUITABLE FOR?
It’s a way of releasing money from the value of your home without having to move out or pay it back during your lifetime. If you are cash poor but asset rich – you have a low income but your home is valuable – then it could be a good way of getting your hands on some of that cash without having to downsize. It can be an attractive form of financing a decent retirement if you have no children you might want to pass on your assets to.

There are different types of Equity Release scheme. With a lifetime mortgage, you borrow money against the value of your property. The amount you can borrow is dependent on the value of the property and your age (and that of your partner if it’s a joint scheme). With something called a home reversion scheme, you can sell all or part of the property to a reversion provider. This means that, if your property increases in value and you sell up, you’ll only benefit from that increase on the part of the property you own.

WHAT ARE THE DOWNSIDES I SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR?
You can progressively lose a proportion of your property. When you die or move into long-term care, the equity release scheme provider will sell all or part of your home and keep the money. So that money won’t go to your loved ones after you die. Once you’ve built up a substantial debt, you may not be able to move to a different home while you’re still alive.

Remember that you can only spend the money once. If you’re in your 60s and thinking of using equity release to fund a better lifestyle the money could run out by the time you need to pay for care homes and other support.

There are reputable providers but watch out for those who aren’t. Advice is absolutely essential. There’s more than one way that dishonest providers can take advantage of your situation. They can mislead you into buying expensive equity release products that are not suitable to your situation. They can give you an unreasonably low valuation for your property, meaning that you get less money out of the deal. Make sure your provider is part of the Equity Release Council, because these schemes have to provide a “negative equity guarantee”. This means that if the value of the property falls below the amount you owe, the provider will take a loss and it will not be passed on to your family.

If you and your partner are both eligible by age, you can take out a joint equity release plan, which means your partner will be able to stay in the property for the rest of his or her life.

HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?
You will have to pay application and valuation fees, so look for a sensibly priced deal. Application fees can vary from £500 to £700 and valuation fees depend on the value of your house.

Interest rates vary from 5-7%. If you’re paying 7%, the debt will double every 10 years, so it’s worth shopping around for the best option.

DO I QUALIFY FOR EQUITY RELEASE?
You must be over 55 for lifetime mortgages and over 65 for home reversion schemes. You have to be the owner of your home. You’re more likely to be eligible if you have no current mortgage, or if any mortgage you do have is relatively small.

Equity release should only really be considered as a final option after other means of financing your retirement are considered.

ABOUT THE WRITER
Keith Halstead MA (Oxon) FCA has been a partner in the chartered accountancy profession for more than 20 years. He is responsible for a wide range of owner managed businesses, including driving instructors. He currently heads up the DIA Tax Service for members.
Driving Instructor

Risk management is fundamental for driver and rider trainers. Managing risk is what you are training your pupils to be able to do once they are independently driving. Being more aware of where risk lurks in the role and responsibilities of a trainer, in the everyday lesson, out on the road, in your interactions with pupils and members of the public (and in your professional licencing and registration) is critical to your pupil’s safety and wellbeing, and your safety, wellbeing, professional standing and livelihood.

I’ll be talking to our training team about developing some resources that better focus ADIs on recognising, mitigating and managing the holistic risks of professional driver and rider training. This is in response to the very real concern that the industry itself runs the risk of failing to recognise the number and diversity of risks inherent in driver training.

Too many risk management elements of Standards Check training focus purely on isolated risks which occur in the Standards Check. Understanding where risk is in the wider context of driver training, and the role of a professional driver trainer, is more important and more useful than someone showing you how to get through a 45 minute Standards Check and score higher in one part of a form – but will ultimately raise performance in that area also.

Risk management is still a big area of failure and underperformance on the Standards Check. Some trainers fail to recognise the diversity of risks they may encounter – from even a single training session to across their wider professional career. Outside of what happens in driving lessons themselves, in wider interactions with pupils, members of the public and even in interactions online, there are also serious professional risks too. Career ending risks.

About Carly Brookfield

Carly has over 18 years experience in senior management helping to develop and promote both private and public sector bodies including professional membership and industry bodies in the medical, education and financial services arena. She is also an experienced campaigner and lobbyist on road safety issues and member of the DfT’s Road Safety Delivery Group and a board member of the research and knowledge hub The Road Safety Observatory.

“Risk management is fundamental”

As I wrote in my last column we have noted an increase recently in member calls to the helpdesk from trainers facing removal proceedings for Fit and Proper breaches.

We’ve also taken calls and emails where members risk losing their licence due other breaches of licensing and regulation, even down to simply completing their licence renewal in a timely manner.

The key word in the paragraph above is ‘risk’. A risk taken somewhere in a process, a decision or action taken (or not taken), a risk not recognised, all lead to the direct risk of loss of licence and livelihood.

So, do ADIs need to get better at managing risk overall – rather than just out on the road with their pupils? I would say so.

If you only focus on managing the risk of the pupil when they are using your car and interacting with other road users, and in ‘risky’ road conditions and driving scenarios, you will miss a number of other professional risks which will limit your ability to do your job. Some of these risks can present the opportunity for harm for your pupils, and the wider public, as well as you.

Risk management is not just about passing the Standards Check. Some trainers fail to recognise the diversity of risks they may encounter – from even a single training session to across their wider professional career. Outside of what happens in driving lessons themselves, in wider interactions with pupils, members of the public and even in interactions online, there are also serious professional risks too. Career ending risks.

Chief Executive

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Today, I passed a stationary police car with its hazard and blue lights flashing. The car was blocking lanes one and two of a large, traffic light-controlled, roundabout. A motorcyclist was directing the traffic around the police car, a car, and two motorcycles displaying L-plates. A third motorcycle was parked on the pavement, bearing no L-plate. The police were clearly interviewing those involved. Thankfully no one appeared to be injured, although one of the machines was lying on its side.

As bike instructors and ADIs we sometimes pass other vehicles that are engaged in private practice. As bike instructors or ATB owners we are aware that instructors and pupils are required to wear vests with the ATB’s details on. The motorcyclists I encountered were not wearing anything to identify them as being attached to an ATB.

It is incredibly difficult for anyone to know whether or not these motorcyclists were being fraudulently charged for instruction. Perhaps a well meaning friend was just providing support to his friends! Which is of course perfectly legal, although it carries a major element of risk.

I’m not convinced... this scenario is spotted more and more often. Of course, if we spot the same bike/rider regularly we can contact the DVSA’s enforcement team who will endeavour to deal with the issue.

The difficulty is in identifying the bikes concerned, particularly on the move. Often it’s a larger capacity machine with one, two, or more smaller capacity machines displaying L-plates. All riders had radios attached to their helmets, none of the machines were liveried and none of the riders were wearing riding school bibs or vests.

A further difficulty is having someone with the proper authority to stop the vehicles, should there be concerns of fraudulent activity. I’m sure those with the relevant powers have more important work to be engaged in.

I know local authorities occasionally set up multi-disciplinary checks at the roadside. The police, environmental health, DVSA and others can be involved in these checks which include looking at the condition of vehicles to establish if they are roadworthy, licensing, emissions, operators licenses etc. I’m not aware of any bike instructors being asked to produce their badge that they are required to carry at such a stop.

As an ADI, identifying a car displaying L-plates and no badge in the windscreen where it’s the same vehicle but a different driver/pupil is often easier to spot. Particularly where there are lots of driving school cars in that area displaying their badge. The loss of earnings to ATBs could be considerable but the element of risk to the novice motorcyclists and other road users is incalculable.

Often those who are getting ‘instruction’ from bogus instructors will collude with them if challenged.

Perhaps the unbadged ‘instructors’ would change their view if one of their pupils was injured and decided to take them to task in our more and more litigious society.

Jim Milton is a car and motorcycle trainer, and Diamond examiner.

Jim Milton is a car and motorcycle trainer, and Diamond examiner.
As driving instructors the vast majority of drivers you come into contact with are probably quite young. Official statistics tell us that 17 is the most common age to take the driving test.

Yet, it is drivers at the other end of the age spectrum on whom we have been focusing recently. The AA Charitable Trust conducted some research into the varying levels of risk certain demographics of drivers face.

The results show a stark reverse of fortunes between male and female drivers as they age. Among young drivers it is male drivers who are over-represented in crashes, with a KSI rate per billion miles driven of 925 for men aged 17-to-20, nearly three times as high as women of the same age.

Yet female drivers over 70 are nearly three times more likely than their male counterparts to be killed or seriously injured in a crash, per billion miles driven. Female drivers of this age have a KSI rate of 173 per billion miles travelled, compared to 63 for male drivers of the same age.

It certainly raises a question about what exactly happens in the intervening years between passing the driving test and turning 70 that means the risk rate is reversed between male and female drivers.

The AA Trust believes this reverse in fortune can be partly explained by men becoming more and more likely to be the default driver within a couple as they get older.

Research from our AA/Populus panel shows even among young drivers, men are three times more likely than women to say they do the driving if they travel with their partner, even though they both drive a lot separately.

Once drivers are aged 45-to-54, the balance tips even further, with men becoming five times more likely to say they are the default driver. And by the time drivers are over the age of 65, men are six times more likely than women to be the default driver in their relationship.

It is likely that the times a couple are both in the car at the same time are the times they are doing more unusual journeys – late night trips to and from airports, long journeys for day trips and holidays and driving on unfamiliar roads.

"A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE CAN GO A LONG WAY"

These journeys really help expand a drivers’ experience. Compare that to the type of journeys drivers tend to do on their own – run of the mill journeys that are travelled routinely – commutes, the school run and local trips to the shops. It becomes easy to see why, if one person in a couple always does the driving when travelling together, that person will accumulate a considerably more rounded driving experience over their lifetime.

This really is one of those issues where a little knowledge can go a long way. It’s certainly worth reminding your pupils as they approach their test of the importance of keeping their skills up to date and perhaps making sure that, even if someone else offers to drive them, it’s important to stay in the driving seat.

Equally, if you know an older driver who thinks they might have let their skills lapse a bit over the years, there are plenty of places they can access help from, including the AA, in the form of refresher courses.
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In acquiring the practical skill of driving, in-vehicle learning is essential to your journey. However there are other ways to deliver driver education and widen access to training outside of the traditional mode of delivery. Transporting pupils outside of the car, and into other learning scenarios, such as classroom-based group learning or eLearning, can be highly beneficial and help you engage pupils in areas of training that are sometimes hard to explore or demonstrate on the road.

The introduction of the HPT to the driver testing process has been hailed as one of the most effective interventions in driver education in the last 20 years and it is wholly delivered in a virtual environment. The problem is we don’t do enough of this type of learning outside of the testing process. If we can encourage more trainers to offer more online learning to a greater volume of pupils, we may see an improvement in wider novice driver development, if not in hazard perception and management at least.

DIA is no stranger to online learning, and we’re just about to launch our fully digital learning zone specially created for driver and rider trainers – DIA Academy (see page 35 for more details). We also created DrivingHub – the online learning resource we developed on behalf of Highways England to deliver learning specifically about using the high speed road network, coinciding with the deregulation of motorways. It was the DIA team who designed the website and eLearning platform, wrote the content and created the resources for the project which was a great way for us to widen our knowledge and skill base for delivering online learning.

