



COMMON CONFUSIONS

There has been a call for some central guidance in relation to 'Common Confusions' on the subject of both Observing and Examining within the IAM. In order to alleviate this, the following has been produced in consultation with Staff Examiners across the country and will be added to as further 'confusions' are identified.

1. What to expect in the way of a briefing from the Examiner?

The Examiner, having completed introductions, will:

- Wish to check documentation for the Candidate and the vehicle, carry out an eyesight check and make a visual check of the vehicle both for its legality and suitability for use in the test.
- Outline what it is they will expect from the Candidate. In essence this will be a drive incorporating the advice set out in How to be a Better Driver (HTBABD), in particular the sections titled 'Examiner Checklist'. This amounts to providing a safe, systematic, smooth and progressive drive that complies with the law in all respects.
- Explain how they intend to give directions. They will explain that missing one of their directions will not impact on the result of the test unless this keeps happening, which might indicate poor observations on the candidate's part.
- Point out any local anomalies applicable to the test route that might lead to confusion. They will ask if there are any questions. It is a good idea to think beforehand of any points that may need clarification, and if they are not covered in the briefing, to raise them at the end. However matters of legality are not within the Examiner's remit to make allowance for.

Examiners may appear more detached than Observer(s) but this should be viewed as a professional detachment owing to the nature of the exercise. In the end they will be wanting exactly the same result as the candidate, after all giving good news is always preferable to giving bad news, but they have to ensure that the standards set out for the test are met.

2. What will be expected of a Candidate on test clarification:

Candidates will be expected to provide a safe, systematic, smooth and progressive drive that complies with the law in all respects following the advice set out in How to be a Better Driver (HTBABD). The test will be conducted on a route that encompasses a cross section of differing road types and circumstances and will last between 60 and 75 minutes depending on traffic conditions. Towards or at the end of the test the candidate will be required to carry out a simple slow speed manoeuvring exercise which will count towards the marking of the test.

3. Examiner debriefing of Candidates:

The main benefit of the test for the Candidate is usually considered to be the Examiner's post-test debrief.

- Good points will be highlighted and reinforced whilst weaknesses will be identified and solutions presented for consideration.
- Examiners' debriefs can vary and while it would be wrong to cramp any individual's style, the feedback to the Candidate will be more than a cursory 'recommended' or 'not recommended' followed by a couple of minutes on some weakness.
- Feedback will be informative, reinforce the better aspects of the candidate's performance and illuminate the areas of weakness. The Examiner will endeavour to make sure that the candidate leaves in no doubt when it comes to areas that have been identified as strengths and weaknesses.
- The IAM have no objections to Examiners liaising with Groups and attending 'meet the Examiner' events. Examiners are expected to not be actively involved in the on-road training of any of their potential candidates.
- Examiners are encouraged to give feedback to Observers on their Candidates performance to assist further preparation in cases of 'Non – Recommendation', or to assist more generally in Observer development where candidates pass the test.

4. Misconception – A pre drive check and running brake check is a requirement of the test:

There is no requirement to carry out a pre drive check or undertake a running brake check as part of the test, as the Candidate has already driven the vehicle to the test venue. However, if the Candidate wishes to demonstrate their knowledge in this respect they will not be discouraged from doing so.

5. Test postponement clarification:

There may be circumstances where weather conditions could make testing unsafe. Similarly both Examiners and Candidates may have 'family emergencies', which require short notice test rescheduling. In cases other than for weather-related ones for safety reasons, a one-off rescheduling of test dates may occur without financial consequences for the candidate.

In all other cases a period of at least 24 hours notice of a need to reschedule must be given. Such rescheduling will then be catered for without financial consequences. Repeated postponement should not be necessary, whilst Examiners should exercise reasonable discretion and common sense, if this arises they should seek advice.

6. Legality or condition of the vehicle clarification:

If, for any reason, an Observer considers the vehicle the Candidate is driving to be either unsafe or illegal, the Candidate should be advised of the fact and that the observed session will not take place until the faults/issues are remedied. Similarly, if an Examiner considers the vehicle to be unsafe or illegal, the test should not take place.

7. Declining a Candidate – clarification:

The Observer has the right to decline to drive with any Candidate or any other driver. The refusal should be made through a suitable Group contact.

8. Erroneous statement – Indicators must be used whenever one changes lanes or carries out a left or right turn:

Indicators need only be used when they would be of benefit to other road users. However, use of indicators without obvious benefit is unlikely to affect the test result unless they are misleading to other road users.

If there is any doubt then rule 103/page 34 of the Highway Code applies.

9. Mini roundabout stalemate – clarification:

Highway code rule 184, 185, 188, 189, 190 (HC revised 2007) applies.

