



Extract taken from '**L of a way 2 Pass**' by Diane Hall, DSA(ADI), TFT-Alg.

Top Ten Reasons for Failure...and how to avoid them

The current overall pass rate is just 42%, and the first time pass rate is even lower

Why is the failure rate so high? The Driving Standards Agency published a list of the top ten reasons for failure, and not surprisingly, every manoeuvre features on this list! However, the majority of test candidates who fail do so because of a lack of planning and judgement. You may be physically able to drive to a high standard, but this is not enough to ensure a test pass.

As well as being able to drive, you have to have an awareness of what's happening around you, and to act accordingly. However, this is where at the end of the test, pupils often say... **"but I never do that normally....!"**

In a recent survey over half of the people thought that they would fail their test because of 'doing something silly' on the day that they wouldn't normally do on a driving lesson. Furthermore, a huge 90% believed that their negative thoughts and resulting nerves would have an impact on their test result.

In the same survey, 95% said it would be wonderful if they could go for their test feeling, **"excited because I have absolute belief and confidence in my ability to pass"**.

My belief is that when you have worked through the various exercises and techniques in '**L of a way 2 Pass**', you can have this feeling, and if you go for your test feeling this confident in your ability, then you will have the best chance possible of **passing your test on the first attempt**.

Below are the Top Ten reasons for failure according to the D.S.A. Take a few minutes to look through the list and note which ones you identify with. You may find it helpful to think back to your driving lessons and ask yourself which driving skills your instructor needs to keep practicing with you. It may also be worth showing this to your instructor so he/she can identify the areas that you are weaker in so you can work on this on the lessons leading up to your test. When you have done this, you will have an accurate idea as to where your strengths and weaknesses lie and you can then use the relevant exercises and techniques in the book to help you.

- ⤴ **Observation at junctions** - ineffective observation and judgement
- ⤴ **Reverse parking** - ineffective observation or lack of accuracy
- ⤴ **Use of mirrors** - not checking or not acting on the information
- ⤴ **Moving away** - ineffective observation or control when moving away
- ⤴ **Use of signals** - not given, not cancelled or misleading signals
- ⤴ **Incorrect positioning** - at roundabouts, lanes and bends
- ⤴ **Reversing around a corner** - ineffective observation or lack of accuracy
- ⤴ **Lack of steering control** - steering too early or leaving it too late
- ⤴ **Turn round in road** - ineffective observation or lack of accuracy
- ⤴ **Inappropriate speed** - travelling too slowly

The Madness of Manoeuvres

Every single manoeuvre features in the Top Ten reasons for failure

If you can perform all the manoeuvres accurately, with good observation and control, with no input from your instructor, then skip this section. If however, you feel that you need help to master the manoeuvres, then read on. Getting a manoeuvre right nine times out of ten is really good; but not good enough if the one you get wrong is the one you do on your driving test!

I have spoken to some examiners who really try not to fail pupils on just manoeuvres, but they have a job to do, and if the manoeuvre is not up to the required standard then just a single mistake such as missing a look out of the back window or lack of accuracy is enough to result in test failure.

Ask yourself, "Can I afford to pay for a retest, not to mention the upset of failure just because I clipped a kerb?"

Even though manoeuvres only account for a few minutes of your test, it's vitally important that you are comfortable and confident in your ability to get them right. That's why there is a whole section in **L of a way 2 Pass** dedicated to mastering the manoeuvres. Remember, **every single manoeuvre** features in the Top Ten reasons for failure, so don't let them be your downfall. The techniques you will learn will ensure that you are fully prepared.

Mirror, mirror on the wall....

As you look through the list, you will see that the reasons for failure fall into two basic categories; '**observation & judgement**', and '**physical ability**'. Ask yourself just how difficult is it to look in your mirrors whilst driving? When you go on your driving test, does a neck brace mysteriously appear around your neck as the examiner gets into the car, which prevents your head from moving, or do your eyes suddenly start to hurt as soon as you look in the mirror, or perhaps your elaborate hairstyle prevents you from turning around to check your blind spot? Of course not, but look again at the list of reasons for failure;

Six out of 10 of them are attributable to lack of use of mirrors and observation!