Online learning can also allow you to develop students’ risk perception and awareness by covering elements of the curriculum which are hard to expose them to in the car. A virtual environment is much safer.
TOP REASONS WHY STUDENTS LOVE ONLINE LEARNING

YOU MIGHT NOT BE THAT SWITCHED ONTO LEARNING ONLINE YET, BUT YOUR YOUNGER AUDIENCE IS – AND WILL EVEN DO ONLINE LEARNING AT SCHOOL. RESEARCH AMONG SCHOOL AGE PUPILS IN THE USA, EVEN IN THE EARLY DAYS OF ONLINE LEARNING, DELIVERED SOME INTERESTING FEEDBACK ON WHY PUPILS LIKE IT:

I can sleep in
While this may sound indulgent to the over-30 crowd who are often of the mindset that students need to be prepared for the 9-5 world into which they will graduate, the reality is this:
- Adolescents need more sleep
- Adolescents often function best late at night and do not function well early in the morning
- The jobs today’s adolescents will have are quite likely to not fit the traditional 9-5 mould
- It makes sense that students enjoy the opportunity to learn when they are well-rested and alert

Many students who learn online are doing so because they are pursuing a passion that doesn’t fit into the traditional school system or curriculum. Younger learners are investing more time in exploration of their passions online and use social media channels like YouTube just as much to learn a new skill or acquire new knowledge as they do to watch cats playing pianos!

I can focus better
Although on-road training is essential to hone pupils’ perception of the hazards of distractions, online learning allows pupils to really focus on subjects without too much distraction. Studies have shown they do have an increased level of focus when learning online – they are surprisingly not as distracted as you would think by the opportunity to surf or check social media.

I can move at my own pace
A tremendous benefit of learning online is that, when done right, students can learn at their own pace. For some, this might mean they can demonstrate competency upfront and move quicker through a learning process, which may individually motivate them. For others this may mean moving at a slower pace and receiving additional support if necessary.

I can easily communicate with my teacher when I need to
Students participating in online environments often share that they appreciate the ease and opportunities available to communicate with their teacher. Online environments typically have structures in place where students can easily send private instant messages or emails to their teacher so they feel more supported by and connected to their teacher.

I can connect and communicate with other learners
Traditional driver training doesn’t encourage students to communicate with one another. The online environment makes it much easier for students to connect with one another on topics of interest and benefit from peer group learning. It also creates a sense of cohesion and community centered around the trainer which can be beneficial for retention and new pupil recruitment, as much as learning.

CONTENT AND CURRICULUM

Having covered the benefits of delivering group learning in the physical classroom environment in last month’s feature (visit the members area of driving.org to access previous issues of the magazine), and outlined possible content and activities you can deliver to pupils in a group learning environment, we now switch this focus to online learning. Revisit these articles when thinking about what to deliver in terms of content and think about you could translate that into a webinar, eLearning course or video presentation.

The massive benefit of eLearning to small independent trainers is that you can deliver it anywhere, anytime and your pupils can access it wherever they want with a smartphone, tablet or PC. It can also be a very low cost or free way of delivering additional training to pupils and creating more value for your customers.

Here’s some free and easy ways of delivering some online content for your pupil base.

MODES OF DELIVERY

Group chat and video
An easy way of bringing pupils together to learn in an accessible and low cost way is to use the many group chat functions available from social media and other online communication platforms.

Skype, Facebook Messenger and Google Hangouts all allow group video chat now, meaning small groups can ‘hang out’ together to discuss key themes and topics. WhatsApp released their group video chat late last year but that is currently limited to four participants only.

Facebook has recently parcelled up a lot of group communication tools in its Workplace @ Facebook. Just Google ‘online group tools’ to get the latest updates on who’s offering what and how it can work best for you and your pupils. There are also lots of useful videos on YouTube to guide you through the use of the various group tools on social media applications.

For quick, uncomplicated ‘broadcasts’ of learning, or to discuss key topics in a group (for example the introduction of the new digital marking of the L-test could be an ideal subject for this mode of learning – a download of the main changes from you as the trainer and then a Q&A session for
pupils) group video chats make learning fun, easily digestible and interactive.

Your own video channel

YouTube is the biggest social media channel in the world, so it’s a brilliant place to broadcast learning to your own pupils as a closed group or attract a larger audience by releasing videos more widely.

Setting up your own YouTube channel is easy to do and there are plenty of online guides. It’s a great way of boosting your brand to a local – and even global audience.

You don’t need to be Steven Spielberg to make your own content. YouTube revolutionised video sharing and gave rise to the ordinary Joe to become a celebrity simply by sharing viewpoints, advice – even their life – to just a phone or bog standard digital video camera. Real people like watching real people.

So don’t try and create Star Wars, just think what your pupils need to hear and know that you can share with them. There’s plenty of examples of other trainers doing this online – just follow their lead, or improve on what they do, fill in any gaps!

And, while making your own videos is a great way to build a profile and display your expertise, with a little research, you can find tons of videos that offer invaluable content on your training topic. All you have to do is share the video with your audience and you’re providing them with engaging content. Just make sure you don’t breach anyone else’s copyright if using any third party videos.

Facebook Live and Twitter are also great places to promote video resources and channels, but they are useful tools to do a live broadcast to your pupils too! Live is a great way to interact with viewers in real time. Field their burning questions, hear what’s on their mind and check out their live reactions to gauge how your broadcast is going. Visit Facebook/FacebookMedia for more guidance.

You can also easily create live videos to share what’s happening live directly from the Twitter app on your phone. When enabled, a broadcaster can invite their viewers to join as guests, and viewers of the live broadcast can request to join as a guest. Up to three guests can participate in a live broadcast at one time. Go to Twitter for more guidance.

Webinars

A webinar is a live event delivered online. It is an educational or instructive session that includes audio and visual communication between a speaker and attendees. Webinar software enables the sharing of slides and interactive participation through chat boxes and Q&A features.

You set the time and content for the video (as you would also do with a Group Video Chat, Facebook Live broadcast, etc) and invite attendees. You deliver the learning either as an audio with slides, simple audio or video or a combination of all three. The great advantage of most webinar tools is they will also record the broadcasted webinar so you can share it after the live event so other pupils can benefit from it. DIA’s free monthly webinars are broadcast live initially but then members can view them afterwards in the member’s area of the website – and soon on DIA Academy.

There are numerous webinar tools on the market some of which are free to use initially, and only charge when you want to use advanced features or broadcast to larger groups. We’ve used Zoom and GotoWebinar successfully but we keep an eye out for new packages and services in this area all the time to improve what we offer as a webinar experience.

EXPLORE AND EDUCATE

The best way to figure out what works for you and your pupils is to try some of the channels with a small group and figure out what works best. Pupils don’t mind being guinea pigs if it’s free and requires no more effort than tapping into something from the comfort of their own living room. It gives them the value of additional learning time with you, so I think you’ll find you have more than a few willing participants. Pick a topic you feel comfortable just talking about and sharing your knowledge on, don’t get too bound up in slides and special effects to start with, just talk to them/camera as if in a real classroom and before you know it, you’ll be attracting a following!

For more advice on delivering online learning our expert training team are happy to give you advice and share their top tips. Just call or email the helpdesk for an informal chat.
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Speed of Sight is a charity that provides motoring experiences on-track and off-road to people with a variety of disabilities. Founded in 2012, Speed Of Sight allows people of all ages and abilities to take part in a high octane driving experience.

The design of their specially built dual controlled cars allows some people to get behind the wheel for the first time in their lives. For others it’s an opportunity to get back behind the wheel if a later in life disability means they can no longer drive.

I was lucky enough to go along to one of their track days at the Three Sisters circuit in Wigan where I met founders Mike Newman and John Galloway, and their fantastic group of volunteers, including the ADIs (and one racing driver!) who take participants round the track.

Along with all the Speed of Sight crew, there was a group of drivers raring to go, along with their friends and/or carers. Everyone was having a wonderful time – the rain even held off until the end of the day. People of all ages, with many different disabilities, had their chance to race around the track at whatever speed was comfortable for them.

FEELING GOOD
Mike and John are passionate about the charity, and believe it is a great way to help people with self-esteem, social interaction and physical and mental wellbeing. A consequence of a person’s disability is losing their driving licence which means a loss of freedom. Speed of Sight works with people of all ages and disabilities, some of whom will never be able to have a driving licence.

John said: “We focus on what people can do, rather than what they cannot. Driving instructors give the gift of freedom, whether that’s for work, to help you get a better job or just freedom on the road. We want to give our participants that feeling of freedom.”

Professional GT4 racing driver Martin Plowman, is one of the volunteers that takes participants around the track. He loves working with Speed of Sight so much that he’d flown in from Austria first thing
Driving Instructor

FEATURE: SPEED OF SIGHT

where he’d been working the day before!
He said: "We focus on the ability, not the disability. The ADI or I are there as a safety net but the participant is in control as much as possible. They set the pace and choose the speed– it’s up to them what they want to do."

ALWAYS ADAPTING

The cars have been specially adapted, and can be further adapted to fit each individual. Some people don’t use pedals or some need the steering wheel adjusting, for example. As John said, it’s "very rare that we get beat" as they can nearly always adapt a car for whatever disability or size of person.

The three cars at the event I attended were Charlie the white buggy, Ross the red buggy and Simon the track car. They’re all named after Mike’s guide dogs. Also in attendance on the day was Stanton, Mike’s current guide dog.

HAPPY DRIVERS

After each participant went round the track, the looks on their faces and their excitement when chatting to their friends afterwards showed just how rewarding the experience is.

I spoke to Alex Campbell, who lost his sight 15 years ago. This was the first time he’d driven since then, and it was a particularly fun experience for him as he was a self-confessed "petrolhead" and former car mechanic that used to race karts. He now works as a social worker, teaching people to use a white cane.

Alex said: "It was fantastic and liberating, a wonderful experience." Alex went round with Martin, and they zipped round at quite a speed!

Another driver was Rhys, who was a little nervous at first. However with plenty of encouragement and support from the team, he had his turn round the track. As he came back in, and his helmet was removed, he shouted "amazing!"

Andrew Bevan from Road to Glory driving school trains up all the new ADIs. He first met John at a guide dog exhibition where John had brought along the white car Simon. "I asked him if he was lost," joked Andrew. He’s now created a training regime, and Speed of Sight is always looking for new ADIs to join the team.

One such ADI is Dipak Fakira from VR Driving School. It was his first day when I visited the Wigan event, and he had a great time taking excited people with different ability levels round the track. He said: "I love how much everyone is enjoying themselves."

A Speed of Sight day is an inspiring experience, seeing people push themselves to do something they wouldn’t ordinarily be able to do, and feeling proud and thrilled when they do.

The charity is always looking for ADIs to train up and join the crew, so get in touch with them if you’d like to be a part of their team.

For more information visit speedofsight.org

ABOUT MIKE NEWMAN

Mike Newman has achieved eight world records – six land speed records, one water speed record and one aerobatic record. He is the only blind driver to set a world record for driving a car solo at over 200mph.

Partially blind from birth and now completely blind he has not allowed his disability to stop him achieving his ambitions.

He first satisfied his need for speed in 2001 when he rode an Aprilia Falco 1000cc V twin motorbike and reached 89mph after only three days’ practice.

The next step was to conquer four wheels, which he did in 2003. He drove an Jaguar XJ-R at 144.7mph to secure his world record. His next attempt was at Evington Aerodrome in a specially engineered BMW M5, during this attempt he reached a record breaking speed of 155mph.

Mike founded the charity Speed of Sight in 2012, alongside co-founder John Galloway.
Hey Hannah, come and see my new set of wheels” said my younger sister. There I was, looking at her new car. She’d just passed her test. Hmm if only… I wonder what it would be like? How would it feel?

I wonder if, maybe, perhaps… could I?

It’s so boring just being sat in this wheelchair!

Soon after, a conversation arose between me and my support staff, in which I mentioned driving a car, and expressed a wish to experience being behind the wheel. Never ones to be defeated, as it is their job to enable me to experience as much as possible, my team leader and the rest of my fairy godmothers set to work.

