



RoSPA Advanced Car Test

Guidelines for Candidates and Tutors

What is RoADAR

RoADAR is the RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders section of RoSPA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. RoSPA, a charity, is one of the foremost safety advisory and training organisations in the world. RoADAR operates in a very practical style by creating local Groups of volunteers, all of whom have passed the RoSPA Advanced Test and have been trained to pass on their knowledge to others. They offer tutoring, support and advice to anyone who wants to improve their driving and to pass the RoSPA Advanced Test, many on a one to one basis where you remain with the same Tutor throughout. Groups often work closely with police advanced drivers and instructors to ensure that the standards outlined in Roadcraft, The Police Drivers Handbook, are maintained.

Before taking the test you should study the current editions of The Highway Code and Roadcraft. Without a good knowledge of both you are unlikely to obtain a high grade. You would be unwise to apply for an advanced test unless you have had some additional training since passing your L-test.

What is Advanced Driving?

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

- DSA, RoADAR, IAM, 1997

These are just some of the benefits of becoming a RoADAR advanced driver:

I have been driving for years, what can you teach me?

A comment that has been heard by many RoADAR Tutors over the years. In truth, for many people, it is not about teaching you anything new it is about improving the skills that you already have. Many people do not realise the potential consequences of their acquired habits until they are pointed out.

Smoother safer progress

By helping you to improve your observation, planning and vehicle control you can progress in a safer, smoother and easier manner. This will reduce stress and fatigue for yourself and your passengers and reduce wear and tear on your vehicle. Who knows it may one day save a life, possibly yours or someone dear to you.

Enjoy Your Driving

You'll enjoy driving more and feel much less stressed. Good observation and planning enable you to deal with situations in a smooth and controlled manner, avoiding excessive braking and acceleration. In so doing not only will you reduce your fuel consumption you will also make the drive safer and more comfortable for yourself and your passengers.

Improve Your Confidence

You'll feel much more confident, both in your own driving and in your ability to deal with the behaviour of other road users.

Reduce Your Crash Risk

It will help you to avoid making mistakes and mis-judgements that lead to crashes, and help you cope with the mistakes of other road users.

Improve Your Fuel Consumption

You'll spend less money on fuel, and cause less harm to the environment, because your driving will be smoother and more systematic, with progressive acceleration and braking together with appropriate use of gears.

Ensure Less Wear and Tear on Your Vehicle

Your car (possibly the second most expensive item you own) will last longer and may have a higher resale value.

Lower Your Insurance Premiums

You may be eligible to receive insurance discounts – make sure you tell your insurer what extra training you've taken.

Meet People

By joining a driving group, you can meet other like-minded people.

Meet the Challenge

A reason often given by people who take advanced driver training is the challenge of proving that they are a driver of the highest standard. Some want a formal qualification, which can be useful when job hunting.

Access exclusive RoADAR benefits

We have a range of benefits for members who pass our test, including insurance discounts.

What happens when I apply for my Advanced Test?

When you apply for your test the application form is dealt with at RoSPA Headquarters in Birmingham. When it has been entered onto the system the test request is sent to a Regional Senior Examiner who will allocate the test to an Examiner in your area. The Examiner will then make contact with you to arrange a mutually convenient time and location for your test to be conducted.

All our Examiners hold a UK Police Advanced Driving qualification and a number of them are also qualified Police Instructors. Many of these people are still serving Police Officers and work shifts, consequently they may have taken time off work to conduct your test. Therefore please only cancel your test in unavoidable circumstances and if it is at the last moment we may not be able to re-arrange it. If you cancel within three days of the test there is a cancellation fee.

When your re-test is due we will make contact to remind you. You will need to take your test within a reasonable time of the due date in order to keep your membership current.

The Test

The RoSPA advanced test is monitored and approved by the DSA and a RoSPA Gold is widely regarded as the highest civilian driving standard available. The test is based on the Police Foundation publication 'Roadcraft, The Police Drivers Handbook' and the Highway Code. A thorough understanding of both Roadcraft and the Highway Code will be required to pass the test at a high standard.

