

Moving off – on the flat

To get yourself and the car ready to move, and to make sure it is safe to start it is a good idea to follow a set routine. Here we will explain a routine called Prepare, Observe, Manoeuvre (POM) which is routine you can use each time you prepare to start to move off in the car.

Prepare

The first thing you need to do is get the car ready to move, and this is done through reaching the biting point. To do this, follow these simple steps:

1. Clutch down: using your left foot engage fully press down on the clutch pedal until it touches the floor.
2. First Gear: next, put the car in first gear.
3. Engage the accelerator: lightly press the accelerator pedal with your right foot until you hear a slight humming sound, keeping the gas at that level by not moving your foot (it is easier to say in this position if you place your heel on the floor).
4. Reach the biting point: it is now time to slowly release the clutch with your left foot making sure you are listening to the engine to hear it reaching the biting point. You can detect this by a change in the sound of the engine or you might see the front of the car lift – detecting the biting point will soon become familiar.

Observe

You now have the car ready to move, but now you need to make sure that the surroundings are safe for you to move off into. In the observe stage of the routine, you are checking for other vehicles, pedestrians or even animals that might be also using the road and whom you need to be aware of. You also need to check for objects that don't move – such as parked cars, bollards, and dustbins.

A good routine to do as part of the observe stage is the six point check (this list refers to if you are parked on the left and are moving to the right, do these in reverse if you are parked on the right):

1. Blind spot – look over your left shoulder and through the side-back window
2. Left door mirror
3. Front window ahead

4. Rear view mirror
5. Right door mirror
6. Blind spot – out of your driver's side window.

During your observations, you might notice that a car is about to move near you, or you have spotted a person approaching your car. In these cases, it is a good idea to wait until the coast is clear so you can move off without any disturbances.

Once your observations are complete and you have decided it is safe to move off decide whether or not you need to signal your movement – either with a left or right indicator depending on which direction you are going. You only need to signal if other drivers or pedestrians would benefit, and remember to only signal when you are ready to move off to avoid confusion to other road users.

How do I check my blind spot?

The 'blind spot' is the area around the car that the driver is unable to see either through the front and back windows, or their rear-view and side mirrors. It is very important to check your blind spots as in these areas there may be other vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians that you cannot see in your mirrors. A failure to check your blind spot before moving off in your driving test is a sure way to fail.

So, where are the blind spots? The first is an area to the right which cannot be seen in your right wing mirror. To check this blind spot you need to look over your right shoulder out of your driver's side window.

The other blind spot is over your left shoulder and through the back-side window. Remember to always look over both of your shoulders before moving off, and it is important that your last check is the blind spot that is on the side of the car you are moving towards (so right if you are moving to the right, and left if you are moving to the left).

Manoeuvre

Having prepared and observed, you are now ready to manoeuvre. Here is how you do it:

1. Handbrake off – release the handbrake all the way
2. Clutch up – you are at the biting point and in first gear, so to get the car moving you need to slowly raise your clutch feeling the car slowly moving until you come off it completely. If you take your foot off the clutch too quickly the car will stall.

Remember – practice makes perfect!

3. Accelerator – now you are moving, gently apply pressure to the accelerator to increase your speed. The key to this is being gentle as you don't want to move off too fast.
4. Position – ensure that you are in the normal driving position (NDP) on the road by steering slightly right. You need to be around a metre from the kerb, or a metre from any obstructions parked in the road (such as cars, skips etc.).

Moving off – uphill & downhill

Uphill

Moving off uphill is a little trickier but you will soon get the hang of it. The key is to apply more pressure to the accelerator and to let your foot off the clutch much slower in order to make the car move. It can be easy to panic if you roll backwards on an uphill start but all you need to do is to bring up to clutch slightly and your car will remain stable, and then raise the clutch to get the car going.

Downhill

If you are setting off from a downhill position you don't need to find the biting point. The routine is similar to that above however instead during the 'prepare' stage you need to engage the foot brake, instead of finding the biting point, to prepare the car for moving off. Observe in the same six point step (checking all of your mirrors and your blind spots) and then it is time to manoeuvre. When you are ready, move your right foot from the foot brake to the accelerator – you will feel the car slowly move forward. Slowly bring up the clutch pedal as the car starts moving – if the hill is steep you need to bring the clutch up quicker. Now you are moving, get the car in the normal driving position (NDP).

If you are on a small hill and the car doesn't start rolling you will need to find the biting point to get the car moving.

Stopping

Now you know how to move off, you need to know how to stop. The key to stopping safely is planning ahead and identifying a safe, convenient and legal place to stop. Apart from when conducting an emergency stop, you should always use the Mirrors Signal Manoeuvre (MSM) routine when stopping.

When stopping at the side of the road you need to practice the SCALP routine – this stands for Safe Convenient and Legal Position. This is to show consideration to other drivers and to keep yourself and others safe – so only stop where it is safe, convenient and legal to do so.

Here we will run through what you need to do to safely stop in a normal driving scenario.

Mirrors

Depending on whether you are stopping on the left or the right you need to check both the interior mirror and the corresponding wing mirror.

Signal

It may not always be necessary to signal when stopping – so make sure you check if there are any other vehicles or pedestrians that would benefit from a signal. If there is a car behind you then you will need to indicate to them that you are stopping and pulling over, so use your indicator to signal to them what you intend to do.

Be careful not to indicate too early otherwise, this might be confusing to other drivers and pedestrians (for example, if there is a road approaching and you are intending to stop after this road make sure you signal once you are past this road).

Manoeuvre

You have identified a safe place to stop, checked your mirrors and signalled if you needed to – now it is time to stop. Follow these steps for a smooth and safe stopping procedure:

1. Remove your foot from the accelerator
2. Gently brake – practice progressive braking, that is where you brake gently at first and then more firmly when you need to come to a complete stop (this will prevent a harsh and jolting stop).
3. Steer to the left – when pulling over to the left-hand side you can steer gently towards the left (if there are no parked cars) so that you can pull over at a slight angle and then straighten up. If there are cars in the road you will need to adjust your steer and pull over at more of an angle.
4. Clutch down – as you are about to stop press the clutch pedal all the way down to stop you stalling.

5. Come to a stop – apply the brake firmly to come to a complete stop.
6. Handbrake – once the car has come to a complete stop apply the handbrake and put the car into neutral position.
7. Take feet off the pedals – you can now relax your feet as the handbrake is holding the car in position and the car is no longer in gear so you don't need the clutch.
8. Stop signal – if you were indicating make sure you stop this signal at this point.

Summary

You are now fully clued up on the safest way to move off and stop. Here is a quick summary to remember what you have learnt:

Move off = POM

- Prepare: biting point
- Observe: check all mirrors and blind spots and signal if you need to
- Manoeuvre: move off smoothly and find the normal driving position

Stopping = MSM

- Mirrors: check the interior mirror and the corresponding wing mirror of the direction you are moving towards
- Signal: do you need to signal? If you do so put your indicator on
- Manoeuvre: pull over in a safe, convenient and legal place