How on earth could I experience this? How would it ever be possible for me to drive a car?

Living with severe Cerebral Palsy, which has also resulted in me being visually impaired, the word ‘challenge’ was an understatement to say the least.

Time passed… It was my birthday, and as if by magic, I was surprised with a Speed of Sight driving experience! I had never even heard of the charity before, which helps people with disabilities to drive racing cars!

One of my support workers had seen it advertised at a Disability Awareness Event and immediately organised it as a surprise.

Race day arrived, for which I had been waiting in eager anticipation! I was super excited, although a little apprehensive.

I needn’t have been as my co-driver was lovely and explained that he would give me instructions on driving the car and track directions via an earpiece and microphone, which both he and I had attached to our helmets, allowing us to communicate throughout my driving experience.

Before I knew it, there I was sitting in the car. Safety harness on and clipped shut, helmet on, visor down.

We were off! My co-driver asked me: ‘Are you enjoying it Hannah?’

“Faster, faster, faster!” I shouted, as I pulled the accelerator towards me to speed up the car. Thank goodness for dual control as I can’t see where I am going at all. Although I can pull the accelerator towards me to go faster, pushing it away from me to slow down proved to be a bit more challenging!

The co-drivers always find this hilarious, and suggest I use this as an excuse to go at super speed. Every time, I just giggle all the way round the track, throughout the entire experience! I absolutely love it! The feeling of the wind blowing through my hair as we whizz around the track is truly incredible!

If you hadn’t already guessed I’m an adrenaline junkie, with a need for speed! The driving experiences are magnificent, and everyone at Speed of Sight is awesome!

I have driven many times now, around many different tracks, and I love it equally as much each time! I can now, with guidance use the steering wheel with an adapted wrist support. I can for the most part drive the car myself!

One memorable adventure was the off road driving experience at Myerscough College. I hadn’t driven off road before, it was a terrific sensory experience for me being visually impaired. Going over the uneven ground at super speed and getting covered in mud made my day! My care support staff however, weren’t as made up with the rather large amount of laundry!

For me Speed of Sight made the impossible, possible. My friends at Speed of Sight have given me the chance to experience and participate in something that would otherwise never have been possible. For that I have the utmost appreciation, as now I am now just like my sisters. I can drive, and although I do so with support, I can drive all the same!

To find out more about Hannah, view her video which can be found here: https://vimeo.com/339357281
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Cognition: An essential driving skill

TOM HARRINGTON EXPLORES THE EXTENT COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING INFLUENCES DRIVING INVOLVEMENT AND WHETHER THERE IS AN IMPACT OF COGNITION ON DRIVING
Cogntion is one of the three essential driving skills or abilities needed to be a competent driver. The other two are the affective and psychomotor skills. Driving a mechanical or electric vehicle requires a seamless interaction of multiple cognitive abilities, including attention, perceptumotor skills and decision-making.

Cognitive skills or abilities have to do with how a person understands the world around him or her and acts in it. It is a set of mental abilities or processes that are part of nearly every human action while we are awake. Cognitive abilities are brain-based skills we need to carry out any task from the simplest to the most complex. They have more to do with mechanisms of how we learn, remember, problem-solve and pay attention, rather than with any actual knowledge.

For instance, answering the phone involves perception – hearing the phone ring. Decision making is answering or not. Motor skills are lifting the receiver. Language skills are talking and understanding. Social skills are interpreting tone of voice and interacting properly with another human being.

**SEAMLESS INTERACTION**

Cognitive abilities or skills are supported by specific neuronal networks. For instance, memory skills rely mainly on parts of the temporal lobes and parts of the frontal lobes (behind the forehead). With age, some cognitive abilities tend to decline, especially the so-called executive functions, and those cognitive abilities that are not used regularly. Fortunately, growing evidence shows that decline can be delayed with appropriate lifestyle options and practices. Visual selective attention – how well a person can select and attend to relevant information processing speed. How quickly a person can comprehend a situation and take in the relevant information.

Driving requires a seamless interaction of multiple cognitive abilities, including attention, perception and attention, logic, reasoning and memory processing.

**RELINQUISH THEIR KEYS?**

Driving a vehicle is one of the most cognitively complex tasks we engage in on a daily basis. Driving requires an assortment of cognitive skills including executive functioning, information processing, visual processing and memory. As we age these cognitive skills tend to decline, making driving more difficult and dangerous over time. However, recent research suggests that the cognitive demands of driving may actually help reduce declines in cognition caused by ageing. Additionally, driving (or at least easy mobility) may also play a role in keeping older people healthy, active and socially engaged. People who are unable to drive safely should relinquish their keys, but several previous studies have demonstrated that driving cessation is associated with declines in both emotional and physical health for seniors.

**AGE: MORE THAN A NUMBER**

Two of the most common stereotypes in driving are that teenagers are maniacs behind the wheel, and that elderly people are a menace. Psychological science research presents us with interesting findings on the basic functioning skills of the aging population which have direct implications for many activities, including driving.

One of the most ubiquitous findings in research on cognition and aging is that a wide variety of cognitive abilities show an increasing decline across the life span. While knowledge-based skills, like driving at the speed limit, are maintained and might even improve with age, other fluid skills, such as correct use of the gas pedal, are not preserved as we age. But older drivers have been driving for years, so experience should mediate their ability to drive, right? Wrong. Older drivers still cognitively know the mechanics of driving, but their psychomotor abilities are not par with their understanding of the skill. That’s not to say that practice doesn’t make older drivers better.

Researchers have examined whether long-term experience in areas such as driving, flying, and music serves to reduce age-related decline in basic abilities and helps develop compensating strategies. The general consensus is that yes, experience can reduce some age-related cognitive decline, however it requires deliberate practice of the relevant skills. So focusing on the specific skills involved in driving should improve older driver’s abilities. This seems to work.

The number of people over 90 years old holding a driving licence in Britain has been on the rise – it recently topped 100,000. So, should you still be driving in your 90s? The number of over 70s holding a driving licence exceeded five million for the first time last year, but figures suggest it is younger drivers who pose more of a risk. “Young predominantly male drivers are much more likely to crash within six months of passing their driving test rather than older drivers with six months of hanging up their keys, he said. He added: “Older drivers often self-restrain their driving by not driving at night and only then on familiar roads.”

**AGE-RELATED RESTRICTIONS**

Living independently requires access to transportation. With 27 million people currently aged 70 or older, a number predicted to rise to 37 million by the year 2030, precautions, such as age-related

**“THE COGNITIVE DEMANDS OF DRIVING MAY ACTUALLY HELP REDUCE DECLINES IN COGNITION CAUSED BY AGEING. DRIVING MAY ALSO PLAY A ROLE IN KEEPING OLDER PEOPLE HEALTHY, ACTIVE AND SOCIALY ENGAGED”**
restrictions on licensing and mandated refresher courses, will need to be taken in order to reduce the safety risk of older drivers.

A recent study conducted by behavioral scientists Moon Choi, Matthew C. Lohman (University of Kentucky) and Brian Mezuk (Virginia Commonwealth University) concluded that driving may be positively linked to maintaining cognitive function.

According to Choi and his colleagues: “Prior research has indicated that poor cognitive functioning is associated with risk of driving cessation. However, our findings suggest that it may also be the case that driving cessation itself is a risk factor for accelerated cognitive decline over time. This suggests that the relationship between driving cessation and cognitive functioning may be bidirectional.”

Choi and his colleagues analysed data from over 9,000 senior citizens over a 10-year period – from 1998 to 2008. At each wave of the study, participants completed an over-the-phone cognitive battery that included measures of memory, speed of mental processing, knowledge and language. Participants were also asked about their current driving status: whether they were active drivers, former drivers, or had never driven.

The researchers found that participants who ceased driving showed accelerated cognitive decline over the subsequent 10 years compared with active drivers even after controlling baseline cognitive functioning and health status.

According to Choi and colleagues: “This study suggests that older adults without independent driving mobility may be a high-risk group for accelerated cognitive decline and may benefit from targeted interventions that promote”
Driving Instructor

Another study involving on-road driving performance was carried out on older people with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) or early dementia. The findings raised concerns about the safe driving competence of this group. 70% of the study participants failed the standardised on-road driving assessment, most broke an important road law and nearly one-half required physical intervention at least once during the assessment. Right turns, which normally involve a greater cognitive load, were more problematic than left turns and general driving.

Of the study participants with MCI, almost half failed the on-road test, while three quarters of those with early dementia failed the same test. The driving faults of the study participants were reported to be related to poor scanning, observation of traffic and road signals, an inability to monitor and control vehicle speed, poor positioning, confusion with pedals and lack of anticipatory or defensive driving.

The quantity and quality of the on-road faults made by this study group of older drivers with MCI or early dementia may be realistically described as "hazardous or potentially catastrophic". It is likely that the basic skills necessary to manoeuvre a car are well automated and represent procedural knowledge that is relatively spared in early cognitive decline. However, in the event of changes in traffic conditions, these drivers seem unable to rapidly process new stimuli and make active and informed driving decisions.

COMPENSATE – DRIVE MORE SLOWLY
Associated with the ageing of the Irish and British population is an increasing number of older drivers – aged 65 years and above. The trips that older people make by car connect them to health and social services, and to social activities to make it possible to live with quality. This increased dependence on driving unfortunately comes with increased cost. When the exposure data is taken into account, older drivers are at high risk of a crash injury or even a fatality.

Dementia disorders associated with ageing are thought to contribute to impairment of driving ability, and thus the accident involvement of older drivers. Drivers can compensate for decline in selective attention by driving more slowly, thereby allowing more time for information processing (Hakamies – Blomqvist, 1993). However, safe driving requires that a number of complex decisions are made while selecting attention between concurrent tasks, in a limited time frame determined, eg by external changes in traffic lights and movements of other traffic. (OECD 2001; Stutts, 2003).

Driving is a complex goal-directed activity. Executive abilities are thought to be important for dual task coordination (Logie et al, 2004) and necessary for car positioning, maintaining safe distances, driving on roundabouts, journey planning, and estimating risk and for adapting behavior such as adjusting speed to traffic conditions. (Radford & Lincoln, 2004). Thus, cognitive functions proposed to be critical to driving ability must include attention visuoconstructional skills and executive functioning.

In one such intervention, a team of psychological scientists led by Jerri Edwards (University of South Florida) designed a cognitive training programme targeting seniors at risk for cognitive decline and car accidents. Edwards and colleagues recruited 500 seniors of 60 years and older to participate in the study. All participants completed a visual processing speed task – poor performance in this task indicated an increased risk for car crashes. The 134 participants who received poor scores in this test were randomly assigned to either cognitive training control group. Participants in both interventions met with a trainer in small groups designed to enhance information processing speed, such as identifying and localising visual (cars and trucks) and auditory (series of tones) targets.

Participants in the computer training condition completed training exercises on basic computer usage, such as using email. The 366 participants who did not show signs of cognitive slowing on the visual processing speed task served as a reference group. As a follow up three years later the researchers found that at-risk older drivers who had received cognitive processing training were still driving at the same rates as low-risk older drivers. In

social, psychological and cognitive engagement.”

Driving Instructor

Driving Instructor
comparison, participants in the computer training group experienced self-reported declines in driving difficulty and frequency. According to Edwards and colleagues: “Cognitive speed of processing training can not only improve cognitive performance but also protect against mobility declines among older drivers. Scientifically proven cognitive training regimes have the potential to enhance the everyday lives of older adults.”

