

*test  
guidelines*

*the  
motorcycle  
test*



**RoSPA  
Advanced  
Drivers'  
Association**



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# Taking the advanced motorcycle test: guidance for candidates and training officers

*The only one monitored and approved by the Driving Standards Agency*

## **What is advanced riding?**

It is a safe, skilful and enjoyable way of riding. Advanced riders are more observant and better at anticipating changes in the surrounding conditions, Because of this they are able to plan their riding to create space and time to deal with any situations.

## **Why should you be interested?**

We are often asked by people why they should be interested in advanced riding. Here are some of the reasons which we think make it worthwhile:

- Your riding costs can be noticeably reduced by improved riding techniques.
- You can often get discounts on insurance premiums.
- You will enjoy your riding more, to the benefit of yourself and your passengers.
- You will feel more relaxed when riding. You will become a safer rider.
- Your riding may one day save someone's life - it could be yours.

## **What makes a better rider?**

By actively seeking and analysing accurately what their senses tell them advanced riders have learnt to anticipate and plan so as to be able to manage situations safely. The best riders do this by riding systematically.

There are only two things you can change by operating the controls while riding: you can change your direction and your speed. It is as simple as that.

In becoming a better rider you learn the overriding importance of safety, both of yourself and others. You learn how to apply advanced techniques skilfully to reduce your risk of crashing.

Many riders ride badly because their errors usually cause no ill effects, thus their errors are reinforced. The average riders do not associate crashes *with* their own careless and thoughtless riding. But poor planning promotes poor performance. Advanced riders aim positively to cut down their risks of being involved in someone else's crash while minimising errors in their own riding. At best a crash is inconvenient but at worst it will result in serious injury or death.

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So advanced riding is achieved by riding to a system which is simple, efficient, effective, always applicable and gives those precious gifts of space and time in which to deal with hazards. The advanced rider is never taken by surprise. The word 'suddenly' does not appear in the riding vocabulary.

With all this in place the advanced rider will be able to make unobtrusive, planned progress consistent with safety and the law.

### **The Test**

The RoSPA advanced riding test is regarded as the most comprehensive and challenging available to the public. A RoSPA gold is the highest civilian riding standard available and the holder will be a master of his or her art. It is unlikely that anyone will gain a high grade without a good knowledge of *The Highway Code and Motorcycle Roadcraft*. There are local groups which have experienced and trained tutors who will, free of charge, assess your performance and provide advice to help you as you prepare for the test.

You may not be as fully practised in the application of the police system of riding as the advanced police rider. However, the examiner will be looking for a satisfactory display of safe, systematic and smooth riding. After the test he will comment on your weaknesses and give advice and suggestions on how to improve. If you pass the test you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you really are a good rider.

The following notes give points which the examiner will look for during your test but these do not replace the need for a full knowledge of *Motorcycle Roadcraft and The Highway Code*.

### **First impressions**

The general appearance of a motorcycle says a lot about the rider. The examiner will expect to see that your motorcycle is legal and roadworthy. It is easy to see a motorcycle's transmission and hydraulic fluids so you should ensure that levels and linkages are correct or properly adjusted.

The clothing you wear as a rider both for the physical protection and visibility/conspicuity it gives are all important to your own safety. The examiner will expect you to wear appropriate clothing and footwear, and will wish to see that your helmet meets British Standards and is in good condition, securely fastened, with a clean, unscratched visor. Any bags or containers must be securely fastened to the machine.

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## **The examiner**

All association examiners will have had considerable experience of many types of vehicles at police advanced level and many are also police instructors.

At the rendezvous the examiner will do his best to put you at ease. He will give you a route to follow and will follow you along this route, normally on another motorcycle. He will consider the skills you demonstrate in the following areas:

### **Steering**

This should be smooth and controlled. The examiner will watch to ensure that you can manoeuvre at low speeds, and at higher speeds in line with safety and speed limits.

### **Clutch**

Your use of the clutch should show smoothness, delicacy and timing with the gear change lever.

### **Gears**

The way you use the gearbox will tell the examiner a lot about your ability. He will consider the way you make the change, your ability to match engine revolutions to road speed and how you use the gearbox when slowing to a stop.

