

**TEACHING
DEAF PEOPLE TO DRIVE**



**HANDBOOK FOR DRIVING
INSTRUCTORS**

This booklet has been produced by the Institute of Master Tutors of Driving to give guidance to instructors for teaching deaf people to drive. It has only been possible with the help of many deaf and hearing people and bodies concerned with the deaf, in particular the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and the British Deaf Association. We wish to acknowledge the willing and voluntary help of Mr WA Johnston, the County Road Safety Officer for West Yorkshire, who has had more experience in teaching deaf children how to use our roads than anybody else in the country. Mr Johnston produced a Highway Code for the Deaf in the 1960s. He was so well aware of the limited vocabulary of deaf people that he realised in its normal form the wording was too complicated for their understanding. We are greatly indebted to him for his interest and guidance.

TEACHING DEAF PEOPLE TO DRIVE

Deafness is not classed as a driver disability. No restrictions are placed on a full licence when a deaf driver has passed the driving test. Those who have no useful hearing, however, are required to record their deafness on the Provisional Licence Application Form.

When filling in the Driving Standards Agency's Application Form for the Driving Test, disclosing their deafness in the box marked "disabilities and special circumstances" will help to ensure that the Driving Examiner is properly prepared. A deaf person is entitled to have a Sign Language interpreter with him/her for the Test to interpret the Examiner's instructions and questions on the Highway Code.

Driving Instructors are not often called upon to tackle this type of training and many are reluctant to undertake the task when asked to do so due to their very limited experience of deaf people and the different methods of communication required.

As a result, deaf people are not always able to obtain expert tuition and may have to rely on amateur instructors such as parents and friends. These may be well versed in communicating with deaf people, but are not necessarily qualified to teach good driving. The effect of deafness necessitates training by specialists in the art of teaching the subject and those who have complete understanding of the extra careful explanation required. The instructor who does undertake this teaching will find the experience both rewarding and enriching.

The purpose of this leaflet is to give some guidelines which will help the driving instructor to communicate his skills to deaf people.

In this country there are some 50,000 people either born deaf or deafened in early childhood, as well as several thousand others who become profoundly deaf in adult life after acquiring speech and verbal/written language. It may not be generally known that when a hearing child first goes to school he or she has already a vocabulary of approximately 2,000 words. Deaf children often start school with almost a non-existent written/spoken vocabulary. They are not able to hear general conversation, not able to obtain any information from the radio and can only get limited help from television. Altogether this severely limits a deaf person's access to information.

As the age of 17 must have been reached before a provisional licence can be issued, the deaf youngster, having received his education mainly in special schools or units, has some speech, although this may be difficult to follow. Usually he/she uses sign language, and in addition will be able to lip-read to a certain extent. Lip-reading depends as much on the clarity of the speaker's lip movements as on the ability of the deaf person. The young person may have a reading age much lower than his natural age. Consequently, his/her ability to read and write may be limited. He/she can, however, be just as understanding and with patience from the instructor will assimilate all that has to be learned to drive a motor vehicle.

The problem for the instructor is to learn the best way to impart the knowledge and the skill to the pupil.

The essential is – WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF COMMUNICATION?

The instructor does not need to learn sign language but it is necessary for him or her to use simple straight-forward words and ones which have only one meaning. For example: "do not hug the middle of the road." The word "hug" may be interpreted literally by a deaf pupil as meaning someone putting arms round another. Again, the words "traffic jam" may not be understood. "Jam" is something one spreads on bread and butter.

Because they have never had to rely on hearing, a deaf person's use of the other senses is often a great deal sharper. The powers of concentration with deaf people are often of the highest order.

It is essential to speak distinctly and slightly slower than usual and in good light. Do not talk through your teeth. It will be appreciated that this approach means it has to be a face-to-face conversation and can therefore only be used in a stationary situation. Never shout – the pupil is deaf.

Due to the lack of hearing it is vital that all spoken instruction be reinforced by demonstrations. Always be patient. Unsatisfactory response is likely to be the fault of the teacher rather than the pupil.

At the outset it is necessary to establish what is the best means of communication and this should be done while stationary. The gestures recommended are not necessarily in accordance with signs used in British Sign Language and must therefore be explained and fully understood by the pupil at the outset. Putting a thumb up will mean “good”, whereas putting a thumb down will mean “bad”. Face-to-face conversation, demonstration, written notes and the use of visual aids will cover all requirements.

The first introduction to the controls of the motor car will be as usual, by demonstration, but in addition emphasis must be made to show which limb has to operate each control as this is the method which will be used to communicate. For instance, the right leg being the limb used for the accelerator and the footbrake, tap your own right leg as you place it over and point to the accelerator and the footbrake. Similarly, when demonstrating the use of the clutch, tap your own left leg as you demonstrate how to operate this pedal. This will establish to the pupil what he/she is being asked when you tap either leg.