Before attending for the test ensure that you feel well prepared as this will help you to be more relaxed. The Examiner will do their best to set you at ease but there is no substitute for proper preparation. Bring your driving licence, insurance and, if required, vehicle test certificate with you, ensure that your windows are clean and your vehicle is safe and legal. You may be asked to conduct or talk through the pre drive checks for yourself and your vehicle, conduct an eyesight test by reading a number plate, and to carry out a moving brake test. This brake test only needs to be firm enough to confirm to the examiner that the brakes are working, it is not an emergency stop! Remember if you wear spectacles or contact lenses to drive you must wear them during the test.

During the test the Examiner will be looking at how you deal with the situations that present themselves and assessing the good, and inevitably not so good, elements. The on road section of the test will generally be between 45 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes but this can vary depending on road and traffic conditions. The Examiner will then ask questions to test your understanding of The Highway Code and Roadcraft and you may also be asked some questions about your vehicle.

Following this the Examiner will discuss the road section of the test with you covering both the good points and those areas that could be improved. The Examiner will then tell you if you have passed the test and if so what grade you have obtained.

Some areas the Examiner will consider.

Steering

This should be smooth and accurate at all times. It is important that the driver is in full control of the steering wheel and in most circumstances the best way to achieve this is with both hands in contact with the wheel. The pull push method described in Roadcraft will help with this.

Clutch

Operation should be smooth and progressive showing good balance with the accelerator to achieve smooth gear changes. However, you should not 'ride' the clutch or slip it excessively.

Gears

The manner in which you use the gears can tell a lot about your ability as a driver. The Examiner will look for how you hold the gear lever to assist with positive location of the desired gear, the timing of your gear changes and how you match the engine speed, road speed and the gear to make changes smoothly.

If you are driving a vehicle fitted with an automatic gearbox the Examiner will look for how you use, or consider using, the various modes available, manual gear selection or kick down facility as appropriate for the circumstances.

Brakes

The Examiner will expect brake application to be smooth and progressive with the pressure on the pedal being reduced gradually as unwanted speed is lost. Brake application should generally be in one smooth operation for any hazard.

Accelerator

Smooth use of the accelerator together with good acceleration sense can do much to make the drive smooth and fuel efficient. The Examiner will be looking for the smooth application of the appropriate amount of power at the right time for the circumstances.

Mirrors

You cannot make appropriate plans for hazards ahead unless you are fully aware of what is happening behind you. Therefore the Examiner will be looking for correct use of the mirrors. Remember there are times when a shoulder check is required not matter how much you have used your mirrors.

Horn

The consideration of the use of the horn is as important in Advanced Driving as actually using it. The Examiner will be looking to see if you correctly consider the use of the horn, do you move your hand / fingers to cover the horn, and if you do use it, is that use appropriate for the circumstances? Is the use timed correctly, is the length of the horn use correct? Remember the horn is a means of informing other road users of your presence, it is not a form of rebuke.

Visibility

Ensure that all windows and mirrors are clear and allow you the view intended by the vehicle manufacturer. Make full use of demisting facilities and also fresh air flow by opening a window as required, remember that air conditioning systems can also assist in demisting windows and keeping them that way. Any stickers etc should not obstruct your view through the windows and ensure that the area swept by the windscreen wipers is not obstructed.

Moving off and stopping

Whenever you move off or stop you must ensure that it is safe to do so and your actions should be smooth and precise. Remember that when you initially move off this will be the first impression the Examiner has of your driving. Make it a good one. Before moving off do mirror and shoulder checks and signal as appropriate. Similarly when you intend to stop, ensure that you check mirrors etc and signal your intention if appropriate remembering to brake smoothly. If this is the conclusion of your test it is the last impression you give the Examiner, so make it a good one.

Use of the System

The RoSPA advanced test is based on Roadcraft and The System of Car Control described therein. The Examiner will be looking to see how well you understand and apply the phases of The System, are they well timed and appropriate, do you go back to an appropriate earlier phase if circumstances change on the approach to a hazard? Do you consistently take, use and give information throughout your application of The System? To achieve a Gold or Silver grade you will have to apply The System to a consistently high standard throughout the test.

