

Rules of the road: the latest changes

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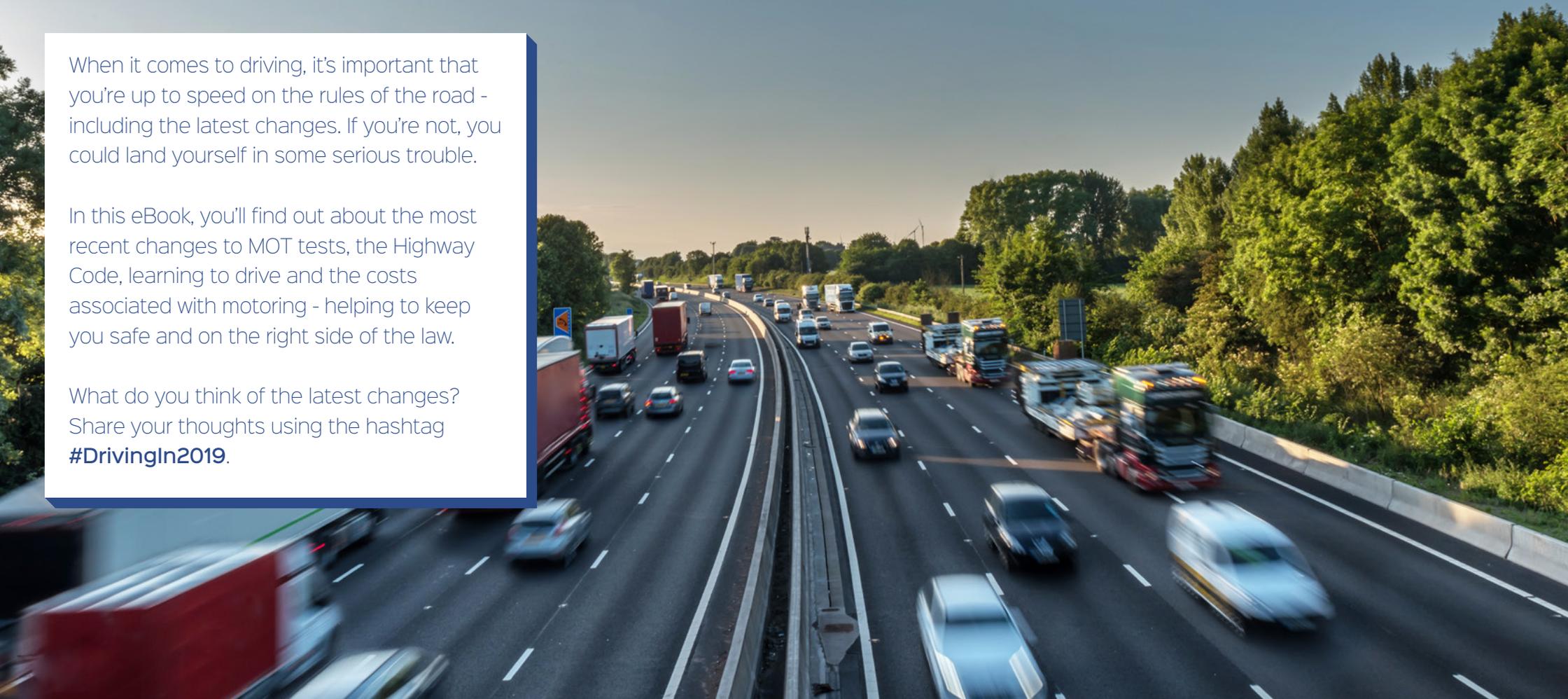
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When it comes to driving, it's important that you're up to speed on the rules of the road - including the latest changes. If you're not, you could land yourself in some serious trouble.

In this eBook, you'll find out about the most recent changes to MOT tests, the Highway Code, learning to drive and the costs associated with motoring - helping to keep you safe and on the right side of the law.

What do you think of the latest changes? Share your thoughts using the hashtag **#DrivingIn2019**.



What you need to know about MOTs

As a driver, you'll know that if your car is over three years old, it will need an MOT test every 12 months. This is a legal requirement and it proves if the vehicle is roadworthy or not - but did you know that the way this test works has recently changed?

