

NOVICE DRIVERS

In July 2007, the RTA introduced a new system whereby every person under the age of 26 years, who has never held an unrestricted driver's licence or whose previous Learner's Licence expired, has to keep a log book and complete a minimum of 120 hours of driving experience over a 12 month period prior to attending a driving test.

Following a review of log book policy and procedures the RTA determined that learner drivers who had professional driving instruction could "enter their driving experience with a driving instructor in their Learner driver log book as 3 hours for every 1 hour with a driving instructor. The total value of lessons taken with a driver instructor for additional Learner driver log book recognition will not exceed 30 hours towards the 120 hour Learner driver log book requirement. Structured driving lessons conducted at night are included as part of the Structured Lesson Scheme and recognised as 3 hours for 1 hour with a fully licensed instructor. However, applicants must still complete a minimum of 20 hours actual night time driving."



Whilst it is not mandatory for learner drivers to have driving lessons with a qualified driving instructor. It is however advantageous that the learner driver receive an initial good base of driving knowledge in the areas of the Preparation to Drive, Vehicle Controls (location and usage) Moving off and Stopping, Steering, Turning Corners, Blind Spots,

Observation Skills, Negotiating Roundabouts correctly and Gear Changing to name just a few. These initial skills obtained from a qualified instructor and other skills such as Scanning Techniques, may otherwise not be correctly taught by the learner's supervisor.

Through ongoing instruction a driving instructor will be able to thoroughly prepare the learner driver to drive in today's road environment competently and safely. This includes advanced driving and traffic skills such as Speed Management, Positioning, Responding to Hazards and manoeuvres such as 3 Point Turns and Reverse Parallel Parking. Driving instructors are equipped with the knowledge of the road rules and how to apply them.

A driving instructor is trained to control a car from the front passenger seat and his car is equipped with dual controls. This can be comforting to a novice driver while they settle into their new role as "the driver".

All too often learner drivers seek the help of a driving instructor at the tail end of their driver training. By this time, habits (good and bad) have set in and can be very hard to change. This in many cases results in the learner failing the driving test. Early intervention can help prevent a fail.

Where it is not possible for a learner driver to have ongoing driver instruction with a qualified instructor, it would be advisable that the learner have a series of at least 10 hours of instruction prior to attempting the driving test. This approach would enhance the driving instruction given to the learner by their supervisor/s and thereby increase their chances of success at the driving test.



It should be pointed out that driving instructors are not the "silver bullet" to ensure that a learner passes the driving test "First Time". A good driving instructor will, over a period of time, develop a learner's driving skills so that they will be a good, safe driver on the road and thereby increase their chances of successfully passing the driving test.