

Special needs accommodations for Deaf candidates booking and taking the practical test (including COVID-19 restrictions):

Special needs notification: DVSA may require this in order to plan for any necessary reasonable adjustments for candidates who:

- Are Deaf without speech or have severe degree of deafness.
- Require a BSL interpreter/communicator (this must be arranged by the candidate or ADI).

Following special needs notification DVSA may decide that extra time is required for the test, this is sometimes referred to as a “double slot” test. Extra time allocation does not mean the test candidate will be driving any longer or doing any additional tasks but merely allows extra time at the start of the test, allows for the possibility of stopping part way through the test if it is necessary and allows time for the BSL interpreter to relay instructions/directions. DVSA allows extra time for “candidates who are deaf without speech or who have declared a severe degree of deafness”.

It should be noted that the elements of the practical driving test remain the same for all test candidates. The extra time does not mean that the drive will be any longer; it merely allows extra time for the additional discussion needed before the start of the test and provides extra time to allow for breaks if required. The “double slot” will also allow the examiner extra time to complete the additional paperwork required for a special needs test. No extra charge is made for a special needs test.

Booking the test: If special needs notification is required it should be declared when booking the test. Make sure that the degree of hearing difficulty is explained and any specific methods of communication or giving directions is noted along with the need for an interpreter if this is required (the candidate/ADI will need to arrange and pay for the interpreter, who may be the candidate’s ADI). If there is a difficulty using one or other method used for the independent drive this should also be declared when making the booking.

The preferred method of booking a special needs test is on-line at <https://www.gov.uk/book-driving-test> or via the DVSA Trainer Booking Service; make sure that the special requirements sections of the booking form are completed; DVSA should then automatically select a “double slot” if this is needed.

It may though be more convenient to make these bookings by telephoning the DVSA call centre (0300 200 1122). “Double slots” are allocated in advance on the booking diary, but it is possible that there may not be a pre-allocated slot available if one is required. Booking via the call centre would allow the staff to combine two single test slots to make a “double slot” if none are allocated in advance; if the booking is made on-line and there are no “double slots” allocated, the system will merely state that there are no test slots available and suggest that you choose an alternative test centre; please note there is currently no Textphone facility for booking the practical test so telephone bookings will need to be made by the ADI or the candidate’s representative.

Confirmation: Once the special needs requirements have been received by DVSA they would then be entered onto the examiner’s journal and sent to the allocated examiner at the specified test centre in advance of the test, so the examiner should be aware of any requirements in advance.

DVSA have advised that ADIs should contact the test centre a few days before the test to confirm the special needs requirements. It would be useful for the ADI to have a face to face meeting with the examiner taking the test, or the LDTM, to confirm the hand gestures used during tuition and ensure that the same gestures are used on test to give directions. Any instruction cards used to explain manoeuvring exercises or to request a show me exercise can be confirmed and if the independent drive is following road signs the method of changing destination will need to be established. If the candidate’s hearing difficulty compromises their ability to use one or other method for carrying out the independent driving this can also be confirmed, but the final choice of method remains the examiners.

The Association of Disability Driving Instructors CIC

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Procedure on test

The candidate's ADI may act as interpreter for the initial discussions and the "tell me" question at the start of the test. If there has been a meeting between the ADI and the examiner in advance of the test, preliminaries should have already been confirmed, the examiner should though confirm the method of communication with the candidate before starting the test and run through any hand gestures that will be needed for directions during the drive; the method for any additional instructions – for manoeuvring and other exercises as well as the show me question – will also need to be established. It should be confirmed that if there is a need for more detailed instruction the examiner will ask the pupil to pull up at the side of the road so that these can be given whilst the car is stationary. Finally, before starting the drive, it should be ensured that the examiner recognises how the candidate will communicate that they do not understand an instruction and need it repeating or explaining in more detail.

The candidate may take a BSL interpreter in-car on test if they use sign language; the interpreter/communicator must be over 16 and could be the candidate's ADI. This must be arranged by and paid for by the candidate; they can though claim these costs back after the test, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-refund-for-use-of-a-british-sign-language-interpreter>

Eyesight test: DVSA have stated that "reasonable adjustments" may be made for the eyesight test. Deaf candidates and especially those who are deaf without speech may find it easier to write down the letters and numbers rather than reading them out – this is deemed to be a reasonable adjustment.

Show me question: The hand gesture or prompt card used to request the required secondary control to be demonstrated should be confirmed in advance, either at the start of the test or when pulled up at the side of the road. The request should then be made on the move in a way that does not distract the candidate whilst they are driving.

Independent driving: If the candidate's hearing difficulty compromises the ability to navigate by either following written directions on road signs or by following directions given via sat-nav this should also be declared when booking the test, stating that the hearing difficulty causes difficulty with either specified method. Please note that the ADI/candidate is not permitted to dictate to the examiner which method of independent driving should be used, they are only to explain any difficulties with one or other method.

Sect 7.36 of DVSA DT1 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 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.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-driving-examiners-carrying-out-driving-tests-dt1/07-general-operational-matters>

If following road signs any change of destination may require the candidate to be asked to pull up at the side of the road to communicate the new destination.

COVID-19 restrictions

The DVSA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been rewritten to take into account the special needs requirements for Deaf candidates and those with severe hearing difficulties.

- The ADI is permitted to accompany the candidate for the "tell me" question at the start of the test if they need the ADI to act as an interpreter for this part only. The "tell me" question can be conducted outside the vehicle so the ADI would not need to get into the car before the test.
- If the candidate is Deaf, uses sign language to communicate and needs a BSL interpreter in car, provided they have notified DVSA when booking the test it will be permitted to have three people in-car for the practical test. The interpreter can either be the candidate's ADI or an independent interpreter.
- If a test candidate with hearing difficulties needs to lip read so that they can understand what the examiner is saying, the examiner is permitted to temporarily remove their face covering to facilitate this.

These adjustments MUST be requested at the time of booking the test to ensure that DVSA can match the candidate with an examiner who is willing to comply with the request. As driving examiner schedules are now staggered throughout the day it is not possible to swap one test for another. Requesting these adjustments on the day may result in the test not going ahead.

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