In an attempt to make the roads as safe as possible, the government has made some slight tweaks to the MOT test. So, to ensure your car passes every time, it's important to pay attention to the most recent changes.

The 5 new MOT categories

There are now five MOT categories, so it's worth familiarising yourself with each one and what they mean. As of May 2018, the categories are:

Dangerous

This means that the defect is considered to be a direct and immediate risk to road safety, or that it has a serious impact on the environment. If a defect falls within the 'dangerous' category, it is recommended that you do not drive the vehicle until the defect has been repaired. It also means that you will receive a fail as your MOT result.

Example: Parking brake inoperative or effective

Major

If a defect falls under the 'major' category, it generally means that it may affect the vehicle's safety, which in turn could put other road users at risk. It may also have an impact on the environment and automatically gives you a failed MOT result.

Example: Exhaust emissions outside of specified limits

Minor

Defects described as 'minor' are thought to have no significant effect on the safety of the vehicle or on the environment. Receiving a 'minor' will not cause you to fail your MOT test, but it's recommended that the problem is repaired as soon as possible.

Example: Windscreen wipers defective and smearing

Advisory

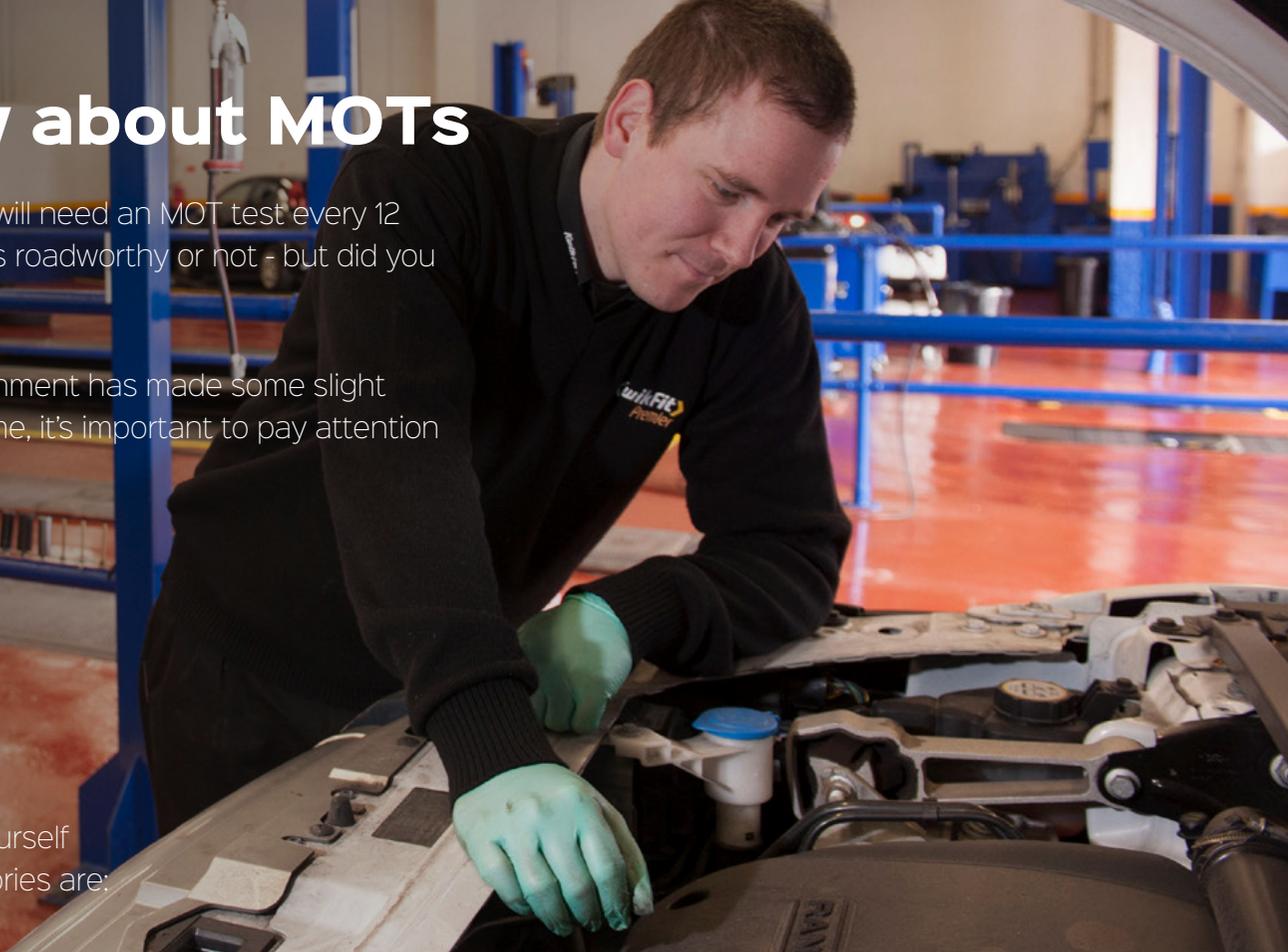
An 'advisory' warning will not cause your vehicle to fail the MOT test itself, but you will be notified of something that may become a serious issue in the future. You should monitor the problem and repair it if it is necessary.

