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Motorways and dual carriageways

Despite faster driving speeds, motorways are statistically the safest roads we travel on.

Dual carriageways, however, have the potential to be less safe, as they have the same speed limits as motorways without the same regulations. For example, cyclists, learners, pedestrians and other vulnerable road users – even horses – may be able to use dual carriageways. This, combined with less user-friendly entry and exit points, increases the potential for an incident or near miss.

It is vital for you, as an advanced driver, to be able to recognise the differences between motorways, smart motorways and dual carriageways and to have a finely tuned awareness of the likely hazards – and how quickly they can develop. You must, therefore, be keenly aware of your actions – and how others perceive them.

7a Differences between motorways and dual carriageways

7b Information

7c Position

7d Speed

7e Gear

7f Acceleration



Competency sheet

Motorways and dual carriageways

To be an advanced driver, these are the competencies that you should be able to demonstrate. Consider how confident you feel with each. Read on to learn more about each competency.

	Progress		
Information			
Identify and use signs in planning your driving			
Gather information on traffic flow when entering a new road			
Conduct appropriate mirror and/or blind-spot checks			
Communicate effectively with other road users			
Anticipate the movements of other road users			
Gather appropriate exit information			
Position			
Adopt an appropriate entry position			
Use the nearside lane whenever possible			
Adopt an appropriate following position			
Plan an appropriate overtaking position			
Position to maintain a safe space and gain the best view			
Position safely when exiting			
Exit to the appropriate lane of the slip road			
Speed			
Accurately adjust speed to match the identified entry gap			
Balance progress with restraint			
Exit at the appropriate speed			
Stop appropriately in an emergency			
Gear			
Select the correct gear for the chosen speed in the given circumstances			
Acceleration			
Apply appropriate acceleration			
Achieved all competencies	Date		

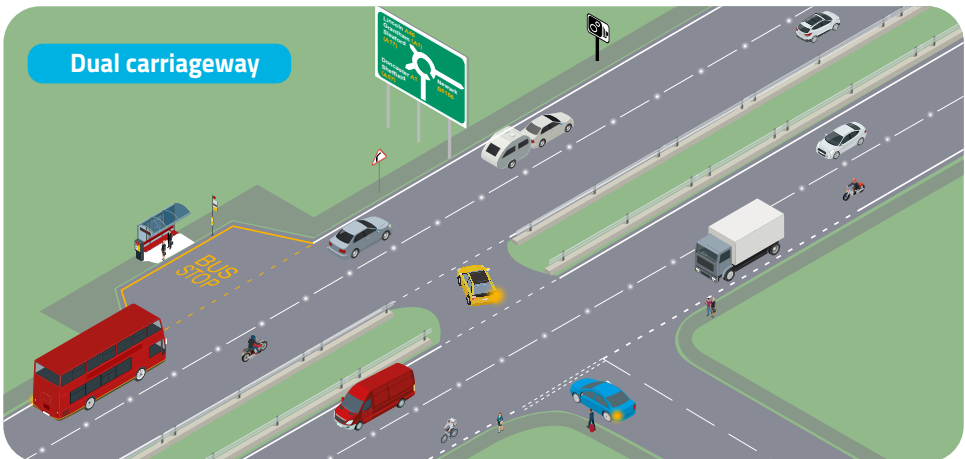
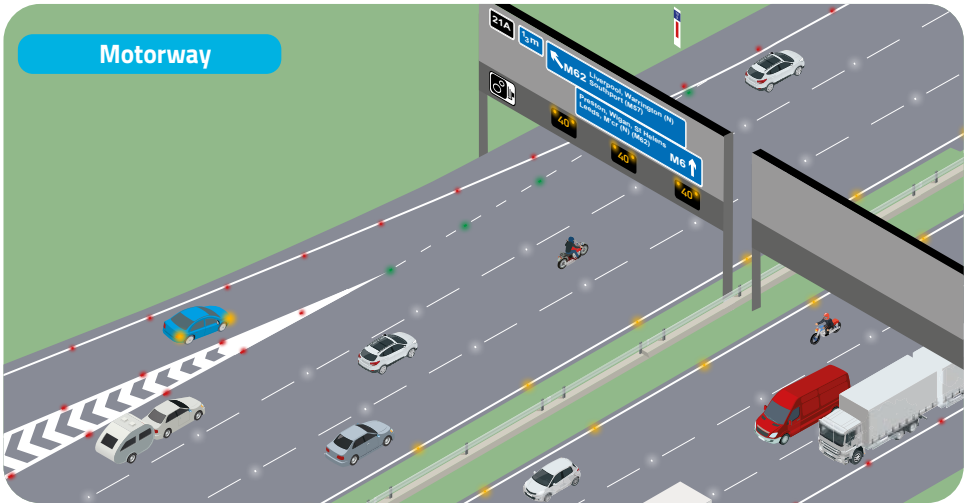
7a Differences between motorways and dual carriageways