MEN’S SELF-IMAGE
Both groups of researchers acknowledge caution that their studies have limitations, beyond cognitive or health issues, seniors also frequently report financial difficulties as one reason to stop driving. Seniors living in more densely populated areas may have more access to alternative means of transportation, and may thus have different cognitive outcomes than seniors living in more isolated or rural areas. Driving is a complex task requiring a range of cognitive, psychomotor and functional abilities.

Although studies have explored predictors of driving cessation, much of the research on older drivers to date has focused on predictors of crash risk. Changing in driving skills, as well as other visuospatial and functional abilities eg strength and motor ability, reaction time, certain medical conditions. Each of these, alone or in combination may contribute to a decline in driving competency and involvement. However, some older people with these types of impairments continue driving and may be at risk of injury to themselves or others.

Men with low cognitive functioning tend to restrict their driving to short distances, whereas women with similarly low cognitive functioning tend to cease driving altogether. Men with mild and severe cognitive impairments are less likely to cease driving than women. This lends support to the contention that the ability to drive is an important contributor to men’s self-image, whereas women most likely view its importance more in terms of mobility and functional independence. Another explanation may be that men of this generation are able to maintain competence using a co-pilot spouse, an activity not available to many women who have outlived their spouses.

CONCLUSION
Cognition skill is one of the ‘big three’ skills or abilities necessary to drive safely. Cognition impairment is associated with driving restriction and cessation, although noteworthy minorities of mildly and severely impaired individuals continue to drive. The decision process surrounding an individual’s restricting or stopping driving are complex and may include consideration not only of competence, but also of sense of self-worth and the relationship with a partner.

Driving any vehicle requires a seamless interaction of multiple cognitive abilities, including attention, perceptualmotor skills and decision-making. Cognitive skills or abilities have to do with how a person understands the world around him and acts in it. It is a set of mental abilities or processes that are part of nearly every human action while we are awake.

Cognitive abilities are brain-based skills we need to carry out any task from the simplest to the most complex. A pre-requisite for driving is the integration of high-level cognitive functions with perception and motor function. Ageing, per se, does not necessarily impair driving or increase crash risk. However, medical conditions, such as cognitive impairment and dementia become more prevalent with advancing age and may contribute to poor driving and increased crash risk.

The extent to which the skills are impaired depends on the cause of dementia, disease severity, other comorbidities and individual compensation strategies. Dementia often remains undiagnosed and therefore general practitioners can find themselves with the difficult situation to disclose a suspicion about cognitive impairment and queries about medical fitness to drive, at the same time.

Giving up one’s driving licence, especially after holding it for many years can be difficult. But the driver’s safety and well-being is of paramount importance and must take precedence. Many drivers will resent losing their licence and resist as much as possible.

Finally, driving a vehicle is one of the most cognitively complex tasks we engage in on a daily basis. Driving requires an assortment of cognitive skills including executive functioning, information processing, visual processing and memory. As we age these cognitive skills tend to decline, making driving more difficult and dangerous over time. Older drivers still cognitively know the mechanics of driving, but their psychomotor abilities are not on par with their understanding of the skill. Also, it’s vitally important that all drivers are as fit – mentally and physically – as possible in every respect to take on the daily challenges of driving on today’s overcrowded and busy highways.
Learner drivers and their families will thank you for introducing Finito.

The Employability Specialists

www.finito.org.uk
Welcome to DIA Academy

WE’LL SOON BE LAUNCHING DIA ACADEMY – AN ONLINE CENTRE OF LEARNING IN THE FIELD OF DRIVER AND RIDER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Whether you’re an ADI, PDI, rider trainer or fleet trainer, DIA Academy’s got you covered with a range of courses to enhance your knowledge and help you move your business forward.

DIA Academy is an online portal which means you can learn in your own home and at your own pace.

We’re committed to supporting your professional growth and development as a driver or rider trainer. We offer a diverse range of development opportunities whether you are just starting your journey to become a professional driver or rider trainer or you are an already established provider looking to progress or diversify your skills and knowledge.

Our education programme offers a flexible way to fit round your needs as a busy professional. DIA Academy is the most convenient way yet to undertake continuing professional development (CPD).

CPD for driving instructors is also encouraged by DVSA. DVSA recommends you record your commitment to CPD if you do at least seven hours of CPD every year. Your commitment to CPD will be highlighted to learner drivers using the ‘Find your nearest driving instructors’ service if you agree to your details being published.

WHY CONTINUE LEARNING?

CPD is important to any professional. Benefits include:

- Helps to plug any knowledge gaps
- Keeps your academic and professional qualifications up to date, particularly important in our fast-moving world where things change all the time.
- Add strings to your bow and potentially increase your income stream
- Shows a dedication to self-improvement to attract new clients
- Reduces feelings of uncertainty or worries about change – CPD gives you a plan for the future and the ability to adapt
- Promotes independence – self-directed CPD requires you to consciously engage in learning activities and follow your own plan, while some structured CPD activities can benefit from you engaging in further research and study
- Ensures that your standards are consistently high
- Enhances your business’s reputation among customers and clients as well as potential employees
- Enables you and your company to positively react and move with current trends and shifts in the industry
**SAFEGUARDING**

This course acts as an introduction to the principles of safeguarding. It will cover safeguarding issues that you may come across as a driver trainer and how to deal with them as well as information on further resources and qualifications. This course will help you to gain a good overall understanding of safeguarding, making it relevant to your role as an ADI.

**WHAT YOU’LL LEARN**
- What safeguarding is and the legislation in place to deal with it
- Safeguarding definitions and who is responsible for dealing with issues
- The different types of abuse and safeguarding issues you may encounter as an ADI
- Why abuse can go unnoticed and the support mechanisms in place if a pupil discloses an issue to you
- What to do if you are not sure if abuse is happening or not

**DVLA DRIVER’S MEDICAL**

This course looks at the DVLA’s driver’s medical service, what the DVLA does and how its work contributes to keeping the roads safe. It will also cover the standards of vision for driving, what DVLA does when you inform them of a medical condition and an overview of section 88. It is based on the workshop delivered by Dr Nick Jenkins at the DIA’s 2018 conference.

**WHAT YOU’LL LEARN**
- The role and history of the DVLA
- Introduction to DVLA’s drivers medical service
- What the DVLA does
- The standards of vision for driving
- How vision is measured for the practical driving test
- What the DVLA does when informed
- An overview of section 88
- Common FAQs

**DRIVERS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS & NEURODIVERSITY**

This course looks at the problems students with diverse needs or a neurodiversity condition face when learning to drive. The course will introduce you to common disabilities and conditions, some of which may be hidden, and discusses how to overcome them.

**WHAT YOU’LL LEARN**
- Where could ADIs fit into the process
- Impact of physical conditions
- Hidden disabilities
- The impact of dyslexia
- The impact of dyspraxia
- Effects of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Overview of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

**STANDARDS CHECK ESSENTIALS**

This online course will help you prepare for an upcoming standards check. It covers what the DVSA is looking for and how the standards check will be graded. It will also cover what considerations to make when planning the session, tips for the day and additional resources to help you get the grade you want.

**WHAT YOU’LL LEARN**
- An overview of the standards check and why it is necessary
- The impact on having to make changes before or during the check
- How your standards check will be graded
- Tips on how to control your nerves
- How to choose the right person if there is one ‘right’ subject and all the factors to consider when planning for a standards check
- The top seven reasons for unsuccessful standards checks

After the initial launch of these four courses, we’ll release the Diploma in Driver Education. This is made up of: Award in Vehicle Knowledge, Award in Driving Theory, Award in ADI Knowledge and Award in Business Knowledge. We want to help you grow as a professional and increase business. DIA Academy is a simple and convenient way to keep your knowledge up-to-date and develop your skills. Keep ahead of the competition with DIA Academy.
Enjoy a better supported and more profitable business

Sign up for a RED Brand Franchise and benefit from an unbeatable package to drive your business forward:

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Bring your own car or benefit from our exclusive Renault Clio leasing deal.

✔ Our Premium Hourly Rate Earns You More
Learner demand means RED instructors enjoy the best hourly rates. Your learners can use our Road Brain Trainer for free, helping them be safer drivers.

✔ Maximised Earnings with Unlimited Quality Learner Supply
New RED instructors average 17+ new pupils in their first 4 weeks, supplied by RED’s fast-start marketing programme.

✔ Outstanding Business Support
Our Instructor Support Team are always on hand to help improve your business.

✔ Reliable, Consistent Income with Quality Prepaid Pupils
Over 80% of our customers pre-pay - we collect their fees so you get paid on time, every time.

✔ Achieve Your Full Potential
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✔ Customers love RED
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WORKING KNOWLEDGE

IT’S YOUR LAST CHANCE TO BOOK YOUR PLACE AT ONE OF OUR DIA CONFERENCES, AND WE’VE GOT A SPECIAL DISCOUNT OFFER FOR YOU

We’re going on the road with our conference programme this year, to make it more accessible to larger numbers of driver and rider trainers. This means we can see more of you, in two locations across the UK. We’ll be visiting Bristol and Cardington (home to DVSA’s own training academy).

For a limited time, if you book now, you can save £20 off the price of a ticket! Just use the code SAVE20 when booking.

WHAT’S HAPPENING ON THE DAY?

You can enhance your knowledge with three certificated CPD workshops. These are:

- Delivering the National Standards
- Developing pupil confidence (managing over and under-confidence issues)
- Safeguarding and lone working.

TICK OFF THREE CORE AREAS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN JUST ONE DAY!

You’ll also be able to get the lowdown on the latest developments in the industry, and road safety in general, from senior DVSA personnel. Find out what’s new in driver and rider regulation and legislation, what’s changing in testing and what developments to expect in how ADIs are trained, assessed and regulated.

We’ll also be hosting a Q&A with the DVSA and other industry experts. This is your chance to ask any burning questions, pitch your ideas and offer your solutions to help develop driver training. Start a debate and have your voice heard where it needs to be.

DVSA will also be taking us through the DL25 app, recently rolled out to a small group of examiners. A tablet with the app will replace the paper form used by examiners during the practical test.

Our conference is also a great social event where you can network with key industry contacts and fellow trainers. Share ideas, anecdotes and experiences with other people in your line of work.

We also have a selection of trade stands for you to get some great deals and discounts from industry leading brands.

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fbtc/Accountancy Services
Attention is a limited resource. When we talk about paying attention, we are describing how we focus or concentrate on something that is happening around us, something we are doing or thinking.

Mindfulness can improve and strengthen attention so that we can pay focused attention for more extended periods or direct a higher percentage of our attention to a chosen task. However, you only have 100% attention at any moment in time. Generally, that 100% is divided (multi-tasking) among your senses, the environment, and whatever you are doing.

When you choose to direct more attention towards a specific task, something else will go unnoticed. Our limited capacity for attention and years of research around attention and driving is what has led to the current laws on mobile phones and driving. Unfortunately, we all think our attention capacity is higher than it actually is!

Learning new things takes a lot of attention. Students learn each new driving task until, eventually, all the small tasks come together like a jigsaw puzzle. You can't create more than 100% attention, so if learning a new task takes too much attention, your brain will prioritise what to notice. The majority of ADIs start lessons in a quiet area to allow for this.

Some students cannot look inside and outside the car at the same time to start or may not be able to hear what you are saying. This is known as inattentional deafness and can be a disconcerting experience for both learner and ADI. It is the brain prioritising and filtering, so speaking louder will not help! Understanding this is a normal and temporary experience allows you to plan together how best to structure the lesson. New tasks will no longer take the student's full attention when they have been practised enough for them to feel confident.

