

The hazard perception test (HPT) explained

New drivers are disproportionately involved in accidents, especially in the first months after passing a driving test. It has been proven that drivers who have taken hazard perception training have much better hazard perception skills.

Why the hazard perception element was introduced

The government is committed to reducing the numbers killed and seriously injured on UK roads by 40 per cent by 2010. The hazard perception element was introduced into the driving test in November 2002. It is one of the measures that should help achieve this target by encouraging appropriate training in scanning the road, recognising at the first opportunity from the clues that a potentially dangerous situation might arise and adopting a driving plan to reduce the risk.

During the development of this test, the GB authority - Driving Standards Agency (DSA) and Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA), worked closely with their colleagues from the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) and the road safety division of the Department for Transport - both of whom thought this test suitable for testing the hazard awareness skills of all drivers.

How the test works

The hazard perception part is delivered on a computer and you respond by clicking a button on the mouse. You will be presented with a series of video clips which feature every day road scenes. In each clip there will be at least one developing hazard, but one of the clips will feature two developing hazards.

To achieve a high score you will need to respond to the developing hazard during the early part of its development. The maximum points you can score on each hazard is five.

Recognition of available clues and perception of danger are skills that are necessary in all drivers and riders, irrespective of the vehicle used. For this reason, the same version of the hazard perception test is used for all categories of test.

An example of when to respond

Think of a parked car on the side of the road. When you first see it, it isn't doing anything - it's just a parked car. If you respond at this point, you wouldn't score any marks, but you wouldn't lose any marks.

When you get closer to the car, you notice that its right-hand indicator starts to flash. This would make you think that the driver of the car is going to move away. The hazard is now developing and a response at this point would score marks. The indicator coming on is a sign that the car has changed from a potential hazard into a developing hazard.

When you get closer to the car, you'll probably see it start to move away from the side of the road. Another response should be made at this point.

How the test is scored

The maximum you can score for each developing hazard is five points. You should respond by pressing the mouse button as soon as you see a hazard developing that may result in you, the driver, having to take some action, such as changing speed or direction. The earlier you notice a developing hazard and make a response, the higher your score.

You won't be able to review your answers to the hazard perception test; as on the road, you will only have one chance to respond to the developing hazard, so you will need to concentrate throughout each clip.

If you react inappropriately during the video clip by clicking continuously or in a pattern of responses you will score zero for that clip. At the end of the clip a pop-up box will appear informing you that you have scored zero for that particular clip.