Motorways have:

- Large blue-backed signs
- Hard shoulder or emergency refuge areas
- Emergency telephones and often have adjustable electronic signing
- Slip roads to access and exit the motorway
- Limited access to vulnerable road users

Dual carriageways can have:

- Green-backed signs
- Often, there are no areas to stop
- Exits and entries possibly at 90 degrees
- All vulnerable road users are permitted unless specifically prohibited



7b Information

As an advanced driver, you must be able to: Identify and use signs in planning your driving

- By extending and widening your vision, you will be able to obtain early information from signs to assist in your decision making
- Be able to identify whether you are entering a motorway or a dual carriageway

Remember:

- Motorways have blue-backed signs and they have additional regulations that prohibit a number of vulnerable road users
- Direction signs prior to a motorway also show motorway information in blue boxes
- Direction signs on motorways give additional information, for example, an unusual feature such as a sharp bend on an exit slip road
- Smart or managed motorways also have overhead gantries to convey information or warnings of problems ahead, for example, lane closures or a variable speed limit
- Dual carriageways have green- or white-backed signs. Unless signed to the contrary, a dual carriageway can be used by all road users
- On dual carriageways, traffic has the potential to leave or join from either side at junctions (some motorways also have this, but it is a rare occurrence) and this may be at 90 degrees with no slip road

Gather information on traffic flow when entering a new road

- On approach to a motorway, it is sometimes possible to see the carriageway above or below. Use this to help gather information in relation to traffic flow
- If traffic is at a standstill, try to identify the problem early enough to choose an alternative route
- While in the slip road, try to obtain an early view of traffic and carry out blind-spot checks – especially for motorcycles which can easily be lost in a mirror

- Assess the speed of approaching vehicles and identify an entry gap early

Conduct appropriate mirror and/or blind-spot checks

- Check your mirrors before changing speed or position on a motorway or a dual carriageway and make appropriate checks to cover the blind-spot area
- When changing lanes, make good use of mirrors to help to accurately assess the speed of approaching traffic
- You must link what is in the mirror to the hazards developing ahead in order to remain safe
- Be aware that high-speed traffic approaching from the rear is relevant to decision making even when still a long way behind. Make sure your mirror use is good enough to identify this early

Communicate effectively with other road users

- Be aware that the vehicle position you adopt may begin to communicate your intentions to other road users
- Use well-timed signals to reinforce this
- Promote safe sharing of the road space by identifying a potential problem early and actively communicating with other road users

For example; applying brake lights early can alert a following driver to a problem ahead

Anticipate the movements of other road users

- Traffic joining the main carriageway from a slip road may be travelling at a slower speed, so be prepared to change lanes and allow others to join
- Whenever possible, avoid being immediately beside joining traffic and identify junctions early to assist in planning for this. This helps avoid the risk of being in the blind spot or being caught out by late lane changes

- Remember: on a dual carriageway, traffic joining may be slow to accelerate
- Traffic leaving a dual carriageway may have to slow considerably or early, causing passing traffic to displace into offside lanes. Early anticipation of where and when this is likely to happen helps to avoid heavy braking
- Remember: Large Goods Vehicles and coaches over 12 metres are limited to 60 mph. Any smaller vehicles behind them may be travelling more quickly, so anticipate these pulling out into your path – and plan for this. Early anticipation of where and when this is likely to happen will avoid possible conflict

Gather appropriate exit information

Remember:

- Motorways typically have a signing system giving early warning of junctions
- Dual carriageways tend to offer more limited information
- If countdown markers are present, they will be equidistant from each other and usually 100 yards apart
- Exits may be very sharp or from the offside lane
- The size and shape of a junction will influence the speed of exit
- It may be necessary to slow and display brake lights earlier if exiting a dual carriageway to a sharp exit
- Having an early view helps with planning a route through other traffic

7c Position

As an advanced driver, you must be able to:

Adopt an appropriate entry position

- Make safe use of the entry slip road to build up speed and position alongside a gap
- Avoid being alongside any vehicle when they get to the main carriageway to allow them to maintain their 'safety bubble'

