

Dual carriageways

A Dual carriageway is a road which has a central reservation to separate the carriageways.

Below, are some of the rules relating to Dual carriageways from the Highway Code.

Highway Code Rule 131

Lane dividers. These are short, broken white lines which are used on wide carriageways to divide them into lanes. You should keep between them.

Highway Code Rule 132

Reflective road studs may be used with white lines.

White studs mark the lanes or the middle of the road.

Red studs mark the left edge of the road.

Amber studs mark the central reservation of a dual carriageway or motorway.

Green studs mark the edge of the main carriageway at lay-bys and slip roads.

Green/yellow studs indicate temporary adjustments to lane layouts, e.g. where road works are taking place.

Lane discipline

Highway Code Rule 133

If you need to change lane, first use your mirrors and if necessary take a quick sideways glance to make sure you will not force another road user to change course or speed. When it is safe to do so, signal to indicate your intentions to other road users and when clear, move over.

Highway Code Rule 134

You should follow the signs and road markings and get into the lane as directed. In congested road conditions do not change lanes unnecessarily. Merging in turn is recommended but only if safe and appropriate when vehicles are travelling at a very low speed, e.g. when approaching road works or a road traffic incident. It is not recommended at high speed.

Highway Code Rule 137

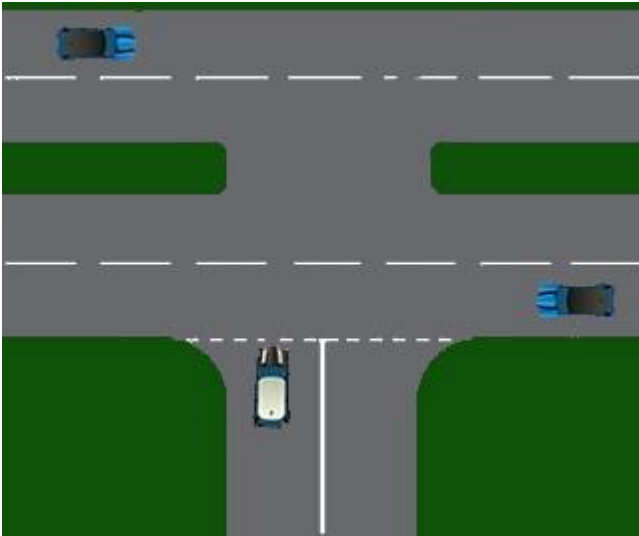
On a two-lane dual carriageway you should stay in the left-hand lane. Use the right-hand lane for overtaking or turning right. After overtaking, move back to the left-hand lane when it is safe to do so.

Highway Code Rule 138

On a three-lane dual carriageway, you may use the middle lane or the right-hand lane to overtake but return to the middle and then the left-hand lane when it is safe.

Highway Code Rule 173

When crossing or turning right, first assess whether the central reservation is deep enough to protect the full length of your vehicle.



If it is, then you should treat each half of the carriageway as a separate road. Wait in the central reservation until there is a safe gap in the traffic on the second half of the road.

If the central reservation is too shallow for the length of your vehicle, wait until you can cross both carriageways in one go.

Question. Looking at the picture above. Where should the car position itself when it reaches in the middle? And why?

Dual Carriageways for cyclists

Highway Code Rule 75

Remember that traffic on most dual carriageways moves quickly. When crossing wait for a safe gap and cross each carriageway in turn. Take extra care when crossing slip roads.

TRAFFIC SIGNS ON THE DUAL CARRIAGEWAYS



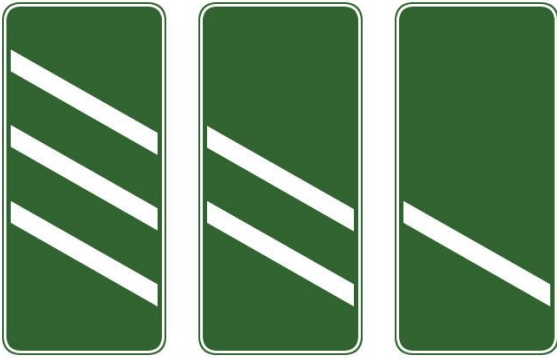
Normally seen on approach to a dual carriageway.