Positioning

If you are to take in all the information that is available at any time then you need to position your vehicle appropriately. This applies equally to roads subject to lower speed restrictions (30, 40 and 50) as it does to roads subject to the national speed limit. Consider on the approach to a hazard does your position provide you with the best view whilst retaining appropriate safety margins? Remember that you can assist other road users by making sure they can see you as well. However never sacrifice safety for view. If moving to a position to obtain what you consider to be the best view would place you in actual or potential danger, then do not do it!

Cornering

You must always be able to stop on your own side of the road in the distance you can see to be clear. The Examiner will look at the line you take on the approach and through the corner, did it give you the best view with appropriate safety margins, was your speed of approach correct and were you in the right gear? You will be expected to control the vehicle smoothly and accurately maintaining vehicle stability through correct use of the controls and good observation and planning.

The practice of crossing the centre of the road to straighten a series of bends is one that causes significant discussion. If the circumstances are appropriate it can contribute to safety, stability and progress. This is however an action that requires a high level of skill, observation and planning to execute correctly. Whilst there are positives the potential for coming into conflict with, or causing confusion to other road users can be significant and must always be taken into consideration. If in the opinion of the Examiner, the candidate

causes their own or another road user's safety to be compromised, they will fail the test. You must also ensure that crossing any road markings at any time does not compromise safety or stability.

Signals

Signals are the primary way you give information to other road users about your intentions. They must be given correctly and at the right time so as to avoid confusion. Give them only when they will benefit another road user and remember they indicate your intention, not what you are already doing. Remember giving a signal does not give you the right to conduct the manoeuvre.

Reaction to signs, markings and hazards

As an advanced driver you need to be able to recognise and react to road signs, markings and hazards in good time. In this way you give yourself time to react and form a driving plan. The Examiner will be looking for evidence of this in the timing and manner of response to the various signs and hazards that you come across.

Reversing

You may be asked to carry out a reversing manoeuvre. You will be expected to make all necessary checks to ensure that it is safe to reverse, remember that aids, reversing sensors / cameras etc are just that, an aid. There is no substitute for proper all round observation including listening, consider lowering a window. Stopping the vehicle during the manoeuvre to realign it may be acceptable depending on the circumstances.

Progress / Restraint / Consideration

Advanced drivers demonstrate an ability to drive at a speed within the legal limit that is safe for the situation. The Examiner will be looking for you to drive in a manner that is safe, smooth, systematic and making progress where it is appropriate whilst also showing consideration for others. It is however, possible to be too considerate and thereby adversely affect your own opportunities to make progress during the test. In order to achieve the correct balance it is vital that you concentrate fully at all times.

Overtaking

An advanced grade can be obtained without an overtake being made on the test, however if the opportunity is there the Examiner will be looking at how you deal with it. All overtaking manoeuvres must be well planned, carried out safely and within the speed limit. There is no exemption in law for exceeding the speed limit to complete an overtake!

Speed

Advanced driving is not all about speed. Having said that you will be expected to demonstrate your ability to control your vehicle at speeds up to the legal limit where it is appropriate to do so. Be aware that a driving plan that requires you to exceed the legal limit to complete a manoeuvre safely is not acceptable. Likewise if you consistently exceed the speed limit the Examiner may stop the test and you will fail.

Vehicle sympathy

Respect your vehicle and do not ask too much of it. Always drive within the capabilities of the vehicle you are in whilst not being afraid to allow it to give you its optimum performance. There is a difference between driving a vehicle positively and progressively and 'thrashing' it.

Concentration

Concentration is a prerequisite of advanced driving and distractions are an ever present element with which you must deal whilst displaying a calm controlled approach to your driving. As part of this the Examiner may ask you questions relating to the conditions encountered.

Observations

One of the skills of an advanced driver is the ability to see hazards and situations developing earlier than lesser skilled drivers. This is achieved by constantly scanning all around taking in the near, middle and distant views as well as to the rear. Smell and sound can also play a significant part in this. In this way the advanced driver has more time to plan and deal with situations and can also anticipate the actions of other road users, almost appearing to do so automatically. Like positioning mentioned earlier, this skill is just as relevant in lower speed limits as it is on the open road.

The Examiner will be looking to see how and when you react to changes in conditions.

Department / Temperament

Ensure that your seating position is comfortable and allows you easy access to all the vehicle controls. If you are comfortable you will be more able to demonstrate a calm controlled and confident manner throughout the test. The Examiner will anticipate you being nervous and will make some allowances for this so try not to let nerves affect your performance.