Example: Tyres wearing close to legal limit

Pass

Like its name suggests, a 'pass' means that your vehicle meets all of the minimum legal standards.

You'll only receive a Pass if the vehicle is not deemed to have any Dangerous or Major defects.



New items tested during the MOT test

There are some new items that are now being tested as part of the MOT too. These include checks to determine if:

- The tyres are underinflated.
- The brake fluid is contaminated.
- There are any leaks that may pose a risk to the environment.
- There are any brake pads or discs missing, or problems with the brake pad warning lights.

For vehicles which have been first used from 1 September 2009, the headlight washers (if they have them) and reversing lights are checked.

In regards to cars first used as of 1 March 2018 (most of which will have their first MOT in 2021 when they are three years old), the daytime running lights will be checked too.

Driving your vehicle away when it's failed the MOT test

The new MOT changes also mean that if your vehicle fails its test under the 'dangerous' category, it will be automatically deemed no longer road legal and you will not be allowed to drive it away. Instead, you will need to have the fault repaired. If you are found to be driving your car with a dangerous fault, you could be fined £2,500, receive three points on your licence and even be banned from driving altogether.

Changes to the MOT certificate

Although it's unlikely to impact on you or your vehicle as such, it's worth paying attention to the fact that the design of the MOT certificate has changed. The new document lists any defects under the new categories, making them easier to understand.

Learning to drive

Learning to drive can be an exciting and liberating experience. Even when you're sitting next to an instructor during lessons, getting behind the wheel means you're one step closer to enjoying the freedom of going out and about on your own.

In December 2017, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency confirmed that the driving test in England, Scotland and Wales had changed slightly to make sure that new drivers had the skills they need to stay safe. So, if you're currently learning to drive or you're thinking about signing up for lessons, it's worth bearing the following in mind.

Driving on motorways

Until last year, those learning to drive were not allowed to practise on motorways and had to wait until they'd earned their licence before being able to take to these roads. However, the rules have now changed. As of June 2018, learner drivers are permitted to take to the motorways during their lessons as long as they are accompanied by an approved driving instructor and the car is fitted with dual controls. It's hoped that this will help ensure new drivers know how to use motorways safely.