As a student starts to learn and practise, they begin to link small tasks together into one task. They are storing information into their mental database and recalling it when they need to and beginning to link different tasks together like a daisy chain of information. If the student has had a stressful day or feels stressed during their lesson, they may struggle to store or recall information efficiently. This can lead to forgetting what they learned. If this is familiar, consider starting the lesson with a quick ‘reset’ of attention. Ask them to pause, pay attention to their breathing, ask what they can see, hear, smell. Ask them to notice putting on their seatbelt and to notice the sensation of holding the steering wheel, bringing their attention back to the present moment, in the car, ready to start their driving lesson.

Finish the lesson by asking them to replay in their mind what went well in the lesson and anything new that they have learned.

Possible Coaching Questions

- What have you done previously that will help you today?
- How are you feeling today? How will that affect your driving?
- You said you couldn’t remember, what can you do so that you will be able to remember for next time?

As your student gains experience and confidence, they can drive more independently. Driving becomes more automatic and they no longer think about the fine details. However, in a test situation, they may start to overthink about the fine details of what they are doing. Research suggests that this can interfere with the automatic processing of the brain, leading to mistakes. We often hear about learners who are great drivers but overthinking gets in the way on the day of their test.

Other examples are familiar in sporting scenarios with penalty taking and golfers taking a winning putt. Practising imagery after driving lessons and before a test can help strengthen the information in the student's mental database, build their confidence in their ability and reduce overthinking.

For further information about helping students prepare for their driving test visit: www.confidentdrivers.co.uk

Possible Coaching Questions

- What are your thoughts on your driving test?
- When you have experienced overthinking before? What did you do to make yourself feel better?
- How would you like to feel or be thinking while driving on your test?
- How will you know you are driving as you do in a lesson?
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ON EQUAL TERMS

**Equality** –

treating people fairly and with respect, giving regards for others’ rights and wishes.

**Diversity** –
encompasses the properties and characteristics of a person. It includes characteristics that are inborn and unchangeable: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities/disabilities, race and sexual orientation, and includes differences that are acquired, and those that may change throughout our lives. Some examples include: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, parental status, religious beliefs, military status, health and work experience.
Attention needs to be paid to equality and diversity to create an environment in which everybody thrives. Being aware of equality goes beyond treating everyone the same way. It is also important to ensure that peoples’ varying needs are met in the most appropriate way. Diversity refers to embracing individual differences. By recognising and valuing people’s differences it is more likely that people realise their full potential. This will benefit both the individuals concerned and people they interact with, such as employers, customers and colleagues.

A lot of legislation has been introduced to help protect people from discrimination. There are nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

An example of how people are protected from risk of harm as a result of equality and diversity legislation is the case Nombreda v Charing Rose Ltd where it was found that the employer had not taken reasonable steps to prevent race discrimination.

The claimant was one of seven Filipino care workers at Charing Rose Ltd. During work a fellow white worker sent a text message saying “The Filipinos are ignorant and useless most of the time.”

The claimant informed her manager who then requested the care worker apologise. The apology was read out to all of the Filipino staff and the care worker who sent the message was given a warning that if the behaviour was repeated, she would be disciplined.

Subsequently the claimant resigned and brought a race discrimination claim based on the text message. The tribunal found that the employer had not taken enough steps to prevent the discriminatory act – just getting new employees to read its equal opportunities policy as part of their induction training was “wholly inadequate”. The claimant was rewarded £2000 for injury to feelings.

A brief summary of the Acts of Parliament in relation to equality and diversity is provided in the next section. They are wide-ranging and, in order to reap the benefits of being in a multi-cultural society, it is important to have a good policy in place that considers the many different issues involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Partnership Act 2004</th>
<th>The Civil Partnership Act created a new legal relationship of civil partnership, which can be formed by two people of the same sex signing a registration document. It provides same sex couples who form such partnerships equal treatment with married couples. The Act came into force on 5 December 2005.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability Discrimination Act 1995</td>
<td>The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 aims to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in relation to employment, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the disposal or management of premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005 (DDA 2005)</td>
<td>In April 2005 a new Disability Discrimination Act was passed by Parliament, which amends or extends existing provisions in the DDA 1995. This includes making it unlawful for operators of transport vehicles to discriminate against disabled people; making sure private clubs with 25 or more members cannot keep disabled people out; ensuring discrimination law covers all the activities of the public sector; and requiring public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty to Promote Disability Equality (Statutory Code of Practice)</td>
<td>The Disability Equality Duty places a new requirement for public sector bodies to pay due regard to promoting equality for disabled people in every area of their work. Disability equality should be woven into the everyday working of the organisation, particularly in relation to formulating policy and practices around both service delivery and employment, but also in relation to other functions such as setting budgets, making public appointments, funding and regulatory roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act/Regulation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Act 1990</td>
<td>The Employment Act 1990 (amended) makes it unlawful to refuse employment, or any service of an employment agency, on grounds related to trade union membership; to amend the law relating to industrial action and ballots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006</td>
<td>The Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006 outlaws discrimination (direct discrimination, indirect or harassment and victimisation) on grounds of age in employment and vocational training. The regulations cover people of all ages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 (Amended)</td>
<td>The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 (Amended) outlaw discrimination (direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation) in employment and vocational training on the grounds of religion or belief. The regulations apply to discrimination on grounds of religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulation 2005</td>
<td>The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulation 2005 is concerned with the principle of equal treatment of men and women in relation to access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions. The Regulation includes provision for matters arising out of or relating to such implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended)</td>
<td>The Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended) gives an individual the right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where the man and the woman are doing – like work; or work rated as equivalent under an analytical job evaluation study; or work that is proved to be of equal value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations)</td>
<td>The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services. This new provision was not previously covered by the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003. The Regulations were approved by the House of Commons on the 19 March 2007 and after debate by the House of Lords on 21 March 2007. The Regulations came into effect on 30 April 2007.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality Act 2006</td>
<td>The main provision of the Equality Act 2006 is the establishment of a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) by 2007. The Act introduced a positive duty on public sector bodies to promote equality of opportunity between women and men and eliminate sex discrimination. The introduction of the positive duty harmonises sex equality law with the current Race Relations Amendment Act, and the changes to the Disability Discrimination Act. The third aspect of the Act is to extend current protection from discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief to the provision of goods, facilities, services, the disposal and management of premises, education and the exercise of public functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Recognition Act 2004</td>
<td>The Gender Recognition Act makes provision for the first time for transsexual people to acquire legal recognition of their new gender.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Independent Living & Human Rights Act 1998  

The Duty to Promote Race Equality Code of Practice  
The statutory code gives public authorities practical guidance on the steps they should take to tackle racial discrimination and promote equal opportunities and good race relations in line with the Race Relations Act. It covers both the general duty and the specific duties.

Race Relations Act 1976  
The Race Relations Act makes it unlawful to treat a person less favourably than another on racial grounds. These cover grounds of race, colour, nationality and prohibits discrimination on racial grounds in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities and services and premises.

The Equality Act 2010  
The Equality Act became law in October 2010. It replaced previous legislation (such as the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and ensures consistency in what employers and employees need to do to make their workplaces a fair environment and comply with the law.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000  
The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 outlawed discrimination (direct and indirect) and victimisation in all public authority functions not previously covered by the RRAA, with only limited exceptions. It also placed a general duty on specified public authorities to promote race equality.

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006  
This offence is designed to stop hatred being whipped up against people because of their religion – not just their race. It would ban people from intentionally using threatening words or behaviour to stir up hatred against somebody because of what they believe.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended)  
The Sex Discrimination Act (as amended) applies to women and men of any age, including children. The Act prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal or management of premises.

Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001  
The Special Educational Needs & Disability Act introduces the right for disabled students not to be discriminated against in education, training and any services provided wholly or mainly for students, and for those enrolled on courses provided by ‘responsible bodies’, including further and higher education institutions and sixth form colleges.

CATEGORIES

Finally, it is important to recognise that there are different forms of inequality and discrimination:

**Direct discrimination** takes place where a person is treated less favourably than a person of another age group, disability status, gender, race, religion/belief system or sexual orientation etc would be in the same or similar circumstances.

**Indirect discrimination** occurs where the effect of certain requirements, conditions or practices imposed by an employer or education provider has an adverse impact disproportionately on one group or other. Indirect discrimination generally occurs when a rule or condition, which is applied equally to everyone, can be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular group, the rule is to their disadvantage, and it cannot be justified on other grounds.

**Institutional discrimination** is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief or sexual orientation etc. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantage people.

**Harassment** is conduct which affects the dignity of individuals or groups of people. It includes unwelcome verbal, non-verbal and physical conduct that could amount to unlawful discrimination.

**Victimisation** is the unfair treatment of a person who has made complaints of discrimination or someone who has given evidence in a complaint.
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MONTH IN NEWS
Changes to car finance commission, grey is UK’s top car colour, drivers spend two years behind the wheel, support for fines for idling drivers and more.

DIAMOND COMMENT
Chloe Denny gives us her top tips for driving safely at Halloween, the spookiest time of the year that can cause children to lose their heads...

KEEP THE WHEELS TURNING
Auto Express asks if your wheel bearings are becoming unbearable and offers a handy guide that teaches you all you need to know.

Stats key
- Insurance group rated from 1-50
- CO2 emissions useful on a company scheme
- Fuel consumption miles per gallon
- Gearbox
- First year tax payment
- Engine size
- List price
- Euro NCAP crash safety rating
- How many doors does the car have?
- Electric Car battery range

In association with:
MONTH IN NEWS

GREY IS UK’S TOP CAR COLOUR

Grey is now the UK’s favourite car colour.
Back in 2009 black was the top choice for car buyers, followed by silver then by blue and grey came in at fourth place.
Crusader Vans has looked at how the colour of your car contributes to the long term retention value of your vehicle – from the average depreciation for three years, to the average days on the market to the colour market share.
Key findings include:
■ White, grey and black cars spend the fewest days on the market on average while beige and yellow last the longest on average on the market.
■ Beige cars have the highest average depreciation value after three years at 36% however yellow coloured cars on average depreciate at a slower rate at 27% after the same time period.
■ Britain has returned to the dark side with black and grey cars having 41% of the market share with each colour taking over 20%, closely followed by white at 18%

DRIVERS SPEND TWO YEARS BEHIND THE WHEEL

British drivers spend more than two years of their lives behind the wheel of a car, new research from Privilege Car Insurance has revealed.
In total, UK motorists spend 298 hours a year in their cars, with 33 hours spent driving to and from the supermarket alone.
Another 35 hours a year are taken up by driving to visit friends and family, and another 13 hours are used to take children to social events.
Charlotte Fielding, head of Privilege Car Insurance, said: “This research has shown what a significant amount of our lives is being spent in our cars – who knew how much time we spent driving to work, or simply going to and from the supermarket for example?”
“Whether getting from A to B or enjoying our own space and time, there’s no doubt we spend a considerable amount of time in our cars. It is, therefore, important that we take care of ourselves and other road users by driving safely and remembering to consider everyone else on the roads.”
The survey of 2,000 people also showed that a further 32 hours is spent running household errands – with a huge 63 hours used by driving to and from work alone.
SUPPORT FOR FINES FOR IDLING DRIVERS

Almost three quarters of UK drivers want to see councils target motorists who leave their engines running while parked.

In fact, 44% of 2,130 members surveyed by the RAC would like fines handed out to those who refuse to turn off their vehicles.

Nicholas Lyes, head of roads policy at the RAC, said: “It is clear from our research that the vast majority of drivers are far more aware of the impact of vehicle emissions than they were three years ago.

They want to see local councils taking some form of action against those who do this. “Councils already have the powers to deal with this problem, but few are currently doing so. Many of the drivers we questioned would like to see some firm action taken against offenders.”

