

National Car Test FAQs

The information set out in the FAQs below is intended as a general guide only and does not purport to be a legal or exhaustive interpretation of the requirements or position in relation to the subject matter in each case. Where reference is made to an EU Directive, Statutory Instrument (S.I.) or Road Traffic Act, these can be accessed at www.irishstatutebook.ie

NCTS

The following Q&A in relation to NCTS gives some general information on the National Car Test. For further information, including information in relation to individual tests or test appointments, you may contact NCT directly at www.ncts.ie

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Penalty Points and the NCT – FAQs

Q. What was introduced effective from 1 May 2009?

The Minister of State at the Department of Transport signed new orders on 9th April 2009 to commence section 16 (in part) of Road Traffic Act 2006 and certain provisions of the Road Traffic Act 2002, in relation to the application of the penalty point system:

Specifically, five additional traffic offences (listed below) have now become penalty point offences from 1 May 2009:

1. Using a vehicle (car) without test certificate
2. Driving a vehicle before remedying dangerous defect
3. Driving a dangerously defective vehicle
4. Using a vehicle without certificate of roadworthiness
5. Bridge strikes

The penalty points system is designed to save lives and prevent injuries resulting from road crashes and

collisions. The addition of these five extra penalty point offences from 1st May brought the total number of road traffic offences attracting penalty points to 41.

Q. Are the road traffic offences attracting penalty points from 1st May new offences?

A. No. They are not new road traffic offences. In the case of the 5 offences, enforcement has and will continue to be effected by way of Court summons. It is a matter for the Gardaí to decide whether or not to initiate proceedings for an alleged offence in respect of any of these offences.

Therefore the only change happening to these offences from the 1st May is that they now attract penalty points in addition to any fine following conviction in Court.

Q. Why are penalty points being introduced for NCT related offences and driving dangerously defective vehicles?

A. Driving a vehicle that is defective in some way or that hasn't passed a basic roadworthiness test such as the NCT is a serious offence. It puts you at risk. It puts your passengers at risk. It puts other road users at risk.

Q. Vehicle faults are not a significant cause of road collisions, so why target this area for penalty points?

The NCT is a **preventative** road safety measure that ensures vehicles, particularly older vehicles, using Irish roads are in sound working order.

This is all the more important when you consider that older vehicles are more likely to be involved in a collision. Almost half (47%) of collisions that occurred in 2007 involved vehicles that were 9 years old or more. Almost half (45%) of serious injuries from collisions happened in 2007 involved vehicles that were 9 years old or more. There is a need to get dangerous and defective vehicles off our roads. They are a factor in road deaths and serious injuries.

Thankfully the vast majority of vehicle owners in the State get their vehicle tested through the NCT as required. Unfortunately a minority does not and it is these people who are putting their lives and others at risk by driving vehicles that may be dangerously defective, for example, with poor brakes, worn tyres or broken headlights.

Q. My NCT is due but I can't get through to the NCTS either by telephone or their website to book a test, how can I book a test?

A. Due to the unprecedented demand in the number of people requesting a booking for a test, the NCTS has indicated that, while their Call Centre and web booking application are fully operational, callers may experience problems getting through. This is purely down to the volume of people trying to contact the NCTS and the public are being asked to be patient and to keep trying.

Q. I don't know whether I'm due an NCT or not, I've received nothing in the post?

A. Cars in Ireland must be tested for roadworthiness four years after registration and thereafter every 2 years.

The NCTS have endeavoured to contact as many car owners as possible and from the 1st January this year have sent almost 250,000 notifications regarding their NCT. However, it should be noted that instances such as change of ownership of the vehicle, if the vehicle is off the road or if the vehicle is out of tax can affect whether a letter is received for that vehicle. Therefore, the NCTS are encouraging customers who have not heard from them, but feel their car is eligible for the NCT, to contact their Call Centre directly and a test will be arranged for them.

Q. My NCT is now due but my test date is not for some time, will I get penalty points if I drive my car between now and the test date?

A. The Gardaí have advised motorists awaiting a NCT test to carry proof of their test appointment with them at all times in order to assist them in explaining the situation should they be stopped by the Gardaí. However this does not release motorists of the responsibility to ensure their vehicles are roadworthy.

Q. If my vehicle fails its NCT after 1st May; will I get penalty points if I drive it away from the test centre? / If my vehicle fails its NCT after 1st May, will I have to take it off the road until I rectify the faults?

A. These are not new offences and the legal requirements have been in place since the test was introduced in 2000. As has operated heretofore, the owners of vehicles tested after 1st May that are issued with a 'fail' certificate will still be given 4 weeks to have those faults rectified and the vehicle re-presented at a test centre for a follow-up test.