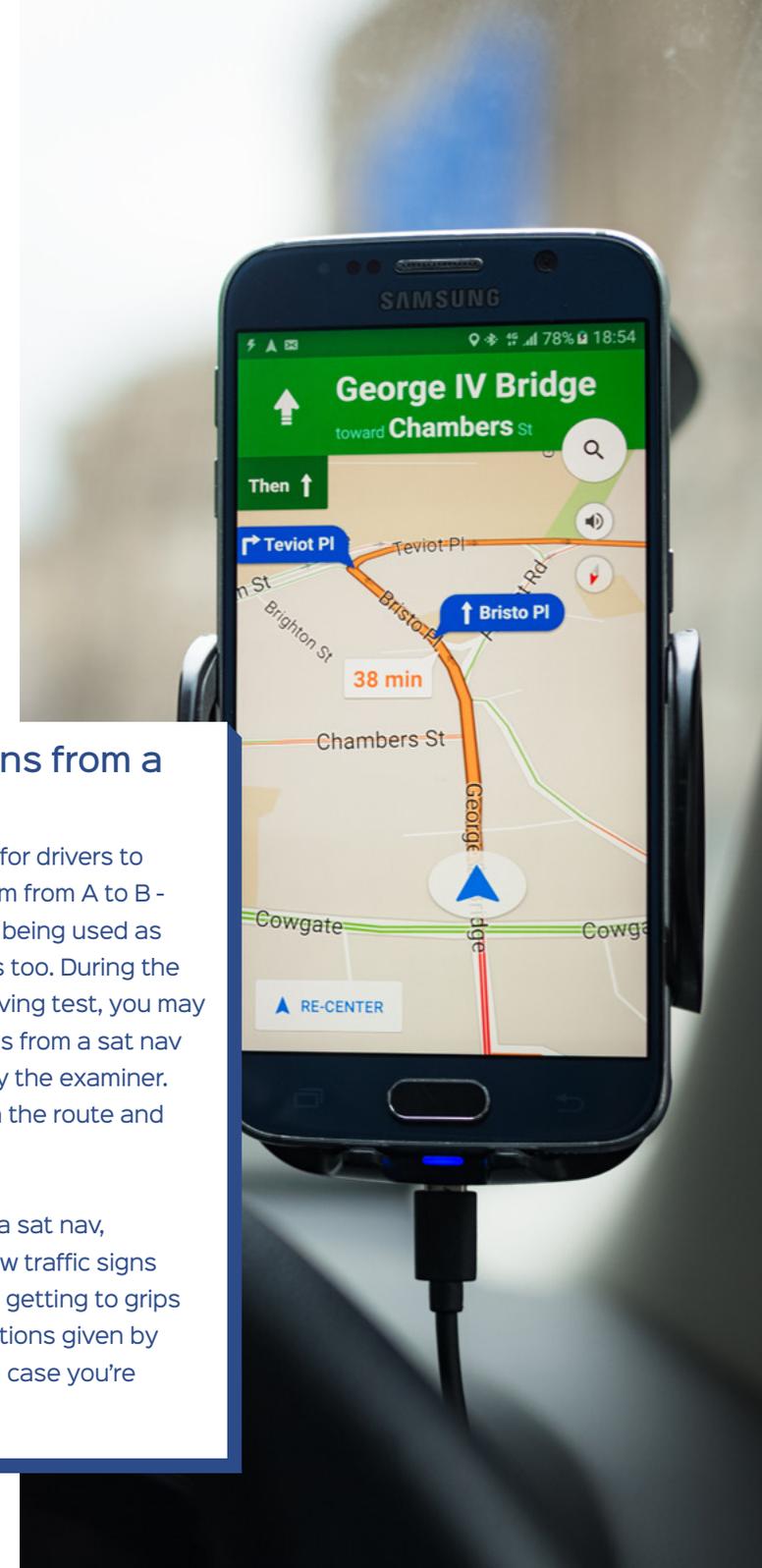
It's important to note that motorway driving during lessons is voluntary, and that it is up to the instructor to decide if the learner driver is competent enough to do so. It's also worth remembering that motorway driving has not been introduced to the driving test itself as part of this change.



Following directions from a sat nav

Nowadays, it's not unusual for drivers to rely on a sat nav to get them from A to B - and these devices are now being used as part of the learning process too. During the independent part of the driving test, you may be asked to follow directions from a sat nav which has been provided by the examiner. The examiner will decide on the route and input this into the device.

One in five tests won't use a sat nav, meaning you'll need to follow traffic signs instead. However, it's worth getting to grips with how to follow the directions given by one of these accessories in case you're asked during your test.





The independent driving part of the test has increased to 20 minutes

As part of every driving test, you are asked to drive without any turn-by-turn directions from the instructor or by following directions from a sat nav. While this part of the test used to be 10 minutes long, it is now approximately 20 minutes, meaning that it takes up about half of the entire test.

The introduction of graduated driving licences

In 2018, it was proposed that new motorists could be given a graduated driving licence. This type of licence imposes certain restrictions as a way of making those who have recently passed their tests safer drivers.

