

MOTORCYCLE MANOEUVRES TEST – FAQ

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16. Q. If dedicated training sites are not essential, why did the Department decide to create dedicated testing sites for the new motorcycle manoeuvres?
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1. Q. Are the tracks safe?

A. Yes. The tracks have been designed with safety in mind and have been audited by an external company (RPS Consulting Engineers) who specialise in design of highway improvement schemes and traffic assessment. They have been involved since the feasibility stage, through planning policy, concept design, road safety audits to actual construction work on site.

2. Q. Has DVA carried out any trials?

A. DVA held a number of open days for the industry and PSNI during which they were given the opportunity to try the manoeuvres. All those who tried the manoeuvres completed them safely.

At the request of a number of trainers, trails were also held for novice riders. The trials clearly demonstrated that the test was able to differentiate between riders of differing experience and abilities and was not as difficult as perceived. DVA offered this facility to trainers to help alleviate concerns, however only a small number of trainers took up this opportunity.

3. Q. Are candidates expected to brake while they are riding a curve?

A. No. The curve has to be negotiated in second or third gear at a speed of at least 30 kph (18.75 mph) and if carried out properly there will be no need to brake. However, there is a possibility, as

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is currently the case that it could happen with poorly prepared candidates. If candidates are at test standard this should not arise. During trials with novice riders none of them applied the brake on the curve.

4. Q. Will candidates have to make a gear change when negotiating the bend?

A. No. However, there is a possibility, as is currently the case that it could happen with poorly prepared candidates. The curve has to be negotiated in second or third gear at a speed of at least 30 kph (18.75 mph) and if carried out properly there will be no need to change gear on the curve. This is a training issue not only for the manoeuvres test but also for the on-road test. If candidates are at test standard this should not arise.

5. Q. Could the speed requirement be relaxed to prevent pupils looking down at the speedometer?

A. The speed requirement is specified in the EU Directive and as such cannot be relaxed. During the trials with novice riders there was no indication that they were looking down at the speedometer. All of the novice riders concentrated on where they were riding and achieved the minimum speed.

6. Q. Will candidates be expected to leave things to the last moment during the avoidance exercise?

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A. This is not the purpose of the exercise. The avoidance exercise and controlled stop, sometimes incorrectly referred to as the swerve, is carried out in a safe environment; the rider is fully briefed on the exercise and knows where the obstacle is located. Therefore the rider can plan ahead to complete the exercise according to test requirements and in safety.

7. Q. Does the new test discriminate against heavy riders on 125cc bikes?

A. DVA has carried out trials using heavy riders (17 stone) and with a pillion passenger (combined weight 26 stone). In both these cases the rider was able to exceed the designated speed of 50 kph (31.25 mph).

8. Q. Has the track been tested in wet conditions?

A. Yes, trials have been conducted in wet, cold and windy conditions. No problems were experienced or incidents recorded with the track design or surface friction quality.

9. Q. Will candidates be able to stop their motorcycle within the allocated distance in wet weather?

A. The stopping distance from the speed measuring equipment to the rear of the stop box is 51.5 metres which equates to over twice the wet weather stopping distance at 30mph. This is inherently safe provided the rider is at test standard.

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10. Q. Will tests be conducted regardless of the weather conditions?

A. No, the examiner will decide on whether the test will go ahead in bad weather. This is currently the case for the on-road test. If there are adverse weather conditions on the day of a test, such as fog, ice, snow, etc. candidates should contact the DVA centre where their test is due to take place, for advice.

11. Q. How many test centres will be available to conduct the motorcycle manoeuvres?

A. DVA carried out research to identify which of its sites were suitable to carry out the new test. This research found that six strategically placed sites were suitable in terms of available space and customer safety.

The six sites are within reasonable return travelling distance for customers. An economic appraisal also examined this issue and concluded that the Department's plans minimised the travel distance for customers to access the test. The appraisal also concluded that there were no social exclusion issues.