If a Candidate has stopped at the give way line to give priority to traffic from the right then they have fulfilled your obligations within the confines of the Highway Code. If the vehicle from the right is not going to move (because they are waiting for the vehicle from their right who, in turn, is waiting for the vehicle from their right who is probably waiting for the Candidate) then they should cautiously make the first move and proceed.

Do not wave vehicles on.

10. Misconception – Neutral must always be selected when stationary in traffic:

This is not true. Neutral should be selected when the Candidate is likely to be stationary for some time. This counts towards the test competencies of Vehicle Sympathy. To not select neutral is not a test failure on its own but might contribute with other faults to an eventual failure.

11. Definition clarification: 'Off siding' = the crossing of the centre line/hazard line, (or in the absence of such lines, the centre of the carriageway) in order to extend a view.

Off-siding – single track road clarification:

In situations where there is no possibility of passing an oncoming vehicle due to the width of the road and in order to enable your presence to be seen earlier, this is acceptable, providing it is both advantageous and gives no risk of conflict.

Off-siding (to extend view) – two-way carriageway clarification:

Experience is showing that this is causing Candidates to put themselves in danger. The IAM actively discourages this practice and it is therefore not acceptable on test.

12. Set of open bends – straight-lining/trimming clarification:

Trimming or straight-lining a set of open bends whilst acceptable on test must not be carried out if there is a risk of conflict with other road users or where it will inconvenience, confuse or cause alarm or distress, to others.

If the Candidate compromises their own, or any other road user's safety they will fail the test.

13. Roundabouts – 'Straight lining'/'Trimming' clarification:

'Trimming' or 'Straight lining' roundabouts is often encouraged to enhance safety, stability & progress. This is correct if the situation is appropriate.

This must not however be done if there is a risk of conflict with other road users or where it will inconvenience or confuse others. The risk from traffic approaching from the rear is also a serious consideration in the decision on whether to 'straighten' a roundabout.

If the driver compromises their own or any other road user's safety they will fail the test.

14. Crossing of solid white lines – clarification:

Highway Code rule 129 p43 (HC revised 2007) applies.

You can cross a solid white line in the following circumstances providing it is done safely and causes no conflict with other road users:

- To pass stationary vehicle(s); N.B. Queuing traffic is not considered to fall within the meaning of this term.
- When it is necessary to turn right into a side road, premises, drive or other access but you must not straddle the line whilst waiting for a gap in oncoming traffic or for your exit to be clear;
- To pass a bicycle, horse or road maintenance vehicle providing they are not travelling at more than 10mph; the road maintenance vehicle has to be actively engaged in road maintenance with its amber light on and keep right arrow on the back;
- If you are directed to do so by a Police officer, VOSA or HATO officer.

You may overtake moving traffic by staying on the correct side of the solid white line providing there is sufficient space available between the vehicle(s) to be overtaken and the solid white line. The manoeuvre must be carried out safely and cause no conflict or confusion with other road users.

15. Overtaking speed clarification:

Any overtake needs to be accomplished safely and without risk of conflict with other road users. If, to overtake successfully, a candidate will have to exceed the speed limit, they should not commence the overtake. If the posted speed limit has to be exceeded the candidate must ask themselves the question as to whether they should have attempted the overtake in the first place.

HTBABD states (page 51) 'You will fail your Advanced Driving Challenge immediately if you break any speed limits.'

16. Misconception – Accelerating to a higher speed limit:

Exiting a low speed zone (or junction or other hazard) and increasing speed to a higher posted limit is sometimes thought by the candidate to have to be race-like. This is incorrect. Progressive acceleration should be encouraged but not to the point of a drag start or racing-type behaviour. Brisk instead of fast is a better descriptive word to use.

Acceleration needs to be progressive and controlled with due regard for the prevailing conditions.

17. Misconception – You must make good progress and need to drive at the speed limit plus 10% or some other margin that is above the speed limit.

This is wrong.

The IAM briefing statement made to all candidates is that they must comply with all traffic regulations. HTBABD states that "You must always stick to the speed limits, whilst driving as progressively as conditions allow."

The candidate should rely on their own speedometer on the day of the test and not try to make any adjustments for perceived inaccuracy. The Examiner will realise if the candidate's speedometer reads inaccurately and will not penalise them for this unless there is a significant defect with the reading which would then class the vehicle as not roadworthy (something the Observer should pick up prior to the test anyway). Candidates should be discouraged from using their SatNav on assessment drives as the use of such devices will be discouraged on test.

Although the candidate might fail the test for making insufficient progress (a significantly more involved set of skills than mere speed alone), they will be failed for exceeding a speed limit.

18. Speed limits – Slowing for a change in speed limit:

Misconception: brakes must not be used when reducing speed to a lower speed limit.

