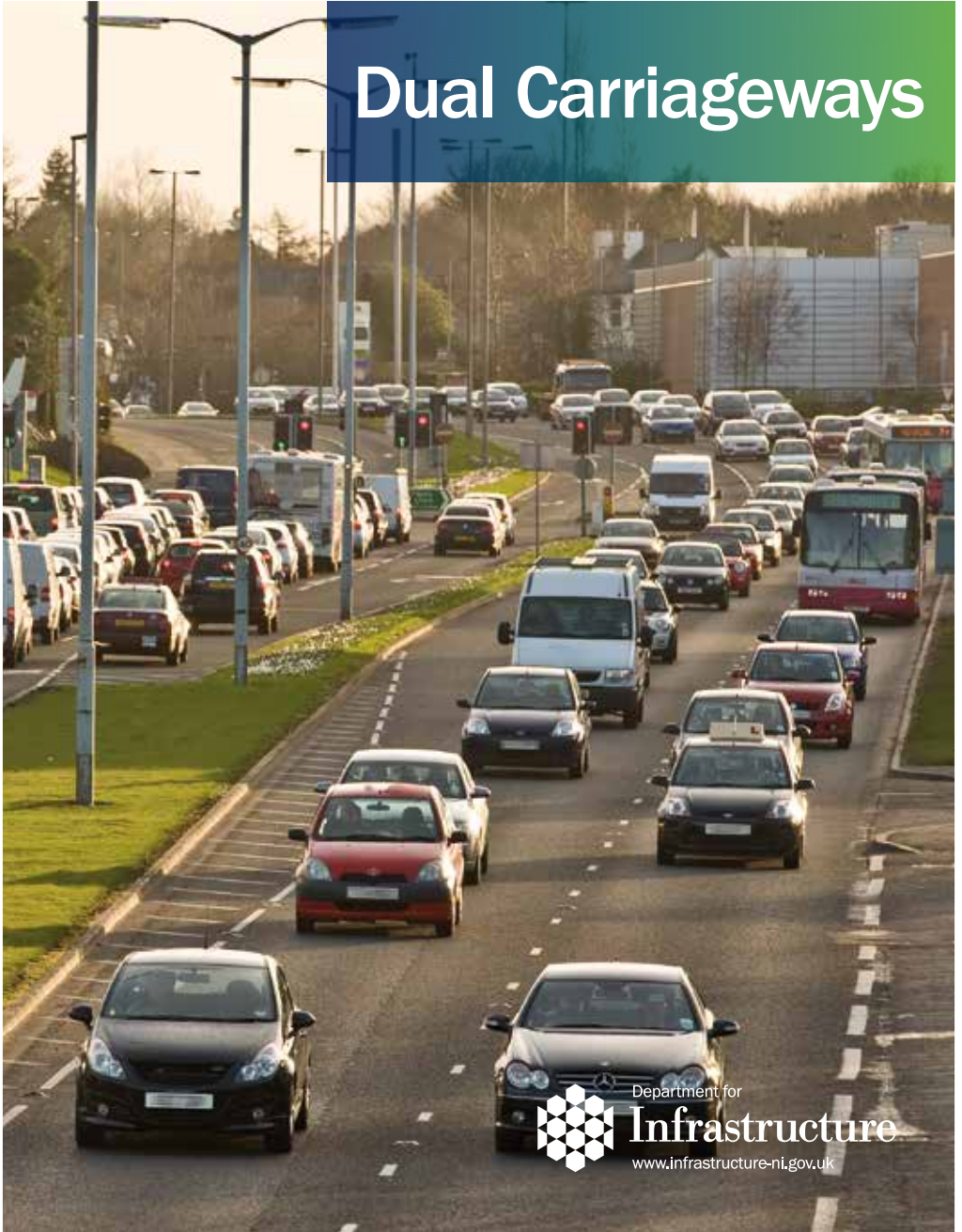


ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION

Dual Carriageways



Department for

Infrastructure

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dual carriageways – know the dangers

Never confuse a dual carriageway with a motorway.

Both may have 2 or 3 lanes, a central reservation and a national speed limit of 70 mph, but that's as far as the similarity goes.

When driving on a dual carriageway there are many dangers you need to be aware of.

Know the difference between dual carriageways and motorways

Unlike motorways...

- Dual carriageways may have variable speed limits;
- Dual carriageways usually permit right turns;
- Dual carriageways allow traffic to join from the left and cross from left to right;
- Cyclists, mopeds, farm vehicles and pedestrians are allowed to use dual carriageways;
- Dual carriageways may have Pelican Crossings, traffic lights, roundabouts and Zebra Crossings.

Speed Limits

Built-up areas*

Type of vehicle

mph
(km/h)



Cars & motorcycles
(including car-derived vans up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight)

30
(48)



Cars towing caravans or trailers
(including car-derived vans and motorcycles)

30
(48)



Buses, coaches and minibuses
(not exceeding 12 metres in overall length)

30
(48)



Goods vehicles
(not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)

30
(48)



Goods vehicles
(exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight)

30
(48)

*The 30 mph limit usually applies to all traffic on all roads with street lighting unless signs show otherwise.
†60 mph (96 km/h) if articulated or towing a trailer.

Know the speed limits

Dual carriageways often have lower or variable speed limits shown by red circular signs.

