

Special Needs Accommodations for the practical test advice to ADIs (includes COVID-19 amendments)

If your pupil has a physical disability, a specific learning difficulty or a hearing difficulty, special needs accommodations may be required when they are taking their practical test.

Many of the accommodations are confirmed in the DVSA DT1 and other agreed documents but occasionally examiners may not be aware of this. This information guide lets ADIs know what is available and will also make it easier for the examiner to check what is permitted to ensure that the appropriate assistance is provided; references to the relevant documents are included.

1) **The eyesight test** (reading a vehicle number plate at a distance of 20 metres):

DVSA DT1 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/01-the-practical-driving-test-and-extended-test-for-cars> section 1.20 gives specific advice regarding candidates with dyslexia (or other reading difficulties).

“Black on Yellow is ordinarily easier to distinguish by most dyslexic candidates. They may also read back to front or in a non-uniform order and may have difficulty distinguishing between certain images, for example B and 8, D and O, 5 and S. They may find it easier to write down the letters and numbers rather than reading them out - this is deemed to be a reasonable adjustment”.

(Alternatively use a printed sheet to point at the numbers/letters).

Deaf candidates may also need to write down the letters rather than read them out. The ADI or independent interpreter may need to assist with the instructions for this, the examiner or the interpreter is permitted to remove face coverings if the candidate needs to lip read.

Disabled candidates with mobility difficulties may remain in the car to read the number plate (examiners may advise where to park to facilitate this).

2) **The ‘tell me’ question** (before the start of the test):

DVSA DT1 section 1.21 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/01-the-practical-driving-test-and-extended-test-for-cars> states that “where a special need prevents a candidate from carrying out a practical activity for the ‘tell me’ question (e.g. physical disability making walking round the car or opening the bonnet difficult) they should be asked to demonstrate understanding by oral explanation”.

For Deaf candidates, Mike Warner (Senior External Affairs Manager, DVSA) has agreed for the ADI to act as an interpreter for the initial discussion and for the ‘tell me’ question at the start of the test, This is confirmed in the DVSA SOP (COVID-19), updated 5 November 2020. Under COVID restrictions discussions should be conducted outside of the car if possible. The examiner or the interpreter are permitted to remove their face covering if the candidate needs to lip read.

3) **Accompanied tests** (during COVID-19 restrictions):

There are times when it might be necessary to have an accompanied test, “such as when conducting test with a British Sign Language Interpreter (Deaf Candidates Only)”. This is confirmed in the DVSA SOP (COVID-19), updated 5 November 2020, which also states that “to avoid inhibiting lip reading, BSL interpreters may not be required to wear face coverings. This must be pre-notified and agreed upon.” Mike Warner has also stated that examiners are permitted to remove face coverings during the test if the candidate needs to lip read.

4) **General communication and interaction with candidates:**

DVSA DT1 section 5.13 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/05-candidates-with-an-impairment> and section 7.36 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/07-general-operational-matters> detail the special needs provisions available for candidates with learning difficulties or spectrum and processing disorders. It states that “where a spectrum condition (or special need) is declared or apparent and providing the test is not undermined, the examiners should, wherever possible adapt their approach to accommodate the candidate”.

5) **Independent driving:**

Section 7.36 of the DVSA DT1 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/07-general-operational-matters> states that if the examiner is made aware that a candidate has a special need they will ask the candidate which is their more able method, either following directions from the sat-nav or following traffic signs; if the examiner is aware of this prior to the test commencing they would be able to bring both a sat-nav and the peripherals to cover either scenario.

This should apply to those with dyslexia or other learning difficulty and to Deaf candidates; if Deaf candidates are following road signs any change of destination may require the candidate to pull up at the side of the road to communicate the new destination.

Despatch states that if the sat nav is to be used: “The examiner will be able to change the colour, contrast and volume”. “If you think your pupil will need to change the sat nav layout, you’ll need to set up a meeting with your LDTM before the test” to discuss what settings they need. “On the day of the test you should arrive early with a copy of the agreed setting requirements”

<https://despatch.blog.gov.uk/2017/10/24/what-weve-done-to-make-sure-the-new-driving-test-is-accessible-for-everyone/>

6) **‘Show me’ questions:**

DVSA DT1, section 1.21 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/01-the-practical-driving-test-and-extended-test-for-cars> states that candidates “should be expected to carry out the ‘show me’ question on the move. Reasonable consideration must be adopted in cases of disability and if adaptations don’t allow candidates to operate windows or demisters on the move, and they are unable to do so, then an alternative question should be asked”.

Lesley Young (Chief Driving Examiner 2012-2018) agreed in Dec 2017 that although the headlight on/off switch is considered to be a safety critical secondary control and should be able to be operated on the move at any time, if this cannot be safely carried out the lights could be switched on at the start of the drive and switched off at the end; this removes the need for operating the switch on the move, an alternative question could also be asked in this case. Lesley Young emphasised in Despatch (Oct 2017) <https://despatch.blog.gov.uk/2017/10/24/what-weve-done-to-make-sure-the-new-driving-test-is-accessible-for-everyone/> that “we will only ask a “show me” question which we think the candidate can demonstrate safely whilst on the move.”

Notification of special need requirements must be made on application for the test if accommodations are required; this is to allow for DVSA to plan for any necessary reasonable adjustments. The ADI is advised to confirm this at the test centre before the test date to ensure the notification has been received and accommodations can be made.