



IAM ADVANCED DRIVING TEST CHECKLIST AND TIPS

Introduction

GAM thought it might help Associates if we provided a brief document on some of the things we know Associates struggle with and on things that have come out of feedback from Examiners.

Approaching the Car

As you approach your vehicle, say to your Observer or Examiner, "Although I drove here myself and performed the necessary checks before doing so, I can check some elements of POWDERY, namely Damage and Rubber." Perform a visual scan around the vehicle for damage while it has been parked, and then do the same for tyres. Don't forget that wipers are an important element of Rubber.

Introduce the subject of the system of car control at this stage; it adds a little sparkle if you explain IPSGA and TUG: Take, Use, Give. If you don't know this, there is little point in continuing with the drive.

Inside the Car

Once inside the car, complete the POWDERY checks, ensuring you have enough fuel for the journey, and the coolant and oil lights are extinguished. The final check is You. How do you feel? Are you tired or upset? This last check is perhaps the most important.

Now perform your cockpit drill, which normally goes something like, "I drove the car here. The mirrors, seat and steering wheel are adjusted to my settings, it is in neutral (or park), and the handbrake is on. The car is safe."

Next is your static brake check. Pump the foot brake a few times. It will become progressively harder - hopefully! Maintaining pressure on the foot brake, depress the clutch and start the engine. The pedal should come back up, and if it does you are now ready to drive.

Driving

If conditions permit, ask your Observer/Examiner whether they want you to perform a rolling brake test, explaining first that you drove the car to the venue and are content that it brakes in a straight line and that the systems are working. Our depot at Guildford offers a perfect opportunity to conduct an RBT, but on your test or in other everyday conditions you should not be pulling into traffic and considering doing one.



Associates should follow that by having a go at spoken thoughts: it focuses concentration. Start by setting the scene: "I am driving a Ford Focus with a 1.6 litre petrol engine that has 135 bhp, front wheel drive and a six-speed manual gearbox." If you want to add a little further sparkle you can explain the different handling characteristics of front and rear wheel drive cars and what you expect your Focus to do when cornering.

Then factor in the weather and road conditions: "it has been raining and the road is wet, so I am doubling my braking distances and factoring those conditions into my cornering."

You have set the scene, so comment on your scanning ahead into the distance and nearer to your car. A useful shorthand is dipped and main beam: "Eyes on main beam, I can see a pedestrian walking towards us with a dog on a lead": remember to grade hazards; a dog not on a lead is a greater hazard than one on a lead: "eyes on dipped beam, I am happy with my position and speed."

Remember to include mirror checks in your spoken thoughts. At the outset, you can say, "I shall be checking my mirrors at least every seven seconds", but on the drive don't merely say "mirror check" as that inevitably leads the person in the passenger seat to ask "And so what?" Say what you are doing as a result of taking in the information from your mirror. For example, "Mirror check. I've a car close behind and if the opportunity presents I shall consider moving over to let it pass; otherwise, I shall not allow it to affect my drive." Or: "Mirror check. I've one a safe distance behind and I'm happy with that."

Associates should practice this every day. It will become more comfortable the more you do it, and remember: the trick is not simply to identify hazards: "Children on the pavement ahead"; but to say what you are doing about them: "I am therefore bringing the vehicle out a little more to the centre of the road, covering the horn and being ready to brake."

Make progress. In recent times, GAM has been notified of an Associate failing for not making progress than for anything else. When leaving a 30-mph limit and entering a national limit, the aim is not to floor the accelerator (not to make the maximum progress) but to make safe and smooth progress, considering tyre grip, road conditions, etc. But if you are on a straight road in a national limit with no traffic in front of you and you're doing 40mph, you will be marked down for not making progress.

Associates sometimes forget to include limit points in their commentary. The limit point is the furthest point to which you have an uninterrupted view of the road as it disappears around a bend or over a brow. You must be able to stop within this distance on your side of the road.

There also seems to be some confusion about straight lining, with many Associates believing it is not permitted. A moving vehicle is safest when it is following a straight line on an even surface, so if the opportunity presents why not take it? But remember what SLAP stands for:

- SAFE – is it safe, given the view available and any hazards?
- LEGAL – Is it legal? (Road signs and markings)
- ACHIEVE – Does it achieve something?
- PERCEPTION – What is the perception of another road user of your actions, especially a new or nervous road user?



Automatic Gearboxes

Associates need to be aware of the capabilities of their automatic gearbox, don't just it only in Drive. Modern automatic boxes offer much more ability to control a car than the old torque converter boxes did, with sport modes and sometimes paddles. Your Examiner will expect you to be able to demonstrate your full understanding of your car's gearbox and to be able to use it flexibly according to the conditions. For example, you are approaching the brow of a hill and therefore know that it is going to drop down on the other side. In Drive, the car will run away, requiring frequent application of the brakes, whereas by anticipating that and using manual mode (if your car has it) or the paddle shifts (if your car has them) you can achieve greater control.

Summary

As Observers, we deliver coaching according to IPSGA and the six competencies framed around it: core driving skills, bends, junctions and roundabouts, overtaking, motorways and dual carriageways and manoeuvring. All these competencies should be covered in your runs with GAM and the requirements are covered comprehensively in the IAM book, so we don't need to go over them here.

GAM also recommends you to visit www.reglocal.com, where you will find lots of helpful tips covering everything you will need to pass your advanced test and hopefully achieve a F1RST, and if you haven't already got one, buy yourself the latest issue of Roadcraft, the police drivers' handbook.

Safe driving!