

DRIVING ADVISORY: VEHICLE CHECKS AND FAMILIARISATION



Ensuring your vehicle is safe and roadworthy isn't just best practice, for commercial drivers it's a legal requirement.

Daily checks and proper familiarisation are vital to prevent accidents, avoid fines, and for heavier and passenger carrying vehicles, it's part of your employers' Operator's Licence.

Whether you're an experienced HGV driver or new to van delivery work, knowing how to do a thorough check and understanding your vehicle is key.

Neglecting checks or driving unfamiliar vehicles without preparation increases the risk of accidents and penalties. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) can carry out roadside checks at any time, and if they find something wrong, it can impact both you and your employer's reputation and legal standing.

Daily walkround checks

The DVSA recommends a daily walkround check before your first journey of the day. This inspection must cover all essential components that could affect safety or compliance. Here's what you should look for:

External checks

- **Lights and indicators**
Make sure all bulbs are working, lenses are clean and not cracked.
- **Tyres and wheels**
Check for cuts, bulges, tyre pressure, and tread depth.
- **Mirrors and glass**
No cracks or damage that could impair vision.
- **Wipers and washers**
Ensure they operate correctly and washer fluid is topped up.
- **Bodywork and doors**
Look for sharp edges, insecure panels or loose fittings.
- **Number plates**
Are clean and legible.
- **Leaks**
Check under the vehicle for fuel, oil, or other fluid leaks.



Internal checks

- **Brakes and horn**
Test for proper operation.
- **Steering**
Ensure there's no unusual play or stiffness.
- **Seatbelts**
Check they fasten securely and retract properly.
- **Dashboard warning lights**
Ensure none are lit unnecessarily after starting.
- **Tachograph**
If you have one, check it's calibrated and ready to use.



Report Defects!

Every walkround should be documented, and any defects should be reported immediately to your transport manager.



Vehicle Familiarisation

If you're new to a vehicle or switching between models, take time to get familiar with the layout and features. Each vehicle can have different blind spots, controls, turning circles, and load handling characteristics.

■ Get in Control

Know where to find lights, wipers, hazard lights, heating, and emergency systems.

■ Load Up

Take time to understand weight limits, load securing methods, and how loads affect braking and stability.

■ Tech Talk

Learn how to operate vehicle-specific tech like lane assist, reversing cameras, or infotainment systems and where they can be operated on your vehicle.

■ Don't go blind

Adjust mirrors properly, locate blind spots and pivot points, and identify where visibility is reduced.

■ Test drive

Take a short familiarisation drive in a safe area if possible, especially if you're operating a larger vehicle or driving one with different handling characteristics.



Train with RED

RED Corporate Training offers professional and auditable training for drivers to complete their own comprehensive vehicle checks, delivered via e-learning or in-person group workshops at your location, it can also assist with templates and advice on record keeping as required.

RED Advisories

RED has produced a series of advisory leaflets covering everything from towing to fatigue. To download a copy, click [here](#)



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