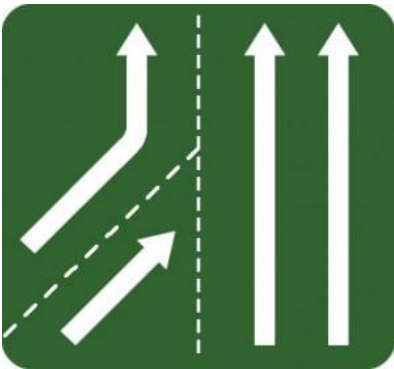
Normally seen when a dual carriageway is coming to an end.



Junction information sign. Normally seen 1 to 1.5 miles before the junction.



Exit Countdown markers (in yards).



How the lanes will merge or join at this junction.

Speed limits

Speed Limits	Built-up areas	Single carriageways	Dual carriageways	Motorways
Type of vehicle	mph	mph	mph	mph
Cars & motorcycles (including car derived vans up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight)	30	60	70	70
Cars towing caravans or trailers (including car derived vans and motorcycles)	30	50	60	60
Buses, coaches and minibuses (not exceeding 12 metres in overall length)	30	50	60	70
Goods vehicles (not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)	30	50	60	70
Goods vehicles (exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight) in England and Wales	30	50	60	60
Goods vehicles (exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight) in Scotland	30	40	50	60

UNLESS ROAD SIGNS/MARKINGS DICTATE OTHERWISE

Stopping Distances. Drive at a speed that will allow you to stop well within the distance you can see to be clear. You should:

Leave enough space between you and the vehicle in front so that you can pull up safely if it suddenly slows down or stops. The safe rule is never to get closer than the overall stopping distance.

Allow at least a two-second gap between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying faster-moving traffic and in tunnels where visibility is reduced. The gap should be at least doubled on wet roads and increased further on icy roads to ten times.

Remember, large vehicles and motorcycles need a greater distance to stop. If driving a large vehicle in a tunnel, you should allow a four-second gap between you and the vehicle in front.

If you have to stop in a tunnel, leave at least a 5-metre gap between you and the vehicle in front.

Essential Skills

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JUNCTIONS

Without Slip Roads – These look very similar as a normal side road. These could be farm entrances or very minor unclassified roads. Extra care must be made when using junctions without Slip roads. Extra time and planning to join/leave must be made to allow surrounding traffic aware of your intent, and act accordingly. There is a very rare chance you will get any information signs and/or countdown markers for these type of junctions.

Short Slip Roads – These have a limited amount of space to decelerate. Just like the junctions without any slip roads, extra time and planning to join/leave must be made to allow the surrounding traffic aware of your intent. Information signs and countdown markers should be present for these type of junctions.

Long Slip Roads – These are more at major junctions. They have longer slip roads for fast traffic to leave without hindering the surrounding traffic. Information signs and countdown markers are present for these type of junctions

JOINING

Signal your intentions as soon as you are in view of the main carriageway. The flashing light is more of an attention grabber to alert the traffic you intend to merge with.

Adjust speed to the traffic on main carriageway. If your speed is different to the traffic you intend to merge with, it will cause others to take corrective/evasive action.

As early as possible, look for a safe gap to merge. If a safe gap is not present, bring your foot off the gas, allow the vehicles to pass, and search for safe gap to enter.

Emerge without interfering with other road user's progress.

Check your mirrors cancel signal.

Stay in the left lane to get used to the speed of the traffic in the other lanes.

LEAVING

No Slip Road/Short Slip Road

Using the MSPSL routine, get into the left lane in plenty of time.

Mirrors to assess what is behind and alongside you.

Left signal much earlier as normal to warn others around you of your intentions (this could be as far back as 250 yards).

Position yourself slightly left of centre, reinforcing your signal of intent.