So why do so many people fail their test for these reasons? If it were so easy to make sure that you use your mirrors effectively, act on what you see, check your blind spots when necessary and keep good all round observation, then the pass rate would be much higher, and hopefully the test waiting lists would be reduced! At least, that is the theory.

How many people do you know who have failed their test because of lack of use of mirrors or observation? Perhaps you have even done so yourself. However, WHY do people fail their driving test because of a failure to do something so obvious and easy to learn? Often, it is because when you are feeling nervous you forget the most basic skills. I have thought about this issue a lot and I have a theory why people miss basic mirror checks on their test, and that is that people will learn from their mistakes. If you lift your foot off the clutch too quickly, the car stalls so, you learn to take your foot off more slowly.

If you try to go up a hill in a high gear, the car struggles, so you learn that you need a lower gear going up hill. These two errors have a tangible, physical consequence. Therefore, you learn from your mistake. However, a missed mirror check during a lesson or test may have no physical consequence, but when it does, the physical consequences can be fatal; swapping lanes in front of

another car, or braking harshly so that the car behind runs into you, or not checking a blind spot and knocking a child off their bike.

However, these events are highly unlikely to occur during a lesson or test as your instructor (or accompanying driver) will prevent them from happening, as they will be more aware and experienced than you about what is happening around the car. You may never get the opportunity to learn from such mistakes until you've passed your test because it would obviously put people's lives at risk (and let's hope that you never do get that opportunity). There can be no 'controlled errors' where mirror checks and observation are concerned. Let's face it, your instructor or accompanying driver is hardly likely to let you run a cyclist over because you've not checked your mirror or blindspot and have you comment; *'That's the second cyclist I've knocked over today, I really must try to remember to check my mirrors next lesson'!!*

**"I always know what's happening around me,
check my mirrors, and act on what I see"**

If you can say the above with total conviction, then you do not need to read this section. However, if your instructor has to keep reminding you to check your mirrors and blind spots, then read on. It's very simple; all you have to do is;

**Look in the appropriate mirrors before
Signalling, Changing Speed, Changing Direction**

As we have already said though, if it were that simple, then no one would fail their test due to observation errors and missed mirror checks, or acting inappropriately on observations made. In the survey mentioned earlier, 70% of the people surveyed said that their instructor has to prompt them on a regular basis. It is hard to understand why pupils need reminding to check their mirrors, knowing that they are aware that there can be fatal consequences of not doing this.

"I'm sorry that your child is dead, but I just forgot to check my blind spot"

I'm using shock tactics here, but I think they are necessary, as death is the potential consequence **EVERY SINGLE TIME YOU** forget to check your mirrors or blind spot. The above statement alone should be enough to ensure that you are ALWAYS aware of what's happening around you, and that you take full responsibility for your actions

Getting the right perspective

When I was learning to drive, I was a student and my fellow students and I would often discuss how well our driving lessons had gone. The question most often heard was; 'So, how many times did you stall?' When I talk to my pupils now, they still ask the same question of their friends. I don't remember ever saying, 'It was brilliant, although I stalled a few times, I never missed a mirror check!' People don't seem to consider errors made in checking their mirrors as important or worthy of comment as errors made stalling their car. This is incredible. If you are more concerned about how many times you stalled, rather than your mirrors and awareness, then I think that you need a lesson in 'perspective'.

**If you miss a mirror check, you can potentially kill someone.
However, the usual consequences of stalling are that you
will hold a few people up for a few seconds.**

Now, I'm not suggesting that stalling is a good thing to do, but I am saying that if you are more concerned with stalling the car than with your mirror checks then you need to get things into perspective. Stalling may have serious consequences, especially if you stall in the middle of a roundabout, or at traffic lights just as they are about to change, but why do people place much more emphasis on this than missing a mirror check? Ask yourself how many times you keep thinking about the few times that you stalled on your lesson, compared to the many times that you missed a mirror or blind spot check? Pupils often get very nervous and panic when they have stalled because they feel embarrassed and are worried about what the other drivers around them are thinking, or that they are holding people up, and annoying other drivers. They aren't unduly concerned when they have missed a mirror check and they should be, as this can have much more serious consequences.

**Promise yourself that from this moment on you will
NEVER AGAIN MISS A MIRROR CHECK AND WILL ALWAYS
BE AWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND YOU**

I hope that this section will have shown you the importance of mirrors, blind spots and observation, but I suggest you work through the chapter on "The Basics" to ensure that this is firmly entrenched in your mind for good.