Councils are currently at liberty to fine drivers £20 for idling while parked. And 2% of those surveyed think offenders should be fined with no warning at all.

PEOPLE DON’T FEEL AS SAFE ON SMART MOTORWAYS

Only one in 10 drivers feels safer on an All Lane Running (ALR) smart motorway compared to a traditional motorway with a hard shoulder, a new survey has found.

Close to half of the 15,000 respondents surveyed by the AA said that they strongly felt that they were more dangerous.

It follows on from a survey in February 2016 which found that almost a quarter of 25,208 people questioned via an online poll believed that 1.5 miles was a suitable distance between Emergency Refuge Areas (ERAs) on smart motorways, but this has now fallen to 16%.

From April 2020, all new sections of smart motorway will have an ERA at every mile, but just two-fifths of respondents think this is an appropriate distance. Almost two-thirds think the distance should be decreased to having an ERA situated every half a mile.

Edmund King, AA president says; “We believe the Secretary of State should now announce a review into the safety of All Lane Running Schemes.

“Unfortunately we have already seen fatalities where vehicles have been left in vulnerable positions in live lanes. Previous research has shown that if Stopped Vehicle Detection is not in place it takes an average of 17 minutes to spot a stationary vehicle in a live lane.

“Our study shows that public trust on removing the hard shoulder has evaporated.”

NOT TREADING CAREFULLY

Just a quarter of UK motorists can correctly state the minimum legal tyre tread depth.

Kwik Fit surveyed more than 2,000 British drivers and found that just 25% were aware that the minimum permitted tread depth is 1.6 millimetres.

Of those questioned, 40% gave an incorrect figure for the legal minimum tread, while a fifth (20%) confessed to simply not knowing. More than one in 10 drivers (11%) said they didn’t know what tyre ‘tread depth’ meant.

Roger Griggs, communications director at Kwik Fit, said: “These figures are alarming and prove we have a lot of work to do when it comes to tyre education.

“Tyre treads are designed to give good grip, which is especially important when the roads are wet. Without adequate tread, the performance of the tyre will decrease and ultimately affect the overall safety of the vehicle. For all the safety developments car manufacturers are making, we have to remember that tyres are the only part of a car that are in contact with the road and so it is vital that they are in the best condition possible.

“There are simple checks, such as the 20 pence piece test, that drivers can perform themselves to ensure their tyre tread depth is legal. For anyone not confident in checking by themselves, our centres offer a tyre check service to give peace of mind to motorists.”

SUPPORT FOR FINES FOR IDLING DRIVERS

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Councils are currently at liberty to fine drivers £20 for idling while parked. And 2% of those surveyed think offenders should be fined with no warning at all.
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Karen Bransgrove, Diamond Chief Examiner

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CHLOE DENNY
HALLOWEEN CAN BE A SCARY TIME ON THE ROADS

It’s Halloween month, the month of trick or treats, screams and squeals. Many of us love to dress up and have parties. Children knock on doors trick or treating, something I loved as a kid. However there are some things we need to be cautious about.

Some children are scared by the decorations on people’s houses, particularly when the neighbours have gone all out to make their houses look unrecognisable. Some homes look like haunted houses where scary pop-up zombies, skeletons, scarecrows and ghosts cause your imagination to run wild.

I know that as a child, things popping out would scare me. With all the fun that trick or treating brings, it can also be extremely scary for some children. It could be the first time they have been out trick or treating or the first time they’re out in the dark after bedtime. Seeing such realistic costumes can be very frightening. All the excitement could lead to them running away or running from house to house and not thinking of the dangers of the roads and cars.

I thought I would put together a few helpful tips about driving on Halloween night.

KEEP THE MUSIC DOWN
It is important to be able to hear what is going on around you. Keep the music volume low as that will make it easier to hear the children and what is going on around you.

DRIVE AT OR UNDER THE SPEED LIMIT
This is especially important when you are driving through residential areas where there are children walking or running out into the road. You need to be in control of your vehicle to be able to stop if anything happens. Carefully enter and exit your driveway and keep your eyes scanning your surroundings.

KEEP YOUR HEADLIGHTS ON
Make sure your headlights are on in residential areas so parents and children can see you coming, especially if you have a darker coloured car.

If you see one child cross the road there are bound to be more waiting to cross or about to cross. In their trick or treat excitement they might not realise there is a car metres away from them. With all the free sweets on offer, they can’t wait to get to the next house and keep going on until their bags are full of sweet treats. They also can’t wait to get home and rummage through their goodies and compare who has the most and the best and, of course, eat so much they feel sick. As a result they won’t be concentrating on the road as much as they would on a normal day.

Houses decorated with ghosts, zombies and witches can be a distraction if they catch your eye when you drive past. If you want to have a closer look, park up and go for a walk and have a look. A second of distraction can cause anything to happen with all the children running around. It is a tricky time; everyone needs to be wary of the dangers this time of year.

It is good to be aware of the dangers that trick or treating could bring. I wouldn’t have thought too much about it until I had to think about what to write for this month’s article and this idea popped into my head.

With Halloween fast approaching I hope that my tips are useful for you and you don’t end up too scared by the decorations and costumes! Some of the makeup people have now is amazing and very realistic. Don’t let that distract you when you’re at the wheel.

Tweet your thoughts @diamondadvanced #diamond

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ARE YOUR WHEEL BEARINGS BECOMING UNBEARABLE?
DON'T WORRY, HERE'S A HANDY GUIDE TO TEACH YOU
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW
Firstly, let’s explain what wheel bearings are. They are an essential part of any vehicle, from a wheelbarrow to a juggernaut. They help a car roll along the road with as little friction as possible, thus saving fuel, reducing wear and increasing performance.

Wheel bearings work by encasing hardened ball bearings or rollers in between two metal rings. The mechanism is then packed with grease to protect the parts from wear. The driveshaft or a hub holding the wheel is attached to one side, allowing it to spin freely with as little friction as possible.

**WHAT CAUSES WHEEL BEARING NOISE?**
Over time these bearings can become loose or worn. This wear will be accelerated if the grease has leaked out or dirt, grit or water have found their way inside.

The first time you may know you have a problem is at a service or MoT test. Modern cars are good at insulating noise, and as the problem tends to build up over time rather than be a sudden failure, it can be difficult for a driver to detect.

If you can hear it, the noise is likely to be a grating, grinding or rumbling which changes with the road speed and doesn’t change when you blip the throttle or dip the clutch.

You may also notice a clicking noise and perhaps a vibration through the steering wheel, caused because the worn bearing allows the wheel to wobble. If you are at this stage, it’s really time to get it fixed as it will affect the handling of the car.

To do a DIY diagnosis, you’ll need to jack the car up and spin the wheels individually to see which one is noisy. It’s also worth rocking the wheel from side to side and up and down to check for clonks and movement.

**HOW TO FIX WHEEL BEARING PROBLEMS**
If you want to attempt a fix on a noisy wheel bearing yourself, check a workshop manual or online guide for instructions. You may find you can just pack the existing bearing with grease and tighten it up, especially on older cars. If you need to replace parts, think carefully before you attempt it yourself as you’ll need some pretty serious tools to undo seized nuts and press out the bearing.

It’s also worth comparing the prices of a wheel bearing kit and a complete hub assembly. It might be that the time and effort needed to remove and replace the bearings alone means it will make more sense to swap the whole hub – especially if you are paying for a mechanic’s labour time.

The price of parts will depend on all sorts of factors, but you might be pleasantly surprised as the same bearings might be used across many different cars. Online suppliers are likely to be cheaper than a dealer or motor factory, but make sure they’re reputable as fake branded car components are worryingly common. Also make sure you are ordering the right part – there can be a bewildering array of bearings, with differences existing even across the same model and production year of car.

If you are struggling to find the right part – for example with a classic or specialist car – it will be worth checking a directory to see if there is a bearing supplier near to you. These businesses will usually have a counter where an expert will be able to identify a part by sight – and they’ll be cheap too.

However you fix them, it’s essential to get your bearings repaired if they are noisy or worn. If you just turn up the radio and ignore the rumbling they will damage and wear other, more expensive components, burn more fuel, and could even be a safety issue.
In the past if you were buying a new car you would have been faced with two choices when it came to its gearbox – manual or automatic. These days though there’s another choice of transmission to be considered, the Direct Shift Gearbox, that’s more commonly described using its DSG acronym, and is also known as a dual-clutch gearbox.

From the driver’s seat it’s very likely you wouldn’t necessarily know the difference between a DSG gearbox and an automatic – the controls are virtually identical and a DSG tends to change gears in the same smooth manner as a traditional auto.

**DSG VS A CONVENTIONAL AUTOMATIC**

So what are the differences between an automatic and a DSG, and is it better to buy one over the other? A DSG gearbox is effectively two gearboxes in one, connected to the engine by two drive shafts. As well as two gearboxes there are also two clutches and both the gearboxes and clutches are operated hydraulically by a mechatronics system (effectively a combination of mechanics and electronics).

In a traditional automatic the drive from the engine is taken to the gearbox via a torque converter whereas in a manual this is taken care of by the clutch. While a torque converter offers smooth gear changes it uses a thick hydraulic fluid which is less efficient than a clutch-based system.

The advantage of the DSG over a conventional automatic is that the gearbox that’s not currently in use is able to work out which gear you’re likely to want next and will prepare it for use. This allows for both smooth and fast gear changes.

In order to do this, an electronic control unit for the transmission uses information such as engine speed, road speed, accelerator position and driving mode to select the optimum gear and to determine the ideal shift point. Each change can be accomplished in less than four-hundredths of a second, although some manufacturers’ systems are faster than others.

**COST OF DSG GEARBOXES**

While some cars can only be ordered with a DSG gearbox, this type of transmission is generally offered as a cost option. This cost obviously varies between different car companies but, as an example, Volkswagen charges around £1,400 extra for a DSG
gearbox on a Volkswagen Golf hatchback.

In terms of performance and economy there’s not a huge amount to choose between and manual and DSG transmissions. DSGs do tend to be slightly heavier than their manual counterparts and this can lead to cars with them being slightly less fuel efficient.

If we use the example of the Golf again, the 148bhp 1.5-litre TSI petrol model with a manual gearbox returns between 44.8 and 47.9mpg under the new WLTP testing guidelines while the same car with a DSG returns between 42.8 and 44.1mpg. Their CO2 emissions outputs are nigh-on identical at 119g/km and 118g/km respectively. Their 0-62mph times are identical, too.

**DRIVING A DSG-EQUIPPED CAR**

For many drivers our increasingly congested roads means that a car with a manual gearbox is becoming increasingly unappealing, especially if you have to contend with a lot of stop start traffic where the constant use of the clutch can become tiring and annoying.

In operation a car with a DSG is effectively the same as a traditional automatic, even if what’s going on with the mechanical items is very different. Like an automatic a DSG-equipped car has just two pedals, the accelerator and the brake, and like a traditional automatic a DSG car is likely to have Park, Reverse, Neutral and Drive settings and you generally need to have your foot on the brake to move between these various drive modes.

When manoeuvring at low speed most DSG cars act in the same manner as an automatic in that they will creep forward or back when in Drive or Reverse when you remove your foot from the brake pedal. This makes it easier to accomplish tasks such as moving the car in and out of parking spaces.

Most modern DSG-equipped cars also come with what is termed a manual mode which allows you to override the computer controlling the car’s gearchanges. You may want to select a lower gear for climbing or descending steep hills, or for when you want to overtake, and this is generally done by shifting the gear lever to the left and moving the lever forwards or backwards to select the gear you want.