Use the nearside lane whenever possible

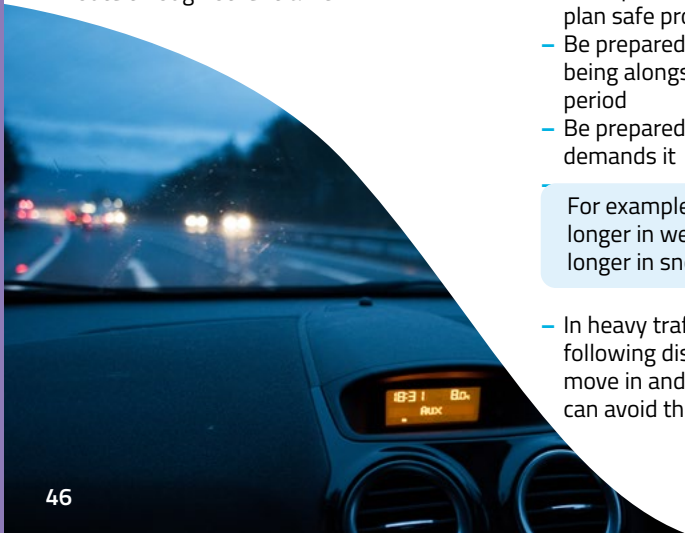
- Monitor the position and speed of other road users to enter the nearside lane as soon as practical
- Remember: all drivers should be travelling in the nearside lane, unless overtaking slower-moving vehicles
- Maintain position in the overtaking lane until a sensible gap appears and do not move into the nearside lane if you would have to move straight back out again
- Monitor mirrors to avoid holding up any emergency vehicles or fast-moving traffic that may wish to pass
- Avoid staying out and attempting to enforce the speed limit. This is likely to provoke an adverse reaction from other road users

Adopt an appropriate following position

- Maintain your 'safety bubble' and the safety of other road users with a following gap of at least two seconds. This gives you time to respond to changing information and to plan safe progress
- Be prepared to adjust this gap to avoid being alongside other traffic for a prolonged period
- Be prepared to increase this gap if safety demands it

For example: stopping distances are longer in wet weather and significantly longer in snow and ice

- In heavy traffic, consider extending the following distance to allow other vehicles to move in and out of the space in front. This can avoid the need for repeated braking



Plan an appropriate overtaking position

- Avoid being alongside the vehicle being overtaken for any longer than necessary
- Move to the nearside lane as soon as it is safe and overtaking is complete
- In general, avoid being three abreast i.e. alongside another vehicle that is itself overtaking as any displacement may have an impact

For example: if a lorry is overtaking another lorry, it is wise to hold back until a safe gap is available

Position to maintain a safe space and gain the best view

- Always position with enough space around to remain safe – and to be seen

For example: stay far enough behind an HGV to see its mirrors, or the HGV driver will not see you following

- Adjust your position to see beyond other traffic to help with planning

For example: increasing your following gap may allow you to see beyond a group of large vehicles

- Position safely when exiting
- Achieve a safe exit gap in the appropriate lane in good time – to avoid affecting other road users
- Exit to the appropriate lane of the slip road maintaining speed until off the motorway
- Use the appropriate lane for the continuing journey
- Ensure that any signals you give are updated as necessary

7d Speed

As an advanced driver, you must be able to: **Accurately adjust your speed to match the identified entry gap**

- This should be achieved using acceleration sense

Balance progress with restraint

- Be aware that traffic, road surface and speed limits will all affect your ability to make progress – and be prepared to alter speed to maintain a safe following distance
- You will be able to do this by looking beyond the vehicle you are following and adjusting your speed using acceleration sense instead of braking
- Recognise when it is necessary to show brake lights to warn following traffic
- Be aware of how weather conditions can affect your own and other vehicles

For example: wind may affect high-sided vehicles and motorcycles, causing them to change lanes unexpectedly

- Take care moving into or out of the space beside a large vehicle in high winds
- Remember: spray, especially from large vehicles, can make it difficult to see or be seen when making an overtake
- Bright sunshine can also have a negative effect on vision, in which case it is important to slow down

Exit at the appropriate speed

- Accurately adjust speed to match the identified exit gap, ideally using acceleration sense
- Try to avoid entering your chosen gap and braking, as this may cause following traffic to brake in response
- Remember: an automatic vehicle may slow down less quickly when the accelerator is released. Make sure to plan for this.
- Allow time to adjust to the slower speed required at the end of the exit slip or to join any queue

- Be aware that on a dual carriageway, it may be necessary to start slowing early to achieve the desired speed reduction and to display brake lights to warn following drivers if the exit is sharp

Stop appropriately in an emergency

- If stopping in an emergency, try to enter the hard shoulder before braking, to slow down with less risk to yourself or following traffic
- When rejoining the main carriageway, build up speed on the hard shoulder to match the traffic in the nearside lane
- Be able to identify when an apparent hard shoulder is actually a live lane, e.g. on SMART motorways or in roadworks

7e Gear

As an advanced driver, you must be able to:
Select and engage the correct gear for your chosen speed in the given circumstances

- Aim to have enough flexibility to deal with the circumstances without constantly having to change gear
- Understand that in many vehicles there may be more than one gear which is appropriate for a given situation
- Consider higher gears for eco driving as long as they provide you with adequate performance
- In an automatic or hybrid, understand how the vehicle will perform when you change gear based on throttle pressure
- In an EV, understand that gear changes are unlikely

7f Acceleration

As an advanced driver you must be able to:
Apply appropriate acceleration

- Display acceleration sense to achieve speed and lane changes wherever possible, and accelerate smoothly when circumstances allow a higher speed
- If using cruise control, be able to cancel it without affecting other road users