Q. If I am detected by the Gardaí for not having a valid NCT disc displayed, will I get a fixed charge notice and an opportunity to accept a lower number of points if I pay the fixed charge?

A. No. The new penalty point offences do not come within fixed charge notice system. They are not new road traffic offences. Enforcement of the offences remains unchanged in that it remains a matter for the Gardaí to decide whether or not to initiate proceedings for an alleged offence. A summons to Court may be issued by the Gardaí; the only difference is that from 1st May, they will attract penalty points in addition to any fine imposed upon conviction in Court.

Q. Can I get penalty points on the spot, similar to speeding or seatbelt offences, for not having a current NCT disc displayed?

A. No. Penalty points can only be applied following a conviction in the Courts for an offence of failing to have a valid NCT disc displayed (5 points) or for driving a vehicle without remedying a fault (3 points) identified during an NCT test. At the moment, a person convicted in Court can be fined up to €2,000 and /or be given up to three months in prison. From 1st May, the Courts may also impose up to 5 penalty points.

National Car Test – FAQs

Q. What is NCT and why do I need to have my vehicle tested?

A. The NCT was introduced in 2000. It is a **preventative** road safety measure which ensures vehicles, particularly older vehicles, using Irish roads are in sound working order. All Member States of the European Union are required to test the roadworthiness of motor vehicles. Cars in Ireland must be tested for roadworthiness four years after registration and thereafter every 2 years. All vehicles degrade in service. The NCT provides an equitable and systematic way of inspecting all cars for roadworthiness. When NCT testing was first introduced less than 4% of vehicles passed the test at the first attempt. Since then the pass rate on the first attempt has risen steadily to almost 70% for cars that are four years old. The first time pass rate for cars 8 years of age is 55%. However, the pass rate on the first attempt for cars 9 years and over is just 30%. The benefits of having a vehicle tested include:

- Safer, more reliable cars
- Longer vehicle service life
- Reduced fuel consumption
- Reduced air and noise pollution

Q. How do I book or re-arrange an NCT test?

A. You must contact the National Car Testing Service directly in this regard. You may choose to have your vehicle tested at any one of 43 NCT Centres located throughout Ireland established solely for the purposes of car testing.

- Internet Bookings: Customers can avail of the NCTS online booking service at www.ncts.ie
- Telephone Bookings: NCTS Booking line is LoCall 1890 412 413 from 8am to 8pm (Mon-Thurs) and 8am to 6pm (Fri) for confirmations, re-arrangements or cancellations.

Q. What cars must be tested and how often?

A. SI No 405 of 2003 as amended by SI No 588 of 2008 requires vehicles within the ambit of the regulations to be roadworthiness tested once they are four years old and every two years thereafter. SI No 588 of 2008 amended the definition of such a vehicle to “a mechanically propelled vehicle having at least 4 wheels, which is constructed primarily for the carriage of passengers and which has a maximum of 8 seats excluding the driver’s seat.” i.e. a car. In 2008 over 835,000 cars were tested by NCTS.

Q. How long does a pass certificate last?

A. The pass certificate will be valid until the next test due date. Cars are due for NCT testing once they are four years old, and every two years thereafter. The due dates are calculated by reference to the date of registration of the vehicle. In cases where a vehicle is not tested by the due date (i.e. tested late), the certificate will be of less than 2 years duration.

Q. What does the NCT test involve?

A. During the NCT, specific items are checked and tested. These items, which are specified in the EU Directive, include:

- Brakes
- Exhaust Emissions
- Wheels and Tyres
- Lights
- Steering and Suspension

- Chassis and Underbody
- Electrical systems
- Glass and Mirrors
- Transmission
- Interior
- Fuel system
- Miscellaneous items

You can access the complete NCT tester's manual at <http://www.ncts.ie/test.html>

Q. What is a Re-test and when is it carried out?

A. If a vehicle fails the NCT, you must present the vehicle again for a re-test. All re-tests must be booked within 21 days of the initial test. Re-tests which do not require the use of a test lane are free of charge. Free re-tests cover minor visual items such as replacement of windscreen wiper and registration plates. Re-tests must be completed within 30 days of the initial test or a full test will need to be repeated.

Q. Why do some re-tests require payment of a re-test fee, whereas others are free?

A. Re-tests which do not require the use of a test lane are free of charge. Free re-tests cover minor visual items such as replacement of windscreen wiper and registration plates. Re-tests which require the use of a test lane incur the re-test fee, due to the extra work involved in the re-test. Although 48% of all vehicles tested require a retest, only 57% of these incur a re-test fee because they require a lane retest (percentages based on 2008 figures).