**Remember, a car is potentially a lethal weapon and you are in control of it.
It takes less than a second to check your mirrors, but if you don't, you will regret it
FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE IF YOU CAUSE A FATAL ACCIDENT**

Don't fail the Physical!

If you refer back to the Top Ten reasons for failure, surprisingly the physical skill of driving doesn't feature very highly. Only 'moving away under control' and 'lack of steering control' find their way into the Top Ten.

You have probably realised by now that the physical ability to drive is the easiest bit to master, and that the hardest part is the thinking behind it. However, what can you do if on your test, the nerves get the better of you, and the physical ability to drive seems to leave you temporarily? So many people drive really well during their lessons, and then go to pieces on their test. What maybe of little consequence on your lesson can turn into a catastrophe if you let it get to you on your test.

**If you usually drive well on your lesson, then remember,
you can also do it on your test as well; you just may not think that you can!**

No good instructor will let a pupil take their test before they are ready, as it's very demoralising to fail your test. Your instructor wants you to be as prepared as possible, so you don't have to go through the upset of failing. Therefore, it's in everyone's interest to make sure you are fully prepared.

Only clutch and steering control feature in this section, and if you have difficulty in these areas, please don't put in for your test until you feel totally confident in your ability. When you have to do an uphill start, if you are scared that you may roll back and feeling nervous about it, then trust me,

you are not ready for your test.

So, ask yourself (and your instructor) if your physical driving ability is up to test standard. If it isn't, carry on working on it until it is; but if it is, and you are concerned that nerves will get to you on your test and prevent you from driving as well as you normally would, then make sure you work through the '**Test day Stress-Busters**' chapter. You will find that so long as your drive is up to the required standard, then you will not suddenly lose your ability to drive due to nerves.

Perfect Planning and Execution

Look again at the Top Ten reasons for failure. Which ones do you think are related to planning and decision-making? I consider the following reasons for failure could be prevented, or at least reduced with more thought;

Observation at junctions

Incorrect positioning

Inappropriate speed

Use of signals

How many times have you said '*If only.....*' followed by a range of comments, such as, '*I'd seen that car at the roundabout*', '*remembered to turn my signal on/off*', '*stayed in the correct lane*', '*spotted the speed limit sign*' etc.

After the event, it's very easy to be full of remorse, bitterness, anger and a range of other emotions, but that just makes you feel worse about failing your test. How much better would it be to say, '*I drove to the best of my ability, and was really in the 'zone' and was aware of everything happening around me.*'? If your physical drive is up to the required standard, then how frustrating would it be to fail on something as simple as missing a speed limit, or forgetting to cancel your signal?

Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance

Remembering this statement is all very well when preparing for an examination; all you have to do is know what's on the syllabus and revise accordingly. However, driving involves making instant judgements and decisions that can affect lives; a split second decision that could result in life or death. Do you think this sounds a bit heavy? Well, so is a car when it hits you at 70mph! Therefore, it's imperative that your judgement is sound and that you always drive with utmost concentration and thought. This is perhaps the hardest part of all when learning to drive.

Awareness and Planning

Firstly, let's look at the easy part; increased awareness and planning. The items that are on the Top Ten reasons for failure, such as making sure you are in the correct lane on a roundabout, using your signals correctly and cancelling them, making sure you notice all the changes in speed limits and other appropriate road signs are easily dealt with.

Your instructor will teach you all of the above, but remembering them during your test is a different matter. Often it's not lack of ability, but lack of memory that causes the problems. For example, how many times do you forget which lane you should be in on a roundabout, forget to change to second gear for a junction, or forget to cancel your signal?

On countless occasions, I've been with a pupil who is ranting on about other drivers who don't give a signal, saying, '*If he'd indicated off the roundabout, I could have gone, but I didn't know which way he was going*'. I then have to remind them to put their own signal on because they have forgotten it! There are many techniques in **L of a way 2 Pass** that will help you immensely, and you

will find that your awareness and planning skills will increase greatly, and the number of times that you instructor has to repeat things like; *'remember to cancel your signal'*, will decrease rapidly, the result of which will be that you should be able to take your driving test in a shorter time than if you hadn't used the techniques.