In addition, the research looked at demand for on-road motorcycle tests and based on test volumes concluded that a reduced number of sites strategically placed throughout Northern Ireland would minimise the overall cost of the test to candidates.

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DVA needed to ensure that the new motorcycle test could be taken throughout Northern Ireland consistent with the spread of demand, whilst providing best value. The Department believes this has been achieved.

12. Q. How far will candidates have to travel to their nearest test centre?

A. The distance candidates have to travel will depend on their location and ranges from having a local test centre to travelling between 12 to 30 miles.

13. Q. Is there a safety issue in relation to candidates riding to and from the test centre?

A. Currently trainees ride on these types of roads in between lessons without an instructor being present, even in the very early stages of learning. Requiring candidates to travel to test centres is not seen as adding any additional road safety issues. Furthermore, it is expected that candidates will need to be at or near on-road test standard to be able to pass the manoeuvres test, making them better prepared for riding to the test centre.

14. Q. Will trainers be able to use DVA sites to train their candidates?

A. The Department considered this option but, as all sites are multi-functional this was considered a health and safety risk and as such was deemed unsuitable.

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15. Q. Where can instructors train candidates to carryout the new motorcycle manoeuvres?

A. The Department is of the view that the majority of the new manoeuvres are already being taught by experienced instructors who teach good riding skills for life and not just to pass the driving test. The current motorcycle test includes an emergency stop exercise which is carried out in excess of 20 mph. We are advised by trainers that trainees are currently trained to stop their bike safely at speeds in excess of 30 mph to ensure they are properly prepared to ride safely. In addition, during the current motorcycle test candidates are required to negotiate bends and curves in excess of 20 mph and they may have to take action to avoid an obstacle. If trainees receive structured training in preparation for the current motorcycle test they should be taught how to control the bike and react to different situations. This training will be similar to the training required to safely carryout all of the elements included in the new motorcycle manoeuvres test. The Department is therefore of the opinion that dedicated training sites are not essential. However, DVA has given assistance regarding track specification to five motorcycle instructors who have indicated they are either leasing or are in the process of obtaining permission to use land for the development of training tracks in following areas:

- Enniskillen
- Ballymena
- Omagh
- Ballyclare
- Newtownards

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16. Q. If dedicated training sites are not essential, why did the Department decide to create dedicated testing sites for the new motorcycle manoeuvres?

A. The Department's decision to carry out the new motorcycle manoeuvres at dedicated sites was based on health and safety issues and consistency of approach. These issues were mainly due to the fact that unlike training, candidates will not be under direct supervision during the test. There is also the possibility that some candidates may choose not to take training. If untrained or poorly prepared candidates take the test, there is the possibility they may be unsafe. The tracks have been designed and audited to remove or minimise the potential for accidents but they cannot mitigate for the skills of the candidate. It is therefore important, from a testing perspective, that tests are carried out in a safe and controlled environment and that they are undertaken in standard uniform conditions throughout the country.

17. Q. Why has Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) not been introduced before the new motorcycle manoeuvres?

A. The Department issued a consultation paper on the introduction of Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) and the mandatory registration of motorcycle instructors in October 2007. The majority of responses were in favour of their introduction. However, the introduction of such schemes in Northern Ireland will require a considerable amount of preparatory work. Compulsory

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Basic Training is a GB initiative and is not essential in other European Member States. Whilst there is agreement that CBT is a worthwhile scheme, GB has decided to review and improve their scheme and, in preparing for CBT in NI DVA will take account of the improvements being considered by GB.

18. Q. Will bikes have to be “thrashed” to make the speed?

A. Doubts have been expressed about the longevity of engines. However, motorcycle engines are designed to rev at higher speed than car engines. During the test some engines may be required to work harder than normal, but proper maintenance should cater for any issues associated with the exercise.

19. Q. Are DVA going to introduce a Direct Access Scheme (DAS)?

A. Current legislation restricts learner riders to smaller bikes and a maximum speed of 45 mph and would render the DAS scheme ineffective.