Misconception: a brake light must be shown when slowing for hazards or a change in speed limit.

It depends on how much speed must be lost and over what distance and relative to any other traffic.

'Acceleration Sense' should be encouraged where it is practical so as to promote smooth and progressive driving. In many situations there may be no need to brake if the manoeuvre has been planned properly unless it is considered that a brake light needs to be shown to traffic following too closely or approaching too fast. Brakes should be used when it is necessary, even if it is only to reduce the need for excessive/hard engine braking.

It is important that the Candidate does not get into the habit of always braking under the guise of showing a brake light as an excuse for poor 'Acceleration Sense' or a lack of planning or observation.

The point at which a speed limit starts and ends is at the change of limit signs. When entering a lower limit, the change of speed should have been achieved by the sign. When entering a higher limit the increase of speed should only commence on actually passing the higher limit signs. However where a speed limit sign is obscured or can only be seen very late the Examiner – whilst expecting the candidate to slow to the speed limit promptly – will make allowances for the situation as presented.

19. Misconception: At STOP lines the driver must set the parking brake.

There is no specific requirement for the driver to do so. The essential requirement is that the vehicle must come to a complete STOP, and not roll adversely.

20. Use of in-car aids

Misconception: Cruise control and other in car aids must not be used on test.

Cruise control can be used, but should not be over used, for example in busy traffic conditions as a way of trying to keep to a speed limit. Other aids are usually permanently switched on in the vehicle – ABS,ESP etc. Assisted / Automatic Parking Systems which take over steering should not be used under guidance or on test. Parking or proximity detectors should not be relied on.

21. Use of Automatic Gearboxes:

- Candidates will be expected to know the manufacturer's recommendations on the use of the gearbox that's fitted to their vehicle.
- Examiners and Observers should be aware of the great steps forward in technology of such gearboxes, and that with some new and nearly new models, manual over ride may not be needed at all.
- A Candidate should not fail the test for simply not using manual over ride, unless there are other significant reasons which may have contributed towards poor assessment and planning.

22. Cutting into RH Junctions off a main road:

Query: – Under what conditions can a driver ‘cut into’ a RH junction, if any, initially proceeding on the wrong side of the road.

This should not necessarily be taught to a candidate, but as with other actions, if it is done correctly, and without any danger or potential danger whatsoever, it may be allowed. If done, it should be part of an early plan.

23. Joining a Motorway:

Query: – Does it have to be Lane 1 for a short distance initially?

As an Advanced driver in the making, planning a motorway entrance should be early and accurate. If safe progress can be made into Lane 2 or 3 safely, it should be done.

24. Allowances for Disabled drivers

Query: – What rules or limitations should be applied when giving guidance?

We will accommodate anyone who can drive, and make suitable allowances for their disability in terms of how they control the vehicle... we have had some cases in the past in which an individual has needed very extensive adaptations, and we are happy to accommodate these. It is useful to give some notice of the situation when booking a test so that the Examiner has notice, and if a case creates any particular problems contact the local Staff Examiner and appropriate advice can be given, and if appropriate arrangements made. (We have on one occasion allocated the Examiner very early in the preparation, to assist with advice about control issues for the Observer)

25. Mini roundabouts clarification:

The subject of mini roundabouts is a regular debate, especially when the roundabout is:

- 1) clearly just paint on the road and
- 2) offset in the carriageway rather than centrally positioned

The first rule of the four S’s of advanced driving is to be ‘SAFE.’

Whilst the IAM does not advocate the breach of any road traffic legislation, it does advocate that the driver or rider remains in the safest position on the road at all times, with full regard to all the circumstances.

Therefore, if in order to position the vehicle away from the first point of danger, (a vehicle waiting to enter the roundabout from another road)

the wheels are positioned partially over the painted roundabout then the Examiner would consider this the safest option and therefore pass the Associate (having debriefed them and been assured that this was done for the right reason). If however, the Associate drives over a mini roundabout when there is no reason other than convenience, then the Examiner would consider failing them (having considered their reasoning and the drive or ride in its entirety).

What we cannot do as a road safety organisation however, is set a policy document that advocates the breach of a road traffic regulation. This is where the IAM relies on its Examiners to make a decision based on their vast experience.

26. Steering techniques clarification:

- The examiner is looking for a safe, smooth and systematic drive and will test to the standard laid out in How to Be a Better Driver, which includes the examiner check list in the steering chapter.
- Pull push is the preferred method of steering.
- We do not prepare our associates or advocate the use of any track or rally steering techniques while driving on public roads.
- Rotational Steering /Fixed grip- Not encouraged for normal road driving, but if it is employed without compromising safety or car control, the Examiner will accept it.