Visual aids are not only invaluable, they are essential. The manual “Driving – The Essential Skills” shows the correct seating positions. The diagrammatical car illustrations showing the positions of the controls enhance your own demonstration and location in the car itself. “Driving – The Essential Skills” illustrates the correct way to use the steering wheel.

As a large amount of learning by everybody takes place through the eyes, it will be readily understood how the task of teaching deaf people becomes less difficult by demonstration, use of visual aids, and simple language.

Often there is a greater sensitivity of “touch” with the deaf person than with the hearing. This has been developed over the normal course of living with deafness, and as a result clutch control and co-ordination with the accelerator are acquired a great deal more easily. Deaf people do not lack intelligence.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTROLS

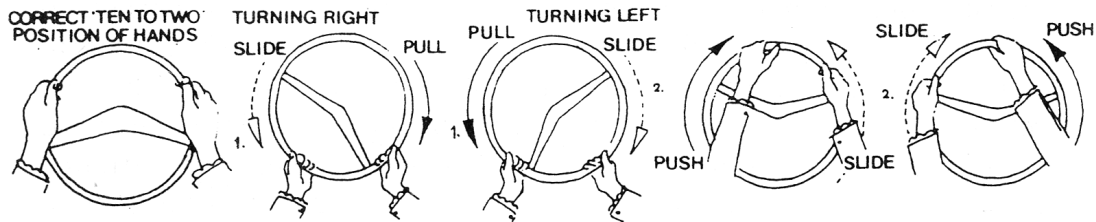
1. MIRRORS

Explanation of the need for constant use and why. Pointing first towards the eyes and then to the mirrors will be the method used throughout.

2. STEERING

Demonstration as normally shown to hearing pupils, plus the use of the illustrations in the visual aids. Establish at the outset, while stationary, how vital it is to look well down the road and not just ahead of the bonnet of the vehicle. When it is seen that the eyes have dropped with the resultant wander of the vehicle, point to pupil's eyes followed by a hand movement straight ahead.

Visual aids will also help to show the correct way to turn the wheel.



3. GEARS

Following explanation of the position of each gear and its uses, establish the method to be used to communicate which gear needs to be selected when on the move. To indicate which gear is required, place right hand (palm facing forward) near to the windscreen.

For 1st gear point index finger upwards

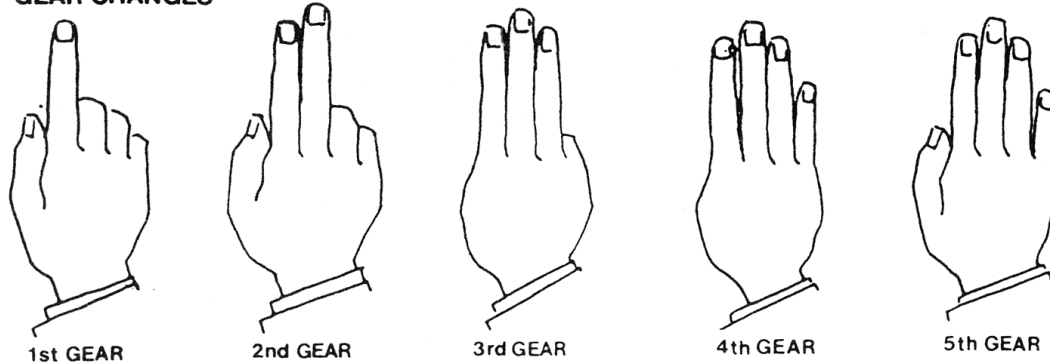
For 2nd gear point first two fingers upwards

For 3rd gear point three fingers upwards

For 4th gear point four fingers upwards

For 5th gear (when fitted) point all fingers and thumb upwards.

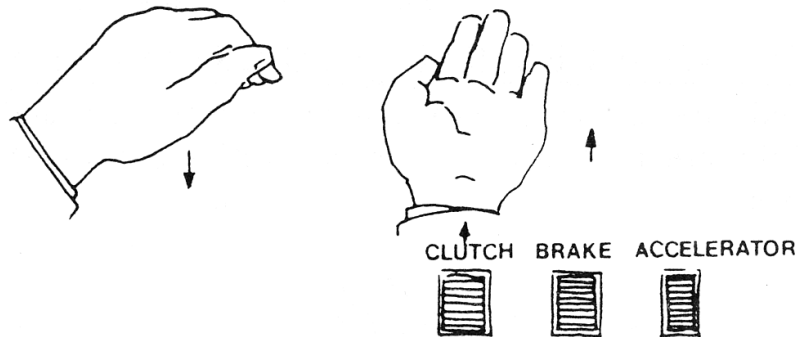
GEAR CHANGES



Recognising when it is necessary to change gear will be known by the awareness of different speeds, but also by the feel of vibrations. It is very helpful if the vehicle is fitted with a revolution counter as it can then be taught that when the needle reaches the correct number of revolutions on the dial this indicates the necessity to move to another gear, either up or down.