Rule 124 of The Highway Code NI says you **MUST NOT** exceed the maximum speed limits for the road and for your vehicle.

The presence of street lights generally means that there is a 30 mph (48 km/h) speed limit unless otherwise specified.



Single carriageways	Dual carriageways	Motorways
mph (km/h)	mph (km/h)	mph (km/h)
60 (96)	70 (112)	70 (112)
50 (80)	60 (96)	60 (96)
50 (80)	60 (96)	70 (112)
50 (80)	60 (96)	70 ⁺ (112)
40 (64)	50 (80)	60 (96)

Know your stopping distances

(Rule 126)

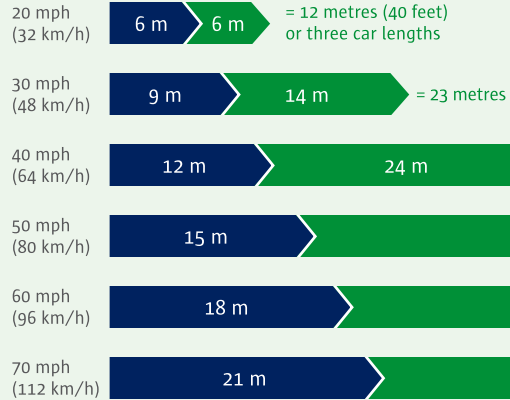
Always drive at a speed that will allow you to stop well within the distance you can see to be clear.

Leave enough space between you and the vehicle in front so that you can pull up safely if it suddenly slows down or stops.

Remember -

- Never get closer than the overall stopping distance (see typical stopping distances table);
- Always allow at least a two-second gap between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying fast-moving traffic and in tunnels where visibility is reduced;
- The two-second gap rule should be at least doubled on wet roads and further increased on icy roads;
- Large vehicles and motorcycles need a greater distance to stop. If driving a large vehicle in a tunnel, allow a four-second gap;
- If you have to stop in a tunnel, leave at least a 5-metre gap.

Typical Stopping Distances -



Know how to join a dual carriageway

When joining a dual carriageway obey signs and road markings.

If joining from a slip road, judge a suitable gap in the traffic and build up your speed to match that of the traffic on the dual carriageway.

If joining from a roundabout, follow the normal roundabout rules.

Be aware - some single carriageway roads and motorways may blend directly on to dual carriageways.

The distances shown are a general guide. The distance will depend on your attention (thinking distance), the road surface, the weather conditions and the condition of your vehicle at the time.

(75 feet) or six car lengths

Thinking Distance	Braking Distance
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Average car length = 4 metres (13 feet)

→ = 36 metres (118 feet) or nine car lengths

→ = 38 m = 53 metres (175 feet) or thirteen car lengths

→ = 55 m = 73 metres (240 feet) or eighteen car lengths

→ = 75 m = 96 metres (315 feet) or twenty-four car lengths

Know how to cross a dual carriageway

(Rule 173)

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

If it is, **treat each half of the carriageway as a separate road**. When it is safe to do so, cross the first carriageway, then 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.

Know how to turn on a dual carriageway

When carrying out a right turn on a dual carriageway, start planning your turn early and consider the speed of the traffic.

Check your mirrors carefully, signal well in advance and start to break gently to warn traffic behind you that you intend to turn.

Position your vehicle accurately inside the turning bay in the central reservation, and check that the road you are turning on to is clear before pulling out.

Know how to leave a dual carriageway

Leave the dual carriageway safely by using the slip road.

Remember - use the sliproad, not the carriageway, for decelerating.

When coming to the end of a dual carriageway look out for the 'end of dual-carriageway' sign.



Don't start to overtake after you see the sign, otherwise you might run out of road or, even worse, find yourself facing an oncoming vehicle head on.

Be aware - dual carriageways often end by simply narrowing down to a single lane or at a roundabout followed by a single lane. So watch out for road signs, road markings and speed limit signs.

Know your lanes

(Rules 133 and 134)

If you need to change lanes on a multi-lane carriageway, 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. In congested road conditions do not change lanes unnecessarily. Merging in turn is recommended but is only safe and appropriate when vehicles are travelling at a very low speed.

Remember - always follow the signs and road markings and get into the lane as directed.

(Rules 137 and 138)

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.

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.



Know the danger of roadworks

Roadworks on dual carriageways present similar dangers and delays. So at the first warning sign slow down gradually and obey the 'no overtaking' and 'temporary speed limit' signs.

Know how to handle a break down

If your vehicle breaks down, think first of all other road users and:

- Get your vehicle off the road if possible;
- Warn other traffic by using your hazard warning lights if your vehicle is causing an obstruction;
- Help other road users see you by wearing light-coloured fluorescent clothing in daylight and reflective clothing at night or in poor visibility;
- Put a warning triangle on the road at least 45 metres (147 feet) behind your broken-down vehicle on the same side of the road, or use other permitted warning devices if you have them. Always take great care when placing or retrieving them, but never use them on motorways;
- Keep your side lights on if it is dark or visibility is poor;
- Do not stand (or let anybody else stand) between your vehicle and oncoming traffic;
- At night or in poor visibility do not stand where you will prevent other road users seeing your lights.

Remember - a dual carriageway is not a motorway, so know the difference and the dangers

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