### **Brakes**

Your use of the brakes will play a big part in the examiner's final assessment. He will look for smoothness, early braking at the right place in the system, a careful balance of front and rear brakes to avoid pitching and skidding. He will look for the progressiveness of the brake pressure used to bring the motorcycle smoothly to a stop.

### **Throttle**

The throttle mechanism is spring loaded to its closed position. You must accustom yourself to this to achieve smoothness. The examiner will want to see you displaying acceleration sense and, most important on a motorcycle, varying the power transmitted according to changes in road surfaces.

### **Rear Observations**

Rear observations play a big part in the system. It is important that the rider is aware of conditions to the rear as well as to the front to enable the early formulation of a riding plan. The examiner will note the timing of rear observation as you use mirror and shoulder checks. These should be made only when the act of looking away from the front is not in itself a hazard.

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## **Horn**

The examiner will note audible warnings. The horn should be sounded only when necessary, when all other safety features have been implemented.

## **Visibility**

It is essential to have clean mirrors, windscreen and helmet visor. It is important that the visor is clear of scratches and heavy tints. You must also use demisting fluids and polishes to keep a clear view in the rain.

## **Smoothness**

Moving off and stopping must be smooth and safe. You must give good shoulder checks before moving off. You should be able to control the machine at low speeds. The examiner will expect a careful balance of throttle and brakes. He will note which foot you put down when stopping. The thinking rider will be able either to place both feet on the ground or to balance with one foot while the other works a control. To prevent the machine from rolling when stationary one of the brakes should be kept applied where appropriate.

## **System**

The examiner will expect to see you demonstrate your understanding of the system as outlined in *Motorcycle Roadcraft*, and the correct sequence of your riding actions. He will observe your hand and foot actions for balance and the timing of your signals. To do this the examiner may not be in the position behind you that you may expect. Do not be disconcerted. He may be checking that your rear observations are really to seek information and not just habitual or reflex actions. Do not treat him as 'following traffic' when considering whether or not to give a signal.

The use of the system as described in *Motorcycle Roadcraft* is the cornerstone of advanced riding and inconsistencies in using it will affect any grade awarded. To achieve a gold or silver grade you should apply the system consistently throughout the test. A bronze grade may be typified by inconsistencies in its use.

## **Positioning**

The examiner will note how you position your machine for safety, stability and view on the approach to hazards both on the open road and in urban areas. He will also note your use of lanes.

You should be able to position the machine in order to obtain the best view that is available all the time. You should also understand that at times a position for view or speed will have to be sacrificed for the sake of safety.

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When you are riding round bends and corners, and not overtaking, you should not cross marked centre lines and you should not cut corners when entering marked junctions. RoADA believes that to do so is potentially dangerous. Such actions may be the result of entering the hazard too fast and may confuse oncoming and following traffic. This view is supported by *The Highway Code*. If anything untoward happened during such a manoeuvre the rider might be seen to be at fault and might then blame RoADA for teaching or condoning this action. If there are no centre markings then some movement over the centre of the road may be acceptable.

We emphasise again that the mark of an advanced rider is always to be able to place the machine precisely where it belongs under all conditions and that it should be in the right place, travelling at the right speed and with the correct gear engaged.

### **Cornering**

The examiner will watch how you ride around corners and bends in both urban and rural areas. He will look at the line you take to ensure that it gives the best view and safety margins. You will need to demonstrate that you are correctly applying the principles and safety features of cornering.

### **Signals**

You should always remember that signals are the language of the road. You will need to consider using signals to warn other road users of your presence and intentions. They should therefore be given clearly and in good time. Arm signals should be given when appropriate to reinforce any mechanical signal. The examiner will note all these points and he will also be observing your reactions to traffic signs.

### **Speed**

Advanced riders must be capable of controlling their machines at speeds up to the maximum limit where it is safe to do so. While the use of speed must at all times be safe and legal, the examiner will want to see a brisk ride with good progress being made where possible.

A riding plan that relies on exceeding the speed limit to complete a manoeuvre is unacceptable. If you consistently exceed the speed limit the examiner will stop the test and you will fail.

### **Overtaking**

While overtaking manoeuvres are inherently dangerous they are a necessary element of the concept of good progress. However, they must be conducted safely and within the speed limit.

