

## 10 Great Driving Test Tips

*based on driving test tips from Maria McCarthy*

If you've started learning to drive and already thinking about test, then you may be feeling anxious about it, Remember that you're not alone. Everyone suffer from nerves to some extent and they can in fact be a help by raising your adrenaline levels and making you more alert. The challenge is keeping them under control. Here are some top tips for overcoming your driving test nerves and passing your practical test.

### 1. Get professional instruction

Most people don't bat an eyelid about the cost of nights out with their mates, or going on expensive holidays, but those same people often moan about the cost of learning to drive which, in comparison, is a valuable skill that will last a lifetime. Learning not only how to control a car, but how to *drive* one safely and considerately, and anticipate what other road users are going to do, can quite literally save your life.

**Cutting back on good driving tuition is a false economy. Taking a test before you're ready is a false economy. Both of these can end up costing you more money – and maybe the lives of you or your friends! If you're worried about costs, put off learning to drive until you can afford it!**

### 2. Why worry?

What exactly are you worrying about? Reducing stress can be achieved by identifying what you are actually worrying about. You may be thinking "*What a daft question...it's obvious what I'm worried about!*" Not necessarily... stop for a minute and try and define *exactly* what it is that's making you nervous, and try to be as *exact* as possible. Identifying the root cause of why you are nervous about learning to drive and taking your driving test, is the first step to overcoming your nerves. Once you have decided what it is that you're worried about you can speak to your instructor and take the first step to overcoming your worries.

### 3. Confidence

Remind yourself that your instructor won't be putting you in for your test until he / she thinks you're ready for it. During your lessons you will have satisfied your instructor that you're a safe and responsible driver. And if you don't feel ready, then speak up! Come to an agreement with your instructor about when you should be ready. Your driving test is your chance to shine, so make sure you feel confident about the big day. All you have to do is to show the examiner what you're capable of, and that driving licence is all yours!

### 4. Visualise

Tap into the power of visualisation and positive thinking - sports stars use it regularly to help them attain their peak performance. Spend time imagining carrying out difficult manoeuvres and dealing confidently with heavy traffic. This will reinforce the message to your subconscious mind that you can do these things and reduce the likelihood of you falling apart on your test. You done them before, now do them again!

### 5. Get support

Talk through any worries with your friends, family and instructor. This will give you a positive feeling, as many of them will be able to give you useful advice and encouragement. Herbal remedies for nerves such as Kalms can be helpful - but start taking them a couple of weeks in advance to reap the full benefits.

### 6. Breathe

Breathing exercises can be very useful - practicing them doesn't have to involve sitting cross-legged in a room surrounded by burning incense. Just focusing on your in-and-out breaths will have a soothing effect - you might like to try counting the breaths, or repeating a mantra such as 'I feel calm' over and over with your eyes closed. It may seem far-fetched – but it works. Try something new and different. Give it a go!

### 7. Flower power

Many ex-learners put their success down to Bach Rescue Remedy. This is a new-age concoction of 'flower essences' developed by Dr Edward Bach, a Harley Street doctor and homeopath. It's available from most health food shops and has a reputation for being very effective in stressful situations – such as driving tests!

## **8. Eat a banana**

Shortly before your test, eat a banana. It's well-known among top instructors as a superfood, for the following reasons - bananas are full of B vitamins, which help calm the nerves. They contain tryptophan, a type of protein that the body converts into serotonin, the 'happy hormone' - which will keep your mood upbeat. And they're also high in potassium. When we are stressed our metabolic rate rises and potassium levels decrease. Eating a high-potassium snack like a banana will help rebalance the levels of this important mineral, normalise your heartbeat and send extra oxygen to the brain. Getting you 'up' to pass your test.

## **9. Distract yourself**

Sitting in the waiting room before your test is often the situation where people feel the most anxious. It's a sometimes a good idea to bring along a magazine or an mp3 player, or chat to others to distract yourself. There are 30 million drivers on UK roads and they've all done it. So can you. If you've been practicing breathing exercises, this is an excellent time to get them going. And remind yourself that this is the worst bit - once you're actually in the car you'll be so busy concentrating on the road that your nerves will ease off.

## **10. Pretend to be a taxi – and more...**

If the thought of being tested freaks you out, stop thinking of it as a test - instead imagine that you're taking someone home and as you don't know where they live they have to give you directions. If you've failed your test through nerves several times, then the answer is to ask your instructor for extra lessons to get your driving above the standard required by the test. That way you can underperform due to anxiety on the day, but still be of a high enough standard to get that vital pass. And if all else fails, then visit your doctor and ask for anti-anxiety tablets. It's in the bag!