

ALL WEATHER DRIVING

Before driving, especially when weather conditions are not good, you should always make sure your vehicle is ready and safe to drive. In particular, make sure the tyres are in good condition, and the windows (inside and outside), mirrors and lights are clean, and that all the lights are working correctly.

Make sure you understand and know how to operate the heater / demister system of your car, and keep a clean cloth in the car to wipe the windows dry if necessary.

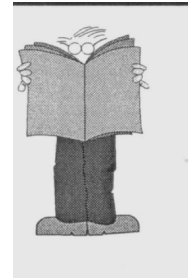
Remember **P-O-W-E-R** :-

Make sure that:-

- You have enough **P**etrol (or diesel fuel) for your journey to ensure you are not left stranded out in the open, and enough to keep the heater going if necessary in case you get stuck somewhere. **This could be your lifeline.**
- The engine **O**il level is correct, so that the engine doesn't suffer a breakdown due to insufficient oil. Also make sure your brake fluid is at the correct level.
- The **W**ater levels are to the required amounts. This should include the engine coolant, and the windscreen washer fluid. It is also a good idea to carry some spare windscreen washer fluid /water mix to top up on a long journey, especially in winter, when there is a lot of salt on the roads – it's amazing how much you will use as the windscreen ends up filthy on a regular basis.
- Check the **E**lectrics for correct operation. This includes the headlights, direction indicators, brake lights, fog lights, and the windscreen wipers. You should also make sure that the window de-misting is fully operational.
- Check the **R**ubber items for wear and condition. This includes tyres and windscreen wiper blades. Try to keep the windscreen wiper blades clean, using a little methylated spirit or similar on a piece of clean paper kitchen towel. Make sure your tyres are at the recommended pressures and are in good condition with plenty of tread.
- Make sure your brakes are maintained in top condition – **your life may depend on them.**

Be aware of the regulations concerning use of fog lights. (Highway Code Rule 236)

STUDY



"The Highway Code"
Rules 226-237

LAW



"The Highway Code"
Rules 226, 229,
236

SNOW AND ICE

- Make sure any and all snow and ice has been cleared from lights , windows, mirrors (and number plates – it’s a legal requirement that these are legible). Be prepared to stop regularly to clear any build –up of snow and ice. Don’t just rely on the wipers to clear it, because the wiper blades could be frozen to the window. If you operate the wiper control under these conditions, the rubbers could easily be damaged and not clear the screen properly, and you could damage the mechanism. Don’t pour boiling water on the windscreen to clear it, as you may end up cracking the glass.
- Make sure snow has been cleared from the bonnet, as a huge piece of snow suddenly shooting off and into the windscreen can have disastrous results. Also ensure the snow has been cleared from the roof, as the disastrous results could happen to following drivers.
- Whilst you are clearing all the snow and ice, have the engine running, with the heater set to hot to ensure the windows are free from misting before you set off. If you have a re-circulation setting, set this in the correct position so that the interior of the car warms up quicker. Don’t forget to deactivate the re-circulation before you set off, or the windows could end up being steamed up again, because there is no fresh air entering the car. Don’t attempt to drive off until you are satisfied that all the windows and mirrors are clear.
- Keep a can of de-icer in the boot, along with a pair of wellies, a shovel, and maybe a container of rock salt or similar. It’s a good idea to keep a spare container of extra windscreen washer fluid mix, because you can very quickly empty the reservoir in winter.
- Also consider taking along some warm clothing and maybe a flask of hot drink in case you get stuck somewhere.
- Have you got enough fuel to keep the engine and heater running if you end up stuck.
- All controls (clutch, gears, accelerator(gas), steering and brakes) should be operated as smoothly and gently as possible, and try to anticipate even further ahead. Look out for other drivers who may lose control of their vehicle, and be one step ahead of them.
- In snow, it is usually better to try to set off in 2nd gear rather than 1st because there is less likelihood of the wheels spinning, and if you need to brake do it much sooner and gentler than usual.
- Brake as gently and as early as possible, and get in a lower gear sooner, especially when approaching a downhill section. (before you actually start going downhill)
- Remember that snow can cover up markings painted on the road, so extra care is needed.
- Watch out for “Black Ice” – it may just look wet. If the tyre noise suddenly decreases, this is a sign there may be black ice. Don’t panic – just take everything calmly and smoothly as possible.
- Try to time your driving and adjust your speed early approaching a bend or corner, so that you don’t have to brake at all if possible.
- Keep a constant look out for escape routes in case another vehicle may be heading towards you out of control, and take any avoiding action as smoothly, early and gently as possible.

Wet Weather

- Remember that your stopping distance will be increased when the road is wet. The 2 second rule should now be the 4 second rule at least. If there has been a prolonged dry spell before heavy rain, take extra care because the roads may be coated with a mixture of oil, rubber and general dirt. This can become extremely slippery when it first becomes wet.
- Be aware of spray from other vehicles, especially large goods vehicles, and use your windscreen wipers. If you need to keep your wipers on, it is usually a good idea to switch on your headlights, so that other drivers can see you sooner as well as increasing your own vision.
- You may find it more difficult to see road markings when wet, especially when it is also dark, so be more vigilant.
- Pedestrians may be more difficult to see, and they may not be as careful when crossing the road, keeping their heads down to avoid the rain etc, and may also be using umbrellas, which can obscure their vision.
- In periods of heavy rain, be aware of deep puddles in the road. Drains may be blocked with dead leaves and other debris. By looking well ahead, you may be able to spot puddles in advance, and have more time to take any necessary avoiding action. Make sure you check your mirrors before moving out to avoid the puddles, and consider if you need to use a signal, as following drivers may not have seen the puddle.