In some cars this can also be done via paddles mounted behind the steering wheel with plus and minus buttons for changing up and down respectively. Not all cars follow the exact same pattern with their controls though, so it pays to make yourself familiar with how the system works if you’re unfamiliar with the car.

**WHAT ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF DSGS?**

No mechanical system is 100% bulletproof, but as manufacturers increasingly use DSG transmissions it would appear that their failure rate is very low. On some older models owners have reported faults with DSGs such as noisy bearings or juddering from the transmission but these are generally few and far between.

As DSGs are fully automated they are actually far less open to abuse than a traditional manual. In a normal manual the gears could be ‘crunched’ by an unsympathetic driver or the clutch could wear out prematurely if not operated correctly.

**WHICH COMPANIES OFFER DSG GEARBOXES?**

The Direct Shift Gearbox entered the mainstream in Volkswagen Group cars and is now widely used in VWs, Audis, SEATs, and Skodas.

Other manufacturers also offer DSG-style transmissions but many of them use different names. BMW uses them in some models; generally its high performance cars, where they’re known as DCT, while Porsche uses the PDK acronym in Fords they’re known as Powershift gearboxes.
he MINI Clubman has always suffered from an identity crisis. The original, with its single rear door that opened on the driver’s side, was quaint but odd. This second-generation car is part hatch, part estate and four years on from launch, it’s had a refresh.

On the surface at least, not much has changed. MINI has chosen to lightly freshen up the looks so the Clubman’s slightly confused personality remains. New lights and a larger grille brighten up the front and there are new, squarer door mirrors, but it’s at the rear where you’ll spot a facelifted Clubman from the old one.

The rear lights are now full-LEDs and adopt the Union Jack design, first seen on the MINI three- and five-door. With their wider and slimmer shape they are arguably less contrived than the Hatch’s design, but they remain a divisive feature. They’re also a feature you’re stuck with, as MINI isn’t offering a more generic halogen offering for people who don’t want to fly the flag. That wouldn’t be premium enough, says MINI.

Elsewhere it’s your typical mid-life refresh, so there are three new colours – including this Indian Summer Red metallic – new wheel designs and, as this is a MINI, there are now more ways to personalise it. So there are more contrasting roof colours and you can order Union Jack-style wheels and headrests, if you wish. More optional extras, including various technology packs and Matrix LED headlamps, are added to

**Refreshed but not reimagined**

THE MINI CLUBMAN HAS BEEN REFRESHED WITH SUBTLE EXTERIOR TWEAKS AND A REVISED ENGINE LINE-UP, BUT IT REMAINS AN ODDBALL CHOICE

“DESPITE ALL THE TWEAKS TO THE WAY THE CLUBMAN LOOKS, UNDER THE BONNET MINI HAS SLIMMED THINGS DOWN”
the list as well. But, unsurprisingly, they all come at a hefty price.

The changes are equally minor on the inside. There are seven new leather upholstery in various colours, which will grab your eye, but that’s pretty much it. The standard of fit and finish remains extremely high, but the Clubman is still outclassed by the now really rather old Audi A3. The design, however, has a bigger wow factor than the Mercedes A-Class, despite the MINI having been around for longer. There are still loads of cubbies to store things, room in the back is fine for two adults, but not three, and the boot remains large for a hatch but small for an estate car.

As standard the entry-level Clubman Classic still gets a 6.5-inch infotainment screen with sat-nav, Apple CarPlay, real time traffic updates, online search and connected services, automatic lights and wipers, LED mood lighting and MINI logo puddle lamps, but is now £700 dearer than before. Meanwhile, Sport carries with it a John Cooper Works bodykit, larger alloys and bucket seats and Exclusive tops the range once again with its leather and chrome features.

Despite all the tweaks to the way the Clubman looks, under the bonnet MINI has slimmed things down. There’s now only one diesel – the 148bhp 2.0-litre Cooper D – and three petrols: a 189bhp 2.0-litre for the Cooper S, a 302bhp 2.0-litre John Cooper Works (70bhp more than the old JCW) and a 134bhp 1.5-litre three-cylinder for the Cooper. The One and One D have gone as has the Cooper S All4, with four-wheel drive reserved solely for the JCW.

The Cooper has long been our pick and the bestseller of the range, due to its appealing blend of performance and finesse. It’s also the model that does the best job of differentiating itself from the MINI five-door Hatch, so it’s the engine we’re focusing on here. The mid-life refresh has left the Clubman’s oily bits untouched so it goes, stops and rides like before.

The 1.5-litre three-cylinder is a little gem; it’s punchy across the entire rev range, and yet has similar refinement to that of the 2.0-litre in the Cooper S – it’s never thrashy or boomy, even when you extend it towards the red line. Our car was matched up to a seven-speed double-clutch Steptronic gearbox (a six-speed manual is standard and £1,600 cheaper), which is smooth but never really gives a sporty feel when changing ratios and is more set up for relaxed driving. The same goes for the ride – the Cooper has a pleasing suppleness around town, which happily doesn’t translate to wallowy body control on a country road.

While the Clubman has always tried to be slightly more comfortable than the Hatch, it still has a chassis that’s typically MINI. For a posh hatchback-cum-estate car, it’s surprisingly responsive and feels more agile than an A-Class or even a BMW 1 Series. It’s just a shame that the steering, while direct, never weights up like it does in other MINI models and feels just a bit too light.

**Verdict**

The second-generation version of the Clubman is now four years old so it’s time for a refresh. On the outside the changes are pretty subtle with the biggest difference being a pair of patriotic rear lights. MINI has slimmed down the engine choices too, but the Cooper remains the pick of the range. While the refresh has smartened things up, the Clubman is still an oddball choice compared to other more conventional premium hatchbacks and it won’t appeal to everyone.
small nip and tuck to the evergreen Passat isn’t really the biggest Volkswagen news of 2019, but it’s one that holds significance to British business buyers. This is a popular company car and motorway mile-muncher, and almost four out of every five Passats leaving UK Volkswagen forecourts are accounted for by fleet sales, not private customers.

That’s why there’s a heavily updated plug-in hybrid model with tiny company car tax, but it’s also a reason why the Passat retains a wide diesel line-up, ensuring a lot of choice for long-distance drivers. There’s an all-new 2.0-litre diesel with 148bhp and clever cylinder deactivation technology, while there’s also a hot 237bhp bi-turbo model. Somewhere in the middle resides this, the 187bhp 2.0-litre TDI.

Driven here in less popular saloon format (sales between estate and saloon Passats are split around 2:1), the design remains fairly restrained in a class becoming ever more obsessed with sporty looks, though a racier-looking R-Line trim exists and ought to be popular. Tweaked bumpers front and rear, a slightly retouched grille, new paint and alloy wheel choices, new tail-lights and new Passat lettering are all you’ll find on the outside, but these subtle differences add up, and it’s clear to see that this is a refreshed car.

Changes on the inside major on trying to make the Passat feel more modern. There’s some new trim and finish, plus a new steering wheel, the analogue clock mounted on the dashboard has been removed, the infotainment has been updated with a sharp and slick eight-inch screen standard across all models, and an 12.3-inch digital instrument panel is now available across a wide slice of the range, though only through a costly option pack.

The additions are minor but regardless, the Passat still feels like a modern and meticulously bolted together car once you climb aboard. It climbs no further up the ladder from a quality perspective and it’s still not quite a match for an Audi A4, Mercedes C-Class, Jaguar XE or BMW 3 Series for luxury. But placed within the context of its true rivals, it feels on the money; perhaps only a nicely specced Mazda 6 can be considered plusher inside for the cash.

Space in the cabin can be considered good up front and par for the course in the rear, given that the large transmission tunnel cuts into the middle seat. However,
those after the looks of the saloon won’t be too disheartened with the boot, given its healthy 586-litre size.

Much like the Golf, the Passat remains a car that’s easy to drive above all else. There’s plenty of adjustability in the seat and steering wheel, so getting comfortable is a doddle. The controls are nicely weighted, the steering itself is positive enough despite the absence of feedback, and the performance of the 187bhp 2.0-litre TDI unit goes without question. It’s capable of 0-62mph in 7.9 seconds and few buyers will find they need more than this; indeed, many may prefer to save money with the 148bhp TDI option.

Summoning the 400Nm torque while on the move doesn’t happen quite as quickly as you’d like, though. The DSG transmission, while a smooth shifter, feels a little languid in its responsiveness, and it could be quicker to respond to kickdown. Telltale diesel clatter and road noise are there but they’re not overly intrusive, and wind noise is impressively quelled, making this an easy-going option for motorway monotony. A 66-litre fuel tank, paired with claimed mixed economy of 49.7mpg, means that in theory, the Passat is capable of 720 miles between fills. In real-world terms, expect around 600 miles between trips to the pumps.

However, one less relaxing oddity about our test car was the ride quality. The Passat has never been a family saloon with a harsh edge, and even with plenty of rubber surrounding the standard 17-inch wheels on our SEL grade car, there was something amiss with the way the Passat handled the mixed road surfaces. There was no crashiness, but it was keen to pick up vibrations, through the seat and up through the steering wheel, suggesting some damper work could be done.

What looks likely to pull buyers towards the Passat is the technology and new driver assistance features introduced on this Mk8 facelift. The big news is the addition of VW’s ‘Travel Assist’ semi-autonomous driver aid, which is standard kit across the line-up. It works with an updated adaptive cruise control system and lane assist to assist braking, acceleration and steering on motorway style roads, right up to speeds of 130mph.

Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto arrive too, while elsewhere, SEL cars feature pinpoint-sharp navigation, voice control, a three-year subscription to VW We Connect remote services and add luxuries such as leather upholstery and heated front seats.

Running costs will dictate a huge amount of Passat purchases, and while even this 187bhp 2.0-litre diesel won’t cost a lot to run the taxman won’t take it easy on company car buyers. 31% BIK is steep, while the plug-in hybrid GTE saloon – which carries a £4,000 premium on list price – takes on a 16% rate. It has more kit, more power and better economy, and depending on how much tax you pay in the first place, you could have it for the same outlay if the sums work in your favour.

**Verdict ★★★★★☆**

The Volkswagen Passat will appeal to company car buyers keen on driver assistance technology and premium appeal, and it remains spacious, practical and easy to drive.

However, you should do the maths to work out if diesel or plug-in petrol power is your best bet financially, because the two propulsion technologies have really hit a crossover point on buying costs and taxation bills. Some may find spending more initially on the plug-in GTE model works out cheaper in the long run.
ot long ago a revised new Vauxhall Astra would have represented a reasonably seismic event in the world of cars. But nowadays, with centre stage being dominated by EVs and SUVs – and increasingly EVs that are also SUVs – an updated version of a conventionally powered, and just plain conventional family hatchback isn’t quite the event it once was.

Especially since the Astra is no longer a top-10 best-selling car in the UK, having been outperformed not just by its arch nemesis the Ford Focus in 2018 (still the fifth biggest-selling car) but also the Mini (seventh), the Mercedes A-Class (eighth) and even the Kia Sportage (10th).

Even so, you ignore this revised new version of the dear old Astra at your peril. For if nothing else, the Astra has always offered a strong combination of value, practicality, sometimes surprisingly high design qualities and often a well-rounded range of dynamic capabilities. And for the fleet market especially, it has long been a stalwart of its kind.