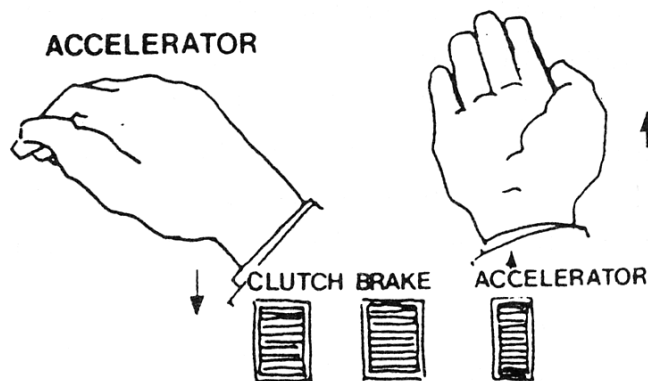
4. CLUTCH

Locate with left foot, tapping left leg, explain use and how to operate, again using visual aids in addition. Establish the code which will be used for instruction on use of the clutch when the vehicle is moving. Place left hand horizontally, as near to the dashboard as possible. When requiring the clutch to be pressed, palm facing down, move hand downwards. For lifting the clutch, palm facing up, move hand upwards.



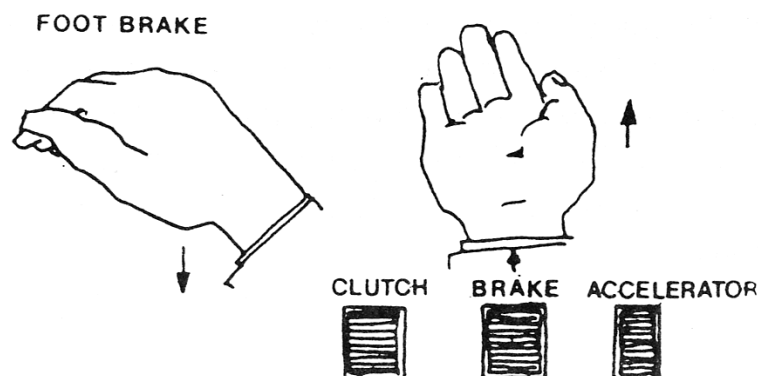
5. ACCELERATOR

Having explained what this is for, where it is and how to use it, establish the method you will use to indicate when you require more or less pressure. Raise right hand to shoulder level in horizontal position with palm facing downwards. As advised with left hand for the clutch, move right hand up or down to demonstrate the pressure required.



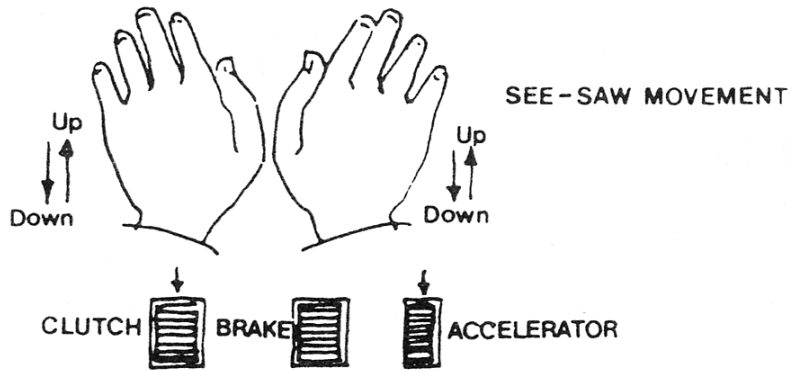
6. FOOTBRAKE

Following introduction to its use, make sure your pupil then knows what will be the signal you will use when braking is required. Raise right hand again in horizontal position, with palm facing downwards, but this time locate your hand a little further to the left in order to indicate the use of the middle pedal. As advised with left hand for the clutch, move hand up or down to demonstrate the pressure required.



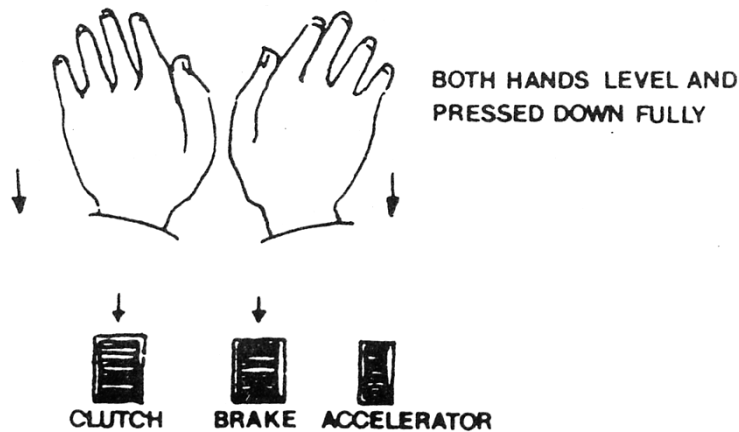
7. CLUTCH AND ACCELERATOR CO-ORDINATION

Use both hands (palms facing down) extended horizontally, and work in unison – one up and the other down like a see-saw. Biting point is shown to be when hands are level.



