



Working To Save Lives

**Graduated Driver Licensing Reforms  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**September 2010**

**Q 1. What are the changes and introduction dates?**

**A1. See Table below.**

Measure	When introduced	What is involved	Applies to
Compulsory lessons for Motorcycles	6 December 2010	A minimum of 16 hours lessons set out in an initial basic training programme	A person who takes out a first motorcycle learner permit on or after 6 December 2010
Compulsory lessons for Cars	4 April 2011	A minimum of 12 hours lessons set out in a training programme	A person who takes out a first learner permit for the category on or after 4 April 2011
Changes to the Driving Test	Quarter 4 2011	Test to be changed to include some elements that research now show us are relevant to good driving practice	Phased in initially for, first time learner permit holders in late 2011 and the driver testing service will be subject to external accreditation
Hazard Perception Test (HPT)	Quarter 3 2012	There is evidence that points to the value of a HPT. HPT teaches and examines a Drivers ability to recognise risks and Hazards	The RSA will shortly commence a study on HPT; on completion of the study a decision will be made on what form such test might take. Any such test is not envisaged before mid-2012 and the passing of necessary legislation
Strengthen Role of Accompanying Driver	Ongoing	Involving the accompanying driver to a greater degree in the learning process through learner manuals and logbooks	Formalising this needs new legislation but in advance of this we will encourage and support the accompanying driver to play a greater part in the learning to drive process
Lower Blood Alcohol	September 2011	A lower blood alcohol limit will apply	Learner drivers and novice drivers (within 2 years of taking out a full licence) will commit an offence if driving with a blood alcohol level of 20mg/100ml- this is lower than the 50mg/100ml that will apply to other car drivers
Higher level of Penalty Points	Legislation being prepared	Penalty Points for certain critical offences e.g. speeding, non-seatbelt wearing, mobile phone use will be doubled	Learner drivers and novice drivers (within 2 years of taking out a full licence) will be affected
R Plates	Legislation being prepared	Display an R plate while driving. Lower blood alcohol limit and higher level of penalty points will apply to this group	Learner drivers and novice drivers (within 2 years of taking out a full licence) when the legislation passed
Driver Theory test	Quarter 4 2011	Improve the test by upgrading content	New applicants for a Driver Theory Test after Autumn 2011
Additional Sentencing Options for Offenders	Following New Legislation	Specific sanctions and restrictions for learner drivers who are prosecuted for particular offences	All Learner Permit Holders and Novice Drivers once new Legislation is enacted

**Q2. I already hold a learner permit for a car how do the changes affect me?**

- A2. The compulsory lessons as announced will not apply to you as you already hold a learner permit in the licence category. The lessons will apply to those taking out a first time learner permit after the dates for introducing the lessons.

**Q3. Why are compulsory lessons needed by learner drivers?**

- A3. We learn skills in many different ways, the research about learning to drive tells us that a combination of formal lessons from a driving instructor covering the basic skills and many hours putting the skills in practice under supportive supervision is the best way to learn to drive. Many learners already take lessons with the focus largely on how to pass the driving test and this is important. However, the aim of the programme of lessons now being developed is to build long term skills that will benefit the learner for life.

**Q4. What will be involved in the compulsory Motorcycle lessons?**

- A4. An initial basic training programme covering on road and off-road lessons has been developed calling on best practice. The lessons will cover rules of the road, motorcycle controls, technical checks, managing the vehicle and motorcycle riding skills- copy of syllabus available on RSA website. The off-road element will be delivered by the driving instructor in a secure compound while the instructor will also oversee the on-road lessons. Completing all the lessons will take a minimum of 16 hours. Whilst there is no formal examination at the completion of the lessons, continuous assessment will be used by the trainer to satisfy him/herself that the learner has completed the modules satisfactorily as they progress through the programme.

**Q5. What will be involved in the compulsory Car lessons?**

- A5. Presently, the training programme is being developed and the lessons will cover the key skills needed by a learner driver. Among the aspects the programme will cover include - knowledge of rules of the road, understanding your vehicle, vehicle manoeuvring, developing hazard perception skills and responsibilities of the driver to other road users. The learner will be able to take the lessons at any point during the learning process and can practice with an accompanying driver during the time while taking lessons. Completing these lessons will take a minimum of 12 hours. Evidence of completing the lessons will be signed off in a learner's logbook by the Approved Driving Instructor. There will not have a formal examination at the completion of the lessons; however, continuous assessment will ensure that the learner has satisfactorily progressed through the programme. A number of countries already require mandatory lessons, in the Czech Republic there is a minimum of 34 hours, in Poland 30 hours, while a minimum of 13 hours is required in Austria.

**Q6. How will the lessons be enforced?**

- A6. You will get a certificate when you finish your course of lessons and this must be kept with your learner permit. For both Car and Motorcycle lessons you will have to present evidence of having taken the lessons before taking a driving test. Motorcycle riders must complete the programme before driving unsupervised on the road while a learner.

**Q7. Will the RSA set the price for Compulsory lessons?**

A7. No- there are presently some 1,800 ADI's in Ireland and this allows for a strong element of competition in the market. These ADI's have met set standards relating to their own knowledge of rules of the road, their driving skills and the ability to deliver tuition.

**Q8. What changes are planned for the driving test?**

A8. It is proposed to introduce changes to the test in late 2011. Research shows that with specific changes to the test the learning experience can be improved. As an example both Holland and the UK have introduced aspects of independent driving to the test and this is being considered for introduction here. Generally, this involves asking the learner to drive to a set point (which is usually a local landmark) without direction from the driver tester, this requires decision making by the learner that has been shown to be a good indicator of driving ability. It is planned to carry out a pilot phase of any changes with first time learner permit holders to assess its effectiveness. The driving test itself will be subject to external accreditation.

**Q9. How will the role of the accompanying driver be strengthened?**

A9. The best way to learn is to practice the skills you have learned. A rounded driver needs to have driven many thousands of kilometres to experience the many different kinds of traffic, weather and road conditions that demand a reaction from a driver. It is now well established that learning under the guidance of a knowledgeable supervisor is an effective way to build up driver competence. Too often the experience in Ireland is that the accompanying driver acts in a passive role. Suitable support and guidance material is now being developed to help the accompanying driver better understand the role he or she can play in the learning process- driver reference manuals will be published shortly. Following the passing of legislation the role of the accompanying driver will be formalised to include signing off on aspects of the practice sessions undertaken with the learner, and must present a signed log book before taking a driving test.

**Q10. What is the significance of introducing R Plates?**

A10. This recognises that the learning process continues after the driving test is passed- for that reason some restrictions should continue to apply to drivers for two years after taking out a full licence. New legislation is needed to introduce the R Plate. A restriction will apply to full licences after September 2011 when the lower alcohol levels are applied to drivers for a period of two years after taking out a full licence. It is also planned to apply a higher level of penalty points to learner and novice drivers for specific high risk offences when the legislation is in place. The R Plate also indicates to other road users that you are a novice driver

**Q11. What changes will happen to the driver theory test?**

A11 The driver theory test was updated in 2006 and will be further enhanced in late 2011.