According to the RAC, some of the restrictions of a graduated driving licence could include:

- A limit on how many passengers a new driver can have in their vehicle.
- Lower speed limits compared to other drivers.
- A limit on how powerful their cars can be, with a restriction on engine sizes.
- A curfew for when they are allowed to be on the roads.
- Lower alcohol limits than other drivers.
- The use of mandatory P plates for up to two years after passing the driving test.

While graduated driving licences have yet to be introduced, it's thought that they will be tested in Northern Ireland during 2019 to see how effective they could be. If successful, you could expect to see this type of licence being rolled out across the country in the near future.

What to look out for financially

Between topping up your tank and keeping your car in good working order, there are many expenses associated with owning a vehicle - but it doesn't necessarily end there. There may be other costs that apply to you too. To stay up-to-date with the latest changes, read on.

Increased car tax for diesel vehicles

In April 2018, tax rates significantly increased for three million diesel drivers in the UK - and they're set to rise again this year too. Instead of receiving a standard Vehicle Excise Duty (which is often referred to as car tax) of £140 per year, these vehicles will now be taxed according to their CO2 emissions.

For example, cars that produce between 191g and 225g of carbon dioxide per kilometre could see an increase of up to £500, while more eco-friendly models, which release between 111g and 130g of carbon dioxide per kilometre, will see a small increase of £40.

A rise in car insurance premiums

Late last year, it was reported that car insurance prices had significantly increased for UK drivers for the first time in 12 months. According to research, over half (54 per cent) of motorists who renewed their insurance between July and September 2018 saw their premium increase by at least £50, while 60 per cent of drivers decided to renew their insurance with their current insurer instead of shopping around. So, if you're due to renew your car insurance this year, you might want to see what you can do to get the best deal possible.

Higher parking fees for diesel drivers

As of last year, parking surcharges for diesel vehicles expanded across the country after being introduced in cities such as London, Birmingham, Manchester and Bath. In the capital city, Westminster Council put a scheme in place which increased on-street parking costs by 50 per cent for diesel cars sold before 2015. The council said as a result of the scheme, the number of older diesel cars being parked in certain areas fell. For example, in Marylebone, drivers of petrol cars paid £4.90 per hour, while owners of diesel owned vehicles paid £7.35. In turn, there was a 16 per cent drop in the number of diesel cars that were found to be parking in the area.

Since Westminster Council's trial, several other London boroughs and cities up and down the UK have rolled out similar schemes. With surcharges like this on the rise, it's worth keeping an eye on the parking fees in your area - especially if you own a diesel car.

While you're out and about on the roads...

You might think you're pretty clued up on the rules of road, but there are some recent changes that you may not know about. To ensure you're driving safely while you're out and about, keep reading.

Changes to the Highway Code regarding overtaking cyclists

This year, the Highway Code is due to change to include a new rule regarding passing cyclists on the roads. The rule will stipulate that there must be at least 1.5 metres (or 4ft 11 inches) between the driver and the cyclist. Failing to adhere to this could land you a £100 fine, so it's important to make sure you leave a sufficient gap when you're overtaking a cyclist.

Penalties for driving in closed lanes on smart motorways

It's expected that changes to smart motorways could see drivers penalised with a £100 fine if they ignore the red 'X' closure signs. These signs usually indicate that a lane is closed due to an accident or if there is no need for it to be open. So, if you're driving down a smart motorway, it's worth making sure you're in the correct lane to avoid being caught out.

Highway Code may include the 'Dutch reach' technique

In another attempt to keep cyclists safe, it's thought that the Highway Code could be changed to include the 'Dutch reach' technique. This encourages drivers to open their door using the hand which is furthest away from the handle. In turn, this forces them to turn and look behind them for cyclists.

While the Dutch reach hasn't been added to the Highway Code just yet, it's important to note that Section 239 currently states that motorists should not hit anyone when opening their door. In fact, "car dooring" is considered to be a criminal offence in the UK and can carry a maximum fine of £1,000.



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Thank you for taking the time to read our eBook. We hope it's informed you of the latest rule changes to the roads, how they might impact you and what you can do to stay safe when you're behind the wheel.