Gently touch your brakes to reduce speed gently and in good time (your brake lights will add to your intent).

Look ahead into the junction to make sure you are going at the right speed to safely turn.

Long Slip Road

Use the road signs and countdown markers to assist you.

A junction sign will warn you off your exit.

Using the MSPSL routine, get into the left lane in plenty of time.

Countdown marker 300 yards – **Mirrors**. Check around to get situational awareness.

Countdown marker 200 yards – **Signal**. Your intent to be coming off the main carriageway.

Countdown marker 100 yards – **Position**. Maintain your speed until you reach the slip road (DO NOT START BRAKING BEFORE YOU ENTER THE SLIP ROAD UNLESS THE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS DICTATE OTHERWISE).

On entering the slip road – **Speed**. Gently bring your speed down using your brakes to adjust to the new speed.

Look. Scan ahead to deal with the end of the slip road (Restart the MSPSL Routine).

Overtaking

Only if sure it is safe to do so. Whilst travelling along the Dual carriageway, you should be checking for opportunities to overtake. Use the MSPSL Routine.

Mirrors – Assess the speed and position of the following traffic. Start the checks in plenty of time.

Signal – This will communicate your intent to the vehicle you are overtaking, and to other road users around you.

Beware! Seeing a vehicle ahead signalling right, may not be overtaking. They may be also be slowing down and turning right through a central reservation.

Position – Don't get too close to the vehicle you are planning to overtake. Keep back enough to get a good view of the road ahead.

Speed – Make sure you have enough speed in reserve to overtake briskly without breaking any speed limits.

Look – Check ahead and assess the condition of the road. Assess what the vehicle ahead is doing. Assess for any other hazards. Check behind again to reassess the situation, motorcyclists can approach very quickly and start overtaking you.

If it is safe, change lanes by gently steering to the next lane on the right.

Make sure you pass the vehicle briskly (DO NOT BREAK THE SPEED LIMIT).

Make sure you are well clear of the vehicle you have overtaken before moving back to the left (DO NOT CUT IN).

Be considerate – Don't block faster moving vehicles that might want to overtake you. Even if they are breaking the speed limit.

You mustn't overtake on the left unless traffic is moving slowly in queues, and the queue on the right is moving more slowly than you are.

Never move to a lane on your left to overtake.

If you are being overtaken – Do not accelerate to prolong their actions. If necessary, ease off to help them pass you.

Keep well back from any vehicle that is too close to the vehicle in front or vehicles swinging in and out of the traffic. Be patient, they could do something dangerous.

Flashing of headlights

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This is a visual version of sounding your horn. By flashing your lights, you are telling someone that you are there.

Don't flash your headlights to indicate to someone that they should pull out or pull in.

However, someone may flash their lights at you. If they do, you must make sure you understand the true intentions of the flash before acting on it.

If a driver starts flashing their lights at you and driving dangerously close, Stay calm and don't be intimidated. When safe, move to the left as soon as safe to do so, without cutting in on vehicles on your left.

Breakdowns

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Most Dual Carriageways don't have Hard Shoulders.

In the unlikely event of having problems with your car, Try to get the car off the Dual Carriageway as soon as safely possible. If not possible, use a lay-by (protected one is preferable).

An unprotected lay-by are those that do not have a kerbed island to separate the lay-by from the dual carriageway. Fatal incidents have happened involving stopped vehicles on unprotected lay-bys.

If unable to find a lay-by, pull off the road onto the grass verge. Be careful with verges with long grass. The hot exhaust system could set fire to the long grass underneath the car.

Actions on pulling over:

Put steering wheels to full lock left.

Use your Hazard warning lights.

If safe to do so, use a warning triangle.

Get your passengers out of the car and place them on top of the verge about 25 metres behind the car.

Keep all animals in the car (risk to other vehicles if loose).

Go to the nearest phone and call for assistance (preferable over using a mobile. The emergency phones are manned by the police, and they will know your exact location).

If you get a puncture

Don't try to change the wheel yourself unless you are in a lay-by