

13. Town and city centre driving

Introduction

The experience you have gained so far will prove invaluable as you take the next step in the programme, which is to move into busy town and city centres. Therefore the aim of this lesson is to learn how to deal with the road systems and the traffic conditions found in busy town and city centres.

Lesson objectives

By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- Identify the types of hazard that are likely to occur in busy town or city centres;
- recognise when you are entering or crossing a one-way street;
- maintain all around awareness when in traffic queues or on multiple lane roads;
- show courtesy to other road users and avoid blocking side roads or crossing traffic at junctions;
- plan well ahead and select the correct lane as soon as possible for the route you intend to take;
- merge with or join queuing traffic streams from side roads or other lanes;
- recognise cycle, bus and tram lanes and act accordingly;
- recognise parking and traffic flow restrictions.

Lesson brief

During this lesson you will learn how to deal with other road users in busy town and city centres. You will be encountering one way traffic systems; bus, cycle and possibly tram lanes; and various parking restrictions.

Traffic queues

In town and city centres you often find traffic queuing. Therefore don't expect the road ahead to be clear. Traffic queues can sometimes make it difficult to get into the right lane. Therefore you should always try to get into your designated lane as early as possible. However, even with the best planning there may be times when you might signal to change lanes and rely upon the courtesy of another driver to allow you to merge in front of them. In this instance the signal becomes a request to merge rather than a signal that you intend to immediately change lanes. However, you must continue to allow traffic to flow in your current lane and be prepared to abandon your manoeuvre if no one lets you in.

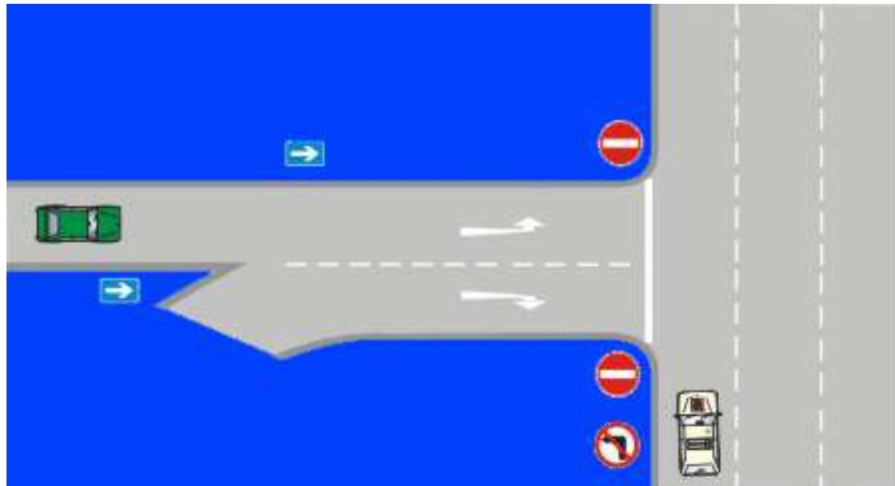
If someone signals to merge in front of you make sure they have seen you and that their actions are consistent with a request to merge rather than an intention to immediately move across. Then if it is safe to give them priority do so. Courtesy and common sense plays a very important role in town and city centre driving.

While queuing you have to particularly watch for pedestrians coming onto the road in front of you and for cyclists or motorcyclists coming up either side of

your vehicle. All round observations and awareness are critical when in queues of traffic.

One-way systems

To help improve the flow of traffic around town and city centres one-way systems have evolved. Roads that at one time may have clearly been designed to have traffic flowing in both directions may now only allow traffic to flow in one direction. This can at first be a little disconcerting as you may find yourself driving on the right hand side of the road.



Although you will be familiar with driving in the right hand lane on a dual carriageway the right hand lanes in a one way system are not specifically for overtaking. On a one way system traffic may overtake on either side. Also traffic can equally merge from the right as well as from the left. On dual carriageways traffic usually only merges from the left.

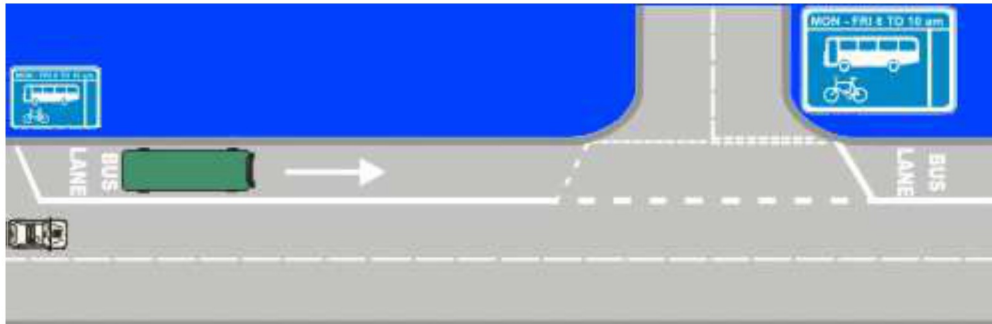
Bus, cycle and tram lanes.

Many town and city centres now specially cater for buses and cyclists by providing specific lanes for such traffic. Some also cater for trams.

Cycle lanes are protected by a solid white line that should not be crossed. Special care must be taken if you cross a cycle lane when turning left or right. Areas of the road may also be designated for cyclists. Watch out for road markings like those opposite. Note how space is allocated in front of the traffic for cyclists at the set of traffic lights. You would be required to stop behind the second white line before the traffic lights not the first.



Bus lanes may or may not be for the exclusive use of buses. If there are only certain times when buses have exclusive use of such lanes road signs will clearly state this. Outside of these times normal traffic may use them.



Some times you may find that a bus lane flows in the opposite direction to what you might expect (i.e. contra flow). You may be on a one-way system with a bus lane going in the opposite direction!



In an attempt to reduce the traffic congestion of city centres some councils have adopted modern tram systems. You should always be prepared to give way to trams as they cannot stop easily and cannot be steered. The metal tracks or rails also present a hazard as they provide little road adhesion and can be very slippery particularly when wet.

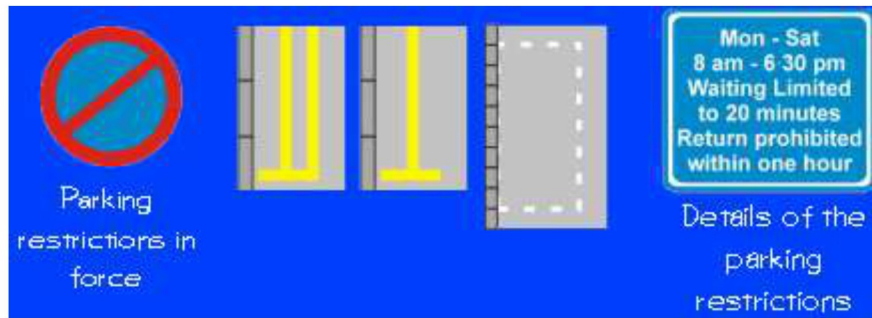


Parking restrictions



Parking restrictions are designated by signs and yellow lines. Different types of yellow line indicate the various levels of restriction in force.

A simple rule to remember is - the more paint there is the greater the restriction. Always look out for the yellow or blue plates that give details of the limitations on parking.



Highway Code practical references

Rules: 119-121, 129, 131, 146, 150, 153, 154, 158, 159, 163, 168, 169, 181, 182, 195, 198, 199, 213, 215, 216, 219 and 273-277.

Page: 77, 79 and 80