Not much has changed this time round, with this new model offering little differences to the existing car visually; there’s a new grille at the front and the ride height is 10mm lower but otherwise that’s about it. However, beneath its anonymous but still-handsome skin, the venerable Astra has undergone a range of mechanical upgrades that will, reckons Vauxhall, make it “an absolute winner for the fleet market” while also enhancing its appeal amongst

“THIS IS NOT A CAR YOU WILL EVER REVEL IN DRIVING ESPECIALLY, BUT IT’S QUIETLY IMPRESSIVE ALL THE SAME”

Take another look at the Astra

CAN THE REVISED VAUXHALL ASTRA GO STRAIGHT TO THE TOP OF THE HATCHBACK CLASS? AUTO EXPRESS FINDS OUT
private, more family-orientated drivers.

The big news is that every single model has a new engine and gearbox, all of which have been designed to make the Astra more efficient, more economical and better than ever to drive. All the new engines are three-cylinder units, starting with a 1.2 turbo petrol with 108bhp and rising to a 1.4 turbo petrol with 143bhp. Then there are two 1.5 turbodiesels – one with 103bhp and 260Nm, another with 120bhp and a false 300Nm.

All these new engines come with a variety of new gearbox options, with the standard choice being a six-speed manual. Optional transmissions then come in the form of a nine-speed auto or a clever new CVT ‘stepless’ auto.

Vauxhall has also worked hard to improve the cabin of the Astra, with a new eight-inch touchscreen and soft-touch plastics that are claimed to provide a premium-car feel. All versions come with improved connectivity, a range of new advanced driver assistance systems and a new MultiMedia Nav Pro infotainment system that’s standard on the top-spec models but optional across the range.

As with the engines, Vauxhall has simplified the trim levels, too, the range starting with SE, rising through SRi and SRi Nav, then SRi VX, Elite Nav and Ultimate Nav at the top. Prices start at £18,895 for the SRi and top out at £26,755 for the Ultimate Nav. Most models cost only a few hundred pounds more than the outgoing car, which seems good value given how much extra kit and tech there is on offer.

For the chassis, Vauxhall has mostly employed the age old adage of ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’. But the dampers are new, the spring rates have been tweaked for extra comfort and control across the range, and the steering calibration has been altered to offer more alert responses, although no mechanical changes have occurred.

We drove various models, from the 1.4 CVT petrol to the 1.5 Turbo D with the excellent new nine-speed gearbox, but focused mostly on the six-speed Turbo D, which is likely to be one of the biggest sellers. In Ultimate trim this costs £24,850 but comes with an impressive amount of tech and equipment as standard, including Apple CarPlay and the fine new touchscreen infotainment system.

On the move the things that impress immediately about the revised Astra are its smoothness of ride, the impressive combination of torque and relaxed acceleration from the new 1.5 TD engine, the slick but still a touch rubbery gearshift and the overall refinement of the car. You don’t expect cutting-edge chassis dynamics from a Turbo D Astra, but neither do you expect such maturity from the steering and suspension, so overall the driving experience is surprisingly positive.

The new engine is all through by 4,500rpm but from 1,800rpm upwards it delivers a sizeable chunk of torque (0-62mph takes 9.6sec) while the suspension has an unusually fluid feel to it. The steering is sweet, too, while the brakes and wind refinement are hard to fault. This is not a car you will ever revel in driving especially, but it’s quietly impressive all the same, with a calm demeanour that is lacking in some of its more frantic, more stiffly sprung rivals.

And when you look at Vauxhall’s claims about the new Astra being some £1,000 lighter on the average fleet manager’s pocket over 80,000 miles and four years compared with the previous car – and £1,800 cheaper than the equivalent Focus, it says – the numbers are hard to argue with.

This is mainly because the CO2 output of the 1.5 Turbo D has dropped to just 95g/km, while the combined fuel economy figure has risen to 62.8mpg. Thank not just the new engines and gearboxes for this but also the car’s impressive 0.26CD figure – the same as a Calibra if you remember that (it was once the world’s most aerodynamic production car).

In its own quiet way, then, the revised Astra is a very good car overall. If nothing else, it will be a very hard car to resist for the average fleet manager —

**Verdict**

Visually it’s not a lot different from the current car, but the revised Astra is a much improved machine beneath the skin, with a range of fine new engines and gearboxes that should make it appeal to families and fleet managers alike. A quietly impressive car overall.
koda’s flagship hatchback, the Superb, has been updated for 2019. The facelift has added new bumpers, a different grille, LED headlights and new Skoda lettering on the boot, along with the various specification changes.

The Superb is a rival for the Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport, Mazda 6 and also the Volkswagen Passat, which was also recently facelifted. The Skoda and VW share an engine range thanks to their MQB architecture: we’ve driven a 1.5-litre petrol model with 148bhp and a manual gearbox, which is also available in the Passat.

With emissions of 120g/km, this engine is a good option for fleet buyers, who make up a big proportion of Superb owners. However, if you’re considering a company car, be aware that a tax-busting plug-in hybrid version will arrive in 2020. Big mileage drivers may still be better served by the super-frugal diesel, too.

The 1.5-litre engine is smooth and very quiet in the Superb, and goes together well with the light, satisfying manual gear shift. However, long ratios that help enable that low CO2 figure do hurt performance. You have to get used to being in a lower gear, which allows the engine to be in the right rev range to deliver its power.

Performance is fine, though we reckon the 2.0-litre diesel engine is a much better fit for this large car. Having to rev the engine this hard just doesn’t feel quite right – and takes away from the relaxed feel.

Still Superb in its class

THE SKODA SUPERB HAS BEEN UPDATED FOR 2019, BUT HAVE THE CHANGES LIFTED IT BACK TO THE TOP OF THE FAMILY CAR CLASS?

“REAR LEGROOM IS EXCELLENT. EVEN THE TALLEST PASSENGERS WON’T COMPLAIN ABOUT SPACE”
That feeling is down to the plush suspension, which smooths out lumps and bumps very well, just as it did in the previous Superb. There's very little vibration over badly surfaced roads, and even big potholes don't upset the body control. Comfortable leather seats are standard on this SE L model, too.

It's no driver's car, but the Superb is still enjoyable to drive thanks to its tight body control. It means you can drive as quickly as you like on country roads without fear of a nasty pothole – and the accurate steering means it's easy to place on the road, too.

As with the previous model, rear legroom is excellent. Even the tallest passengers won't complain about space, and this doesn't compromise the boot either, which is a cavernous 625 litres.

The Estate version offers more practicality, but even the hatch has more space than nearly any other car at this price. Its low cost also means it's excellent value: SE L models get sat-nav, smartphone connectivity, blind spot detection and Matrix LED headlights as standard, so you're not left wanting for kit.

Ultimately this facelift doesn't change anything about the Superb's position in the market, but that's not a bad thing – it's been among the best cars in its class since it launched, and that's still true now.

Verdict

The new Skoda Superb doesn't differ much from before, but it's still a brilliant all-rounder. Its comfortable suspension set-up compliments its limo-like rear seat space, and the quiet engine and comfy seats all add into its relaxed feel. It's also good to drive, incredibly spacious and great value for money.
Target 51

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### Other UK Associations

**AIRSO (Association of Industrial Road Safety Officers)**
- Graham Feast, Secretary, 68 The Boulevard, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 1LA
  - T: 01903 506955 | E: info@airs.org.uk | W: www.airs.org.uk

**IMTD (Institute of Master Tutors of Driving)**
- Kathy Higgins, Secretary, 24 Highfield Road, Knowsley, Huyton L36 3XR
  - T: 07748 305845 | E: secretary@imtd.org.uk | W: www.imtd.org.uk

### International Associations

**EFA (European Driving Schools Association)**
- T: 0161 883 1665 | E: info@efa-eu.com | W: www.efa-eu.com

**IVV (International Association for Driver Education)**
- T: 020 8686 8010 | E: info@ivv.org.uk | W: www.ivv.org.uk

### Local Associations

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### Drives Instructors \(\text{Naspg}^{\text{\tiny National Associations Strategic Partnership}}\)

| ADINIC (Approved Driving Instructor National Joint Council) | Clive Smock, Lasseter Avenue, 47 Sweetmans Road, Slough, Berkshire, RG17 8SH |
| DIA (Driving Instructors Association) | Carly Brookfield, CEO, Glenelgues Court, Brighton Rd, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 6AD |
| MSA (Motor Schools Association) | John Lyne MBE, General Manager, Motor Schools Association of Great Britain Ltd, 101 Wellesley Road North, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 2LP |

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New YouGov research to support Mental Health Awareness Day asked 2,000 people around the UK about the links between state of mind and driving behaviour. The study, commissioned by Carrot Insurance, found:

- Around two thirds (66%) of people say their state of mind affects their driving.
- Almost a quarter (23%) of young drivers aged 18-24 believe their state of mind has a big impact on their driving – this belief reduces with age – to 14% for the 35-44 age group and 7% for the over 55s.
- Nine out of ten people (89%) believe anger makes people more likely to be involved in a crash.
- 84% believe stress could be a likely cause of accidents.
- More than two thirds (64%) see depression as a similar trigger.

The behaviour of aggressive drivers and careless pedestrians, together with running late, topped the list of issues having a negative impact on people’s driving behaviour.

The YouGov survey also showed some differences between the concerns of men and women.

Driving in the dark is more of a concern for women than men, with 28% reporting that it was likely to have a detrimental effect on their driving compared with 19% of men.

The same is true of motorway driving, at 11% of women vs just 4% of men.

On the other hand, more men chose slow drivers (37%) and heavy traffic (26%) as likely to negatively impact their driving, compared with 23% and 20% respectively of women.

In addition to the YouGov study, Carrot Insurance also asked its own customers – most of whom are young drivers aged around 24 – about their mental health experiences via an anonymous online questionnaire. Within just 24 hours they received nearly 1100 responses, with many people telling their own stories of how their mental health affected, or had been affected by, their driving experiences.

Paul Ripley, CEO and founder of online driver coaching business The Driving Doctor, and a globally renowned expert on driver behaviour, education and road safety, said the findings of both surveys underpinned the clear link between people’s state of mind and their driving.

He said: “The state of our mental health affects our attitudes, behaviours and emotions, and can therefore have a significant impact on the way we drive. These human factors profoundly manipulate our behavioural approach to safe driving, and may have a detrimental effect on the way we think, feel, act and react to situations we meet on the road.

“This can lead to erratic decision making and risky driving practises. Such decisions made by a driver in a poor mental state play a prominent role in unsafe driving outcomes.”

Of the people who responded to Carrot’s own customer survey:

- 15% reported having either poor or somewhat poor mental health.
- 65% said they were likely or very likely to seek help if they felt their driving was being affected by mental health.
- 75% said they were knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about mental health issues.

Many gave examples of links between their state of mind and their driving – some described how feeling stressed made them drive more aggressively; some had experienced accidents that had left them anxious behind the wheel; a number however said that going for a drive helped them to relax and calm down.

“FEELING STRESSED MADE THEM DRIVE MORE AGGRESSIVELY”

Carrot Insurance managing director Ed Rochfort said they had been amazed by the number of people who had responded. “It shows the level of awareness and concern they have about mental health,” he said. “It’s worrying of course that 15% of them report a degree of poor mental health – on the other hand it’s encouraging that most of them would seek help if they needed it.

“They were very honest with us about their experiences, positive and negative. One reported that, having suffered with long-term poor mental health, they never thought they’d pass their test and get a car – when they did it proved to be fantastically helpful in helping their state of mind.

“On the other hand, another said that suffering stress and pressure at work impaired their driving ability and made them careless behind the wheel. Whatever the issue, our paramount concern is their safety on the roads, and we want to make sure that help is easily accessible for those who need it.”

He added that Carrot would be adding a section to their website giving advice and signposting appropriate contacts for anyone wanting support on mental health issues, as well as talking to MIND and UK Youth to find out how they can collaborate with them.
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