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Examiners will expect you to overtake if it is appropriate but remaining in the overtaking position for long periods may indicate that you are not looking far enough ahead or may be interpreted as being aggressive. They will look for evidence that the many safety features have been applied, the main one being your ability to regain your correct position on the road before any approaching vehicles - seen or unseen - could come into conflict with you. Exceeding the speed limit in order to complete an overtake is unacceptable.

### **Department**

Rider and machine must blend harmoniously at all times. The controls should be adjusted so as almost to become extensions of the rider's limbs. Posture should be natural and comfortable. Lying flat on the tank or hanging off the seat when cornering should be treated as unnecessary for the road rider. Quiet efficiency is the hallmark of the good rider. Your consideration for other road users and your self discipline will reveal itself, as will your temperament, which, at least when riding, should be calm and relaxed but alert and decisive.

### **Vehicle sympathy**

We expect association members to respect their machines and develop motorcycle sympathy to the benefit of the current and future rider.

### **Observations**

One of the principal differences between the novice and the advanced rider is the huge amount which the latter sees and applies when developing a riding plan. You will be expected to actively seek information about changes in the short, medium and distant views. It is not enough merely to acknowledge a change as the examiner will wish to see evidence of observation links and how you cope with what you have seen.

### **Judging distance**

The examiner will note your ability to judge distance and the way you relate this to the speed of your own and other vehicles together with the way you link this ability with your braking and acceleration.

### **Motorways and dual carriageways**

joining the motorway can be from either lane of the slip road and will depend on traffic conditions and which lane gives the best view of the motorway. You should use acceleration sense to achieve an appropriate merge speed. Speed and following distances should be appropriate for the conditions. When leaving the motorway you should be in lane 1 before the 300 yards marker and, if necessary, signalling that intention.

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## **Knowledge**

At the end of the ride you will be asked several questions on *The Highway Code*, *Motorcycle Roadcraft* and basic motorcycle mechanics. You must be familiar with these two publications. There are a few things about how motorcycles work that every rider must know. Your motorcycle handbook should provide sufficient data for this part of the test. Know your subject well and you will not go far wrong.

It is worth mentioning that through membership of RoADA local groups you are likely to have many questions answered by the members who have already taken a test. It is unusual for a rider without some form of advanced rider training to obtain a high grade. Local group tutors can help and their advice and support is free.

## **After the test**

At the end of the test the examiner will discuss aspects of the test and tell you if you have passed and at what level. He will send a report to the Regional Senior Examiner who then has one week in which to clarify any details and return it to us. We shall type your report and issue a certificate. We shall also send you our brochure of regalia from which you may wish to purchase a badge and other items.

## **Riding grades**

Advanced driving is the ability to control the position and speed of the vehicle safely, systematically and smoothly, using road and traffic conditions to progress unobtrusively with skill and responsibility. This skill requires a positive but courteous attitude and a high standard of driving competence based on concentration, effective all round observation, anticipation, and planning. This must be co-ordinated with good handling skills. The vehicle should be at the right place on the road at the right time, travelling at the right speed with the correct gear engaged and can always be stopped safely on its own side of the road in the distance that can be seen to be clear.’ *DSA, RoADA, IAM, 1997*

It is difficult to lay down precise specifications for the association’s three grades, as it is very much a matter for the expertise and overall judgement of the examiner. It is important, however, to provide guidelines on how the various grades are determined to ensure consistency, understanding and above all, confidence in the grading system. The grade decided by the examiner will not be changed, although any appeal in writing will be reviewed by the chief examiner, who may offer a retest, or comment on any points raised. Examiners operate under strict national guidelines to ensure that the association’s very high standards are maintained. The following guidelines about the requirements for each grade are intended to help you to understand better the criteria applied when awarding a grade.

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## **GOLD**

This grade is recognised as the highest riding award available to the public. It will be awarded only to the polished systematic rider who displays a complete understanding and appropriate application of the principles outlined in *Motorcycle Roadcraft*. With all this in place the gold standard rider will be able to make unobtrusive, planned, polished progress consistent with safety and the law.

