



PART 3: GETTING BACK ON THE ROAD

The third of four safety bulletins to provide advice for older drivers during the lock-down period.

INTRODUCTION

The Older Drivers Forum consists of road safety experts and volunteers, focused on how to keep older drivers driving safely, for longer.

Lots of useful information can be found on our web site www.olderdriversforum.com

✓ OUR AIM

With older drivers following government instructions and **social distancing to save lives**, this means many have also taking a break from driving.

This bulletin provides advice for older drivers as they prepare to drive again when the government announces it is safe to do so.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

In Bulletin 2 we set out various ways of keeping physically and mentally attuned to take to the roads again. Before driving consider:

✓ PHYSICAL PREPARATION

- Check you have full movement and strength of neck, hands and legs.
- Check you are feeling mentally sharp to make the quick decisions driving entails.
- Check with your GP and pharmacist that no new conditions or medications need to be reported to the DVLA or will impact your ability to drive.

✓ MENTAL PREPARATION

- Refresh your knowledge of the Highway Code. www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk
- Sit in an upright chair, close your eyes, visualize yourself driving a familiar route and imagine using your core driving skills:
 - Accurate control of speed when manoeuvring at slow speeds.
 - Early response to road signs with gradual slowing as you approach hazards.
 - Observe, because you 'want' to know what is going on around you, rather than doing it by rote. Mirror, signal, manoeuvre.
- Repeat this visualisation before your first journey.

Be aware that other drivers driving skills may be rusty. **Be prepared for the unexpected!**



CAR PREPARATION

✓ BATTERY

- Check this is fully charged.

✓ FLUIDS

Check these are at the correct levels;

- Oil
- Engine coolant
- Brake fluid
- Screen washer fluid

✓ LIGHTS

- Check these are all functioning.
- Ask a friend to check the rear and brake lights. Otherwise back the car in front of a reflective surface and check in your rear-view mirror that those lights are working.

✓ WINDSCREEN WIPERS

- Lift them off the windscreen to ensure they have not become stuck.
- Check the blades have no splits.

✓ VISIBILITY

- Clean the windscreens, windows and mirrors.

✓ TYRES

- Check no cracks or bulges have developed in the tyre's side walls.
- Check the tread depths are a minimum of 1.6mm across the central three quarters of the tyre. If you do not have a tread depth gauge insert a 20p coin into the tyre's tread. If the outer band is obscured, then the tyres are legal.
- Check the pressures are correct. Do not forget the spare tyre.

✓ BRAKES

- With care move the car forward and backward to make sure the brakes have not seized.
- Gently try the brakes when you first drive off to check they are working safely. In the first few miles the brakes may make a grinding noise as the brake pads clean the surface of the discs. If this noise persists then book the car into the garage for an inspection.

✓ DRIVING LICENCE, TAX & INSURANCE

- Check these are up to date.

✓ MOT

- If this expired during the lock-down period the government has given a 6-month extension, but book your car in for a MOT as soon as possible.



JOURNEY PLANNING

Your first drive should be as stress-free as possible so planning is essential.

- ✓ **ROUTE**
 - Select a familiar 30-minute route that has the fewest possible junctions.
- ✓ **DAY/TIME OF WEEK**
 - Choose a day and time when there will be the lightest traffic.
- ✓ **WEATHER**
 - Choose a day when there is clear visibility and the roads are dry.
- ✓ **COMPANION**
 - Ask an experienced driver, a family member or friend, to accompany you for reassurance.
 - Prior to the journey explain the preparation you have done and the route you have planned.
- ✓ **DRIVE DEBRIEF**
 - At the end of the drive talk through your experience with your companion. First reflect on what you did well then what you could improve on for the future. Invite your companion to contribute to these discussions.

Then go out for regular drives to build your driving confidence.

DRIVING ASSESSMENT

We strongly recommend that at this driving watershed you book a mature-driver refresher session.

These informal ninety-minute assessments use your own car and take place over familiar local roads. You can even bring a friend. These appraisals are confidential, supportive and will help to brush up your skills and build confidence again. There is no need to inform the DVLA or insurers of the outcome.

Providers of these assessments can be found at
www.olderdriversforum.com/courses/