Q. How many vehicles are tested each year and what are the pass/fail rates?

A. The following tables set out the total numbers of vehicles tested and the overall pass rate for 2007 and 2008.

1st Jan - 31st December 2008

Year 2008	Pass	Fail Refusal	Fail Dangerous	Total
Full Tests	433,677(51.9%)	396,456(47.4%)	5,669 (0.7%)	835,802
Re-tests	349,225(90.8%)	34,846(9.1%)	485(0.1%)	384,557

1st Jan - 31st December 2007

Year 2007	Pass	Fail Refusal	Fail Dangerous	Total
Full Tests	355,708 (51.8%)	327,651 (47.7%)	3,346 (0.5%)	686,705
Re-tests	285,556 (90.8%)	28,842 (9.2%)	262 (0.1%)	314,660

Q. Has there been any change in the pass rate for NCT since its introduction in Ireland, reflecting increased maintenance and safety levels of vehicles?

A. When NCT testing was first introduced in 2000, less than 4% of vehicles passed the test at the first attempt. Since then the pass rate on the first attempt has risen steadily to almost 70% for cars that are four years old. The first time pass rate for cars 8 years of age is 55%. However, the pass rate on the first attempt for cars 9 years and over is just 30%. Overall the increase in pass rates reflects an improvement in vehicle maintenance, which has obvious benefits in relation to road safety and the environment.

Q. What are the benefits for road safety from having vehicles tested under NCT?

A. The NCT test regularly highlights faults in vehicles that may render the vehicle unsafe, both for the driver and other road users. The report given to the vehicle owner following the test allows them to have any fault rectified. The highlighting at NCT of vehicle faults results in an improvement in the maintenance of vehicles and results in drivers being more aware of the current state of the roadworthiness of the vehicle. Of course, there is always an obligation on vehicle owners and drivers to be aware of the state of roadworthiness of the vehicle and to ensure that it is maintained to a proper standard.

Q. What are the benefits for the environment from having vehicles tested under NCT?

A. All internal combustion engines produce atmospheric pollutants. Atmospheric pollutants contribute to a decrease in the quality of the air that we breathe. It is important, therefore, to limit in so far as is practical the pollutants produced by such vehicles. During the course of an NCT test, the vehicles exhaust emissions and noise levels are checked. Where a vehicle creates excessive exhaust emissions or emits excessive noise, the vehicle will fail the test. It is beneficial to the environment to test and limit both the air and noise pollution created by vehicles.

Q. What are the benefits for the wider economy from having vehicles tested under NCT?

A. Vehicles which have successfully undergone an NCT tend to be more reliable than vehicles had been before the introduction of NCT. A well maintained vehicle will tend to have a longer service life and reduced fuel consumption. Indeed, safer vehicles contribute to keeping the number of road fatalities and injuries down, which, apart from the obvious benefit of saving lives, has benefits for the wider economy from the reduction in the time and effort that our National Services must devote in the aftermath of road collisions. Accidents and breakdowns can lead to traffic delays and anything which reduces these will be of benefit to the economy by reducing the amount of time lost on the road.

Q. Emerging technologies and reliance of safety of vehicles on these – What is the future position in relation to NCT?

A. Vehicle manufacturers are constantly developing improved technologies in relation to vehicle safety (for example, electronic stability programme (ESP)) It is vital that these systems function properly in order to ensure that their contribution to the safety of the vehicle is maintained. The RSA is proposing to include a check in the NCT whereby evidence of a malfunction or fault in these systems which leads to illumination of the relevant warning light on the dashboard, will lead to failure of the test.

NCTS works very closely with all manufactures and distributors, especially in the area of new technologies, as this ensures that they are inspecting the vehicle in accordance with the standards specific for that vehicle.

Q. NCT Disc – Is it a legal requirement to display a valid NCT Disc?

A. Yes. The Road Traffic (National Car Test) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 405 of 2003) require that a valid NCT disc be displayed on the front windscreen of the vehicle.

Q. Failure Items at NCT– What are the main vehicle failure items?

A. For 2007, the following were the top five failure items in descending order:

- visual defect overall fails 39.4%
- beam results 6.9%
- brake test fails 5.0%
- dip beam left 4.6%

For 2008, the following were the top five failure items in descending order:

- visual defect overall fails 39.5%
- beam results 6.12%
- brake test fails 4.41%
- dip beam left 3.9%

Q. Appeals - What happens if I am unhappy with the outcome of the test and wish to appeal?

A. If you wish to appeal the outcome of a test, you must contact NCTS directly in the first instance. If you are unhappy with the outcome of NCTS' internal appeals process you make take the matter up with the RSA, who will refer your complaint/appeal to the independent appeals board, which comprises PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Automobile Association. If you are still unhappy with the outcome, you may appeal to the Courts.