The candidate will display a confidence and ability throughout the whole test which leads the examiner to consider that the candidate has the potential to do well on a police advanced course. The candidate's performance must be consistent throughout the whole of the test and so lapses may result in a lower grade. Awards of this grade will therefore be reserved for the very best riders.

## **SILVER**

This grade will be awarded to riders who are well above the average. These riders will produce consistently safe and systematic rides but perhaps without the final polish, flair and smoothness of the gold rider. They will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the system of motorcycle control.

Candidates must be able to ride up to the permitted speed limit where it is safe to do so but vary speed according to circumstances and conditions. It must be emphasised that silver is a high grade and a commendable achievement.

## **BRONZE**

This grade will be awarded to riders whose performance is significantly above the standard required to pass the L-riding test. These riders will show a basic knowledge of *Motorcycle Roadcraft* but lack the ability to apply the system consistently throughout the test. The ride should be entirely safe, observing traffic signs, responding correctly to hazards and should display advanced riding techniques.

## **FAIL**

Candidates who fall below the minimum pass standard will fail. Riders will fail if they display potentially dangerous faults, persistently infringe speed limits, commit violations of Road Traffic Law or the rules contained in *The Highway Code*. If the candidate fails to reach the pass standard the examiner will offer advice on improvement and encourage further training or guidance from a local group.

Occasional minor infringements with perceived acceptable reasons will not be condoned but may not on their own be a reason for failure. As a general rule, the examiner will consider whether the candidate is a rider worthy of displaying the badge of an advanced rider, i.e. someone who will consistently ride according to the principles of *Motorcycle Roadcraft*.

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If you fail your initial test you may take a free retest between three and six months later. During this time we hope that you will have received some assistance to improve your riding. You may take a retest before your free test is due for which you will be expected to pay a retest fee (£30). If you wish to improve your standard we do suggest that you join a local group. You will then be in touch with other members who will advise and perhaps offer tuition.

### **How does it all work?**

RoADA is a section of RoSPA, one of the foremost safety advisory and training organisations in the world. Local groups have been formed to offer free training, support and advice to anyone who wants to improve their riding or driving and to pass the advanced test. RoADA operates in a very practical style by creating local groups of volunteers, all of whom have passed the advanced test and have been trained to pass on their knowledge to others. Groups often work closely with police advanced riders and instructors to ensure that the standards described in *Motorcycle Roadcraft* are maintained.

Before taking the test you should study the current editions of *The Highway Code and Motorcycle Roadcraft*. Without a good knowledge of both you are unlikely to obtain a high grade. You would be unwise to apply for an advanced test unless you have had some additional training since passing your L-test. For information about the location of your nearest group you should contact RoADA headquarters or visit our websites, details of which are at the end of this booklet.

### **Administration**

Test administration takes place at RoSPA headquarters in Birmingham where you can contact the Administration Officer during office hours (0121 248 2099). Outside office hours there is an answer service (0121 248 2000). Please preface messages 'For the Advanced Drivers' Association'.

When we receive your application form we shall send it to the Regional Senior Examiner for your area. Within one week he will allocate an examiner who will contact you by phone or by letter within two weeks to arrange your test. This will be carried out using your own machine. Many examiners are serving police officers who work shifts so please book your test at least a month in advance. You may be asked to travel a short distance to meet the examiner or to start the test away from a congested area.

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All examiners hold a UK police advanced riding qualification and many are 10 also police instructors. Your examiner will therefore be one of the best trained riders in the country. You must bring your driving licence, MoT certificate if appropriate, and insurance certificate. Tests last about an hour and a half and cover a variety of road conditions.

Occasionally a senior examiner may wish to travel on the test but will take no part in the testing and will not accompany you if you object.

If at the last moment you are unable to keep your appointment it is unlikely that we shall be able to cancel the test. The examiner may even have taken time off work to test you. Please make sure that you cancel your test only in unavoidable circumstances and not just for your own convenience. If you cancel your appointment at short notice (three days or less) you will be charged £10.

When your retest is due we shall send you a reminder and booking form. You must take your retest within a reasonable time of the due date in order to keep your membership.

Try your best and ride safely and professionally and show just how good you really are.

We offer you our good wishes for a successful test.

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