Judging distance

The Examiner will look to see what you consider a safe following distance and also how you position when looking to overtake another vehicle. How you use acceleration sense to maintain a safe following position and also your appreciation of the speed and distance of approaching vehicles.

Commentary

You may be asked to give a commentary during your test. The purpose of this is to demonstrate to the Examiner your use of The System, your observations, planning and decision making. You should describe what you see, your assessment and proposed driving plan. If you do not wish to give a commentary then the Examiner may ask questions to assist them assess your level of observations and awareness.

Motorways and dual carriageways

When intending to join these roads from a slip road with more than one lane you should generally, dependant on traffic conditions, use the one which gives you the best view of the main carriageway. Use this view and acceleration sense to give you the correct speed to merge with the traffic on that carriageway smoothly and safely. On the carriageway

remember that speeds are generally higher than other roads and allow an appropriate following distance. When planning to leave the motorway allow time to get into lane 1 without having to 'cut across' other vehicles. When joining or leaving such roads consider a signal as required to inform other road users of your intentions.

Theory questions

Following the on road element of the test the Examiner will ask you some questions to check your knowledge of Roadcraft and The Highway Code. You may also be asked some questions relating to your vehicle.

How does the Examiner decide my grade?

Gold

Gold is only awarded to the driver who shows a consistently high standard of driving throughout the test. The driver will demonstrate a confidence in their ability together with a thorough understanding of the principles contained in Roadcraft and how to apply those principles to situations that occur during the test. They will drive in a calm controlled manner, without fuss or flourish. It is important to realise that this is the result of a conscious decision making process and not just an automatic application of a set of 'rules'. The Gold standard driver will consistently demonstrate good observations together with consideration for, and sound assessment of, other road users and situations, being courteous yet taking control as appropriate.

In obtaining this grade the candidate will have consistently made safe, legal, smooth, planned progress within the vehicle's capabilities whilst giving passengers and other road users the impression of being completely calm and relaxed. To assist with demonstrating this the driver may be required to give a verbal commentary at some point during the drive.

Silver

Silver is awarded to candidates who display a skill level well above the average. They will show a thorough understanding of the principles contained in Roadcraft and how to apply those principles to situations that occur during the test. The driver will make safe systematic progress however not demonstrating the consistency, final polish and smoothness of the Gold grade candidate. The System will still be applied in a thoughtful and considered manner for all situations and it must be stressed that this is a very high standard and those who obtain a Silver are to be congratulated.

Bronze

A Bronze grade will be awarded to those candidates who show that they have an understanding of, and the ability to apply, the principles of advanced driving demonstrating a good level of observations and anticipation, but not doing so consistently throughout the test. They will however drive in a safe and legal manner, to a standard which is significantly above that required to pass the appropriate DSA test.

Fail

Candidates who do not reach the Bronze standard will fail the test. Reasons for a fail could include but are not limited to:

- The candidate's overall standard is just not up to the requirements
- A dangerous manoeuvre
- Repeatedly exceeding speed limits or a significant infringement of a speed limit (either signed or applicable to the category of vehicle they are using)
- Violation of Road Traffic Law (contravening solid white lines, stop lines, red traffic lights, speed limits etc), or the rules in the Highway Code.

A minor infringement for which the candidate can give good reason should not generally result in a failure but could contribute to a lower grade being awarded.

Should a candidate fail the Examiner will offer advice on the areas that require improvement and encourage the candidate to obtain further guidance from a local RoADAR group. The candidate can apply to take the test again as soon as they wish, however we would advise taking some additional training before doing so.

An Examiner's decision on the grade achieved is final.

If a candidate achieves a Bronze or Silver pass they may apply to take a retest (for which a fee is payable) before the three year retest becomes due. If you do wish to improve your standard we would strongly recommend that you join a local group where you will meet like minded people. In any case when your three year re-test is due we will make contact to remind you. You will need to take your test within a reasonable time of the due date in order to keep your membership current.

The hallmark of an Advanced Diver is to always be in the correct place on the road, travelling at the right speed for the circumstances and with the correct gear engaged. It is that simple.

We wish you good luck with your test.

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