If the puddle cannot be safely avoided, then slow right down, and consider stopping.

You need to consider how deep the water is, and whether or not to continue.

If you do continue through the water, then go as slowly as possible in as low a gear as possible. You will probably find that the water is most shallow in the middle of the road, but be wary of other drivers doing the same coming in the opposite direction. If you see another vehicle coming fast through the water, then hold back until they have passed – their “bow wave” could easily swamp your vehicle and it’s electrics. When you have safely passed the puddle, the gently try your brakes when it is safe to do so – wet brakes don’t usually work too well. If you need to dry out your brakes, then you can do so by driving very slowly with a very light application of the brakes.

- Don’t speed through heavy surface water, you could end up “aquaplaning”, where the tyres can’t cope with the amount of water, and don’t have adequate contact with the road surface.

High Winds



- Before driving in very high winds, consider is your journey really necessary. Stability of the vehicle can be badly affected, especially if you are driving a high-sided vehicle or towing a trailer or caravan etc
- Always be aware of other road users, and their ability to control their vehicle in these conditions.
- Be especially wary of cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians who may suddenly be blown off course.
- You may be driving in a fairly sheltered environment for example between high buildings, then when you emerge you can be suddenly be confronted by extreme gusts of wind.
- A similar effect may be encountered when driving over flyovers, bridges etc
- If you are passing a large goods vehicle, be wary of the turbulence created by the large vehicle, especially as you come past it.
- Watch out for rubbish, debris from trees etc in the road, and if you need to pass it, make sure you don't swerve without first checking around you for other road users.
- Try to avoid having anything on a roof rack, which will increase the effect of the wind on your vehicle, and if you must have something on the roof, make doubly sure it is well secured.

Fog

- Consider do you really need to drive in thick fog.
- Remember the rules for use of fog lights – only use them when visibility is down to 100 metres or less.
When visibility improves, switch them off
- Make sure your lights are working, and clean, and **SWITCH THEM ON**
- You may have to consider switching off your headlights, and using just foglights.
- Avoid using main beam headlights, as they can reflect on the fog and dazzle you.
- If you are queueing in traffic, it can be helpful to drivers behind if you temporarily switch off your rear foglights to avoid dazzle.
- Don't assume that because you can't see any oncoming headlights that there is no oncoming traffic – some people don't bother to switch their headlights on.
- Make sure your windscreen washer bottle is full, and use your wipers and washers as necessary – fog can easily deposit a lot of moisture on your windscreen without you realising.
- **Never** drive outside the limits of what you can see.
- **Never** assume the driver in front can see better than you can
Don't follow the vehicle in front too closely, hanging on to their rear lights. You could find yourself running into the back of the vehicle if they stop quickly. If you can't see safely yourself, then **SLOW DOWN**
- The extra eyestrain peering through fog can be very tiring – consider stopping at regular intervals for a rest, but make sure you don't stop anywhere that can cause an extra hazard for other drivers in the fog.
- If someone is following you too closely (“tailgating”), don't be pressured into driving too fast for the conditions – consider giving a left signal and pulling over to let them past, and take their bad driving elsewhere.
- Junctions can be particularly hazardous in fog. Switch off any music, and open the windows so you can hear approaching traffic. If you have to stop for any time at a junction, keep your foot on the brake pedal so your brake lights give a bit extra visibility to those behind.
- Remember your theory test regarding colours of studs at the sides of the road and between lanes.

Hot Weather and Sunshine

- Check tyres for condition and pressure (when cold)
- Make sure the engine coolant reservoir is at the recommended level, because it will be more in demand in hot weather.
- Check the windscreen washer fluid level before a journey, because there will be more insects etc getting on your windscreen, with a bigger risk of smearing. Keeping your windscreen clean helps to cut down on glare. Using an additive helps to cut through the smearing.
- Consider wearing appropriate sunglasses, in order to reduce eye strain. Reflections of strong sunlight on a wet road can be particularly bad. Winter sun can be very low in the sky, so it may be a good idea to wear sunglasses to avoid glare.
- If you are going on a long journey in hot weather, make sure you have enough fluid to drink to avoid dehydration and fatigue.
- During long periods of hot weather, the road surface may be very soft. This can affect your steering and braking, so be aware of the possibility. There may be loose chippings on the road to try to combat this softening, so it is important to observe advisory speed limits in these conditions. Try to keep a bigger distance from other vehicles to avoid damage from flying stone chips, and avoid injury to other road users.
- If you have to queue in traffic for extended periods, consider switching off your engine. Not only do you save on fuel and pollution, but it will help to avoid overheating the engine.