Judgement

This is the difficult area for many people because a lot of judgement is common sense, and sometimes it's very hard to teach common sense. On many occasions, I've had a pupil ask, *'Can I go?'*, whilst we are waiting at a junction with a huge truck coming towards us! I feel that some pupils do have a death wish! Spatial awareness also seems to be another problem that many people have. They may try to fit through a gap that a motorcycle wouldn't attempt, or wait when there's a gap that a bus could get through.

One of the best methods that I've found for improving judgement is by getting pupils to watch other people driving and making a decision whether to pull out of a junction or roundabout or not, and asking the pupils to decide if they would think it was safe to pull out. A good exercise to try when you are a passenger, is to imagine that you are driving and see if the driver makes the same decision to wait or go, as you would have done if you were driving. You may be very surprised at the difference between your judgement and that of the driver you are watching.

Often, when you watch a good driver, they will go for a seemingly impossible gap on a roundabout that you wouldn't even consider. You must remember that they have experience behind them, and are very competent at clutch control. An experienced driver will have pulled out whilst you would be still trying to decide whether your clutch is at bite or not!

'Can I go?'

The problem with this question is that if you had pulled out instead of asking whether you should pull out or not, then you probably could have made the move, but by the time you have asked the question, it's too late! You can see now the problems associated with judgement; it's often a split second decision. Unlike a manoeuvre when you can take time to do it properly and your instructor can talk you through it stage by stage, judgement is 'instant'.

Therefore, although judgement can be taught to a certain degree, for example, if you could walk across a road as a pedestrian, then you have time to go in the car, it's ultimately a matter of experience. As one of the main objectives of **L of a way 2 Pass** is to reduce the number of lessons that you will need, what I am now saying seems to fly totally in the face of what we are trying to achieve; on the one hand I'm trying to reduce the number of lessons you will require, and on the other, I'm telling you that you need more experience. How can you do both?

As I said previously, you need to watch other people drive, and in turn, learn from their knowledge and expertise, and transfer it to your own driving. If you have one lesson per week, you aren't going to gain experience and judgement very quickly, but by utilising the visualisation exercises, you will be re-running through your lessons, and can look back at what you would have done differently if you were able to go back to the same situation again.

When can I take my test?

Many people complain about the long time that they have to wait before they can take their driving test. As over half of the tests conducted in this country result in failure, then theoretically these waiting times could be halved if candidates were at the required standard before taking their test. This is one of the reasons for D.S.A. publishing the Top Ten Reasons for Failure, and consequently for me writing this chapter. You will know yourself when you feel confident in your ability, but your instructor will advise you when he feels that you are at the required standard.

If you are in any doubt, then look no further than the advice from DSA; 'If you're not getting it right 100% of the time without your instructor's help, then you're not ready to take your test'. Just think back to your last lesson; how often did your instructor have to help or remind you about something?

To be ready for your test, you need to be able to drive for the whole lesson with no help or advice from your instructor other than your instructor giving you directions. If this sounds harsh, just remember; when you have passed your test, your instructor is not there to help you on that steep hill when you stall, or to tell you if it's O.K. to go at that busy roundabout.

Hopefully, you will have found the advice in this chapter useful. If you would like further information, please contact Diane Hall on 07930 697406, or at Lofaway2pass@gmail.com

Book is available to purchase at www.Lofaway2pass.com, or online at Amazon etc.

You can search for an L of a way 2 Pass Accredited Instructor in your area at www.Lofaway2Pass.com. What does this mean for you? By using a range of proven specialist techniques, specially adapted for learner drivers, your **Accredited Driving Instructor** will tailor the lesson to your specific learning style, enabling you to take on board information much more easily. The benefit is that you will become a safer, more competent driver, and take your test feeling calm and relaxed, stress free, and confident in your ability. If you have **dyslexia** or **dyspraxia** your instructor will understand the particular issues that you may face when learning to drive, such as short term memory difficulties and sequencing problems, and will also understand how frustrating this can be for you. The specialist techniques will combat these issues and also deal with any negative emotions that may hold you back, such as frustration, anxiety, lack of self-confidence etc.

If you are an ADI/PDI and would like further information about CPD courses to train as an Accredited Instructor, please visit the Driving Instructor page at www.Lofaway2Pass.com

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