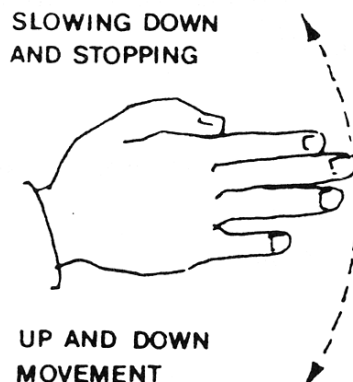
8. STOPPING

While stationary, demonstrate by raising the right foot from the accelerator and transferring it to the footbrake, followed by progressive pressure. Later, when on the move, the right hand will be used as already described. How much pressure is required will be shown by the amount of downward movement of the hand. Just before the vehicle is stationary and the left foot is required to press the clutch, the left hand should be raised alongside the right and pressed down fully.



FURTHER SIGNALS FOR INSTRUCTIONS

When requiring the car to stop at the side of the road, use the same movement with the arm as advised for positioning and follow this by an up and down movement, similar to the Highway Code signal for "I am going to slow down or stop".

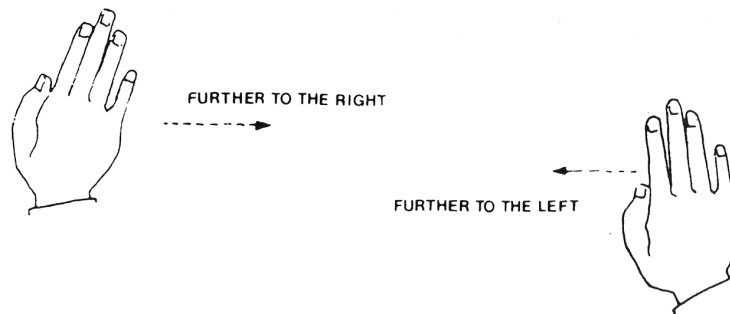


EMERGENCY STOP

The word “emergency” must be explained so that it is ensured the pupil understands exactly what this means in relation to stopping in a hurry. Give a demonstration, stressing the progressive braking and the use of the clutch at the last minute.

POSITIONING

Use right hand (back of hand facing pupil) with fingers extended. To indicate the necessity to move further to the right, move hand towards the right. Similarly, when requiring the vehicle to travel nearer to the left, move hand towards the left.



TURNING CORNERS

When requiring the pupil to take a road on the left:-

If it is the first road –

Place right hand up to the windscreen with one finger pointing upwards, immediately followed by moving the whole hand to the left.

If it is the second road –

Place right hand up to the windscreen with two fingers pointing upwards, immediately followed by moving the whole hand to the right.

When requiring the pupil to take a road on the right:

If it is the first road –

Place right hand up to the windscreen with one finger pointing upwards, immediately followed by moving the whole hand to the right.

SPEED – plus or minus

When more speed is needed by further pressure on the accelerator indicate this by using right arm, hand extended and palm facing downwards, the whole arm moving slowly and gently downward until the correct speed has been obtained.

Similarly, when more pressure is required on the footbrake, move arm slightly to the left to indicate the brake pedal. When less pressure on the accelerator is needed, or less braking, use right arm but with palm facing upwards and move upwards.

REVERSING, TURNING IN THE ROAD AND REVERSE PARKING

By now communication between instructor and pupil will have been well established and completely understood. These exercises will therefore be relatively easy to teach. The diagrams and illustrations in your visual aids will be of great assistance, plus demonstration of what is required. It is important to acquaint the pupil with the requirements as written in the DSA publication "Your Driving Test" in easy and simple terms. Ensure that the pupil completely understands what these exercises illustrate.

GENERAL

Deaf people can, and do, speak, but it is not always easy for people with normal hearing to understand what they are saying. It is difficult for them to make the sounds to which we are used, as they are unable to hear their own voices. Always have a writing pad ready to hand and ask the student to write down his question.

Learning the Highway Code can be helped by the instructor simplifying the language which is used. Formulate questions in written form and have the answers following in the same easy wording.

Instructors can benefit greatly by getting in touch with their own local deaf associations. They are always very ready to help with any problems which may arise.

Published by The Institute of Master Tutors of Driving.

© Elwyn Reed