SHOW ME, TELL ME

Every official DVSA vehicle safety question for the car test — what the examiner asks, the answer they want, and how to say it.

14	7	2
TELL ME QUESTIONS	SHOW ME QUESTIONS	ASKED ON THE DAY

Keep it in the car. **Ten minutes with this is worth an hour of worrying about it.**

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BOOK A LESSON

How the questions work

AT THE START — BEFORE YOU DRIVE

One “tell me”

The examiner asks one of the 14 questions on the next pages while the car is still parked. You explain the check out loud. If it is one of the three bonnet questions, you open the bonnet and point things out.

ON THE MOVE — WHILE YOU DRIVE

One “show me”

One of the 7 show me questions, asked while you are driving. You actually operate the control — but only when it is safe, and without taking your eyes off the road for long.

WHAT IT COSTS YOU

Get **one or both** of them wrong and it is **one driving fault** — a minor. It will not fail you on its own. What *will* fail you is letting your driving go while you answer: if your driving becomes dangerous or potentially dangerous during the show me question, that is a serious fault.

ASHRAF’S ADVICE

The driving always comes first. If you are asked to demist the screen while you are approaching a roundabout, say “I’ll do that as soon as it’s safe” and do it once you are on a straight, quiet bit of road. Examiners expect that. What they do not want is a driver hunting around the dashboard at a junction.

Three things worth practising

1. **Open the bonnet on your own car**
   Find the release catch inside the car and the safety catch under the bonnet lip. Doing it for the first time on test day costs you time and calm.
2. **Say the answers out loud**
   Reading them is not the same. The examiner wants a spoken answer, and the words come out very differently the first time you say them.
3. **Learn your own car’s controls by feel**
   Rear demister, rear washer and fog lights sit in a different place in every car. Find them in the car you will be tested in.

Taking your ADI Part 2? Same list of questions, but you get **five**: three tell me before you drive and two show me while driving. One driving fault for each wrong answer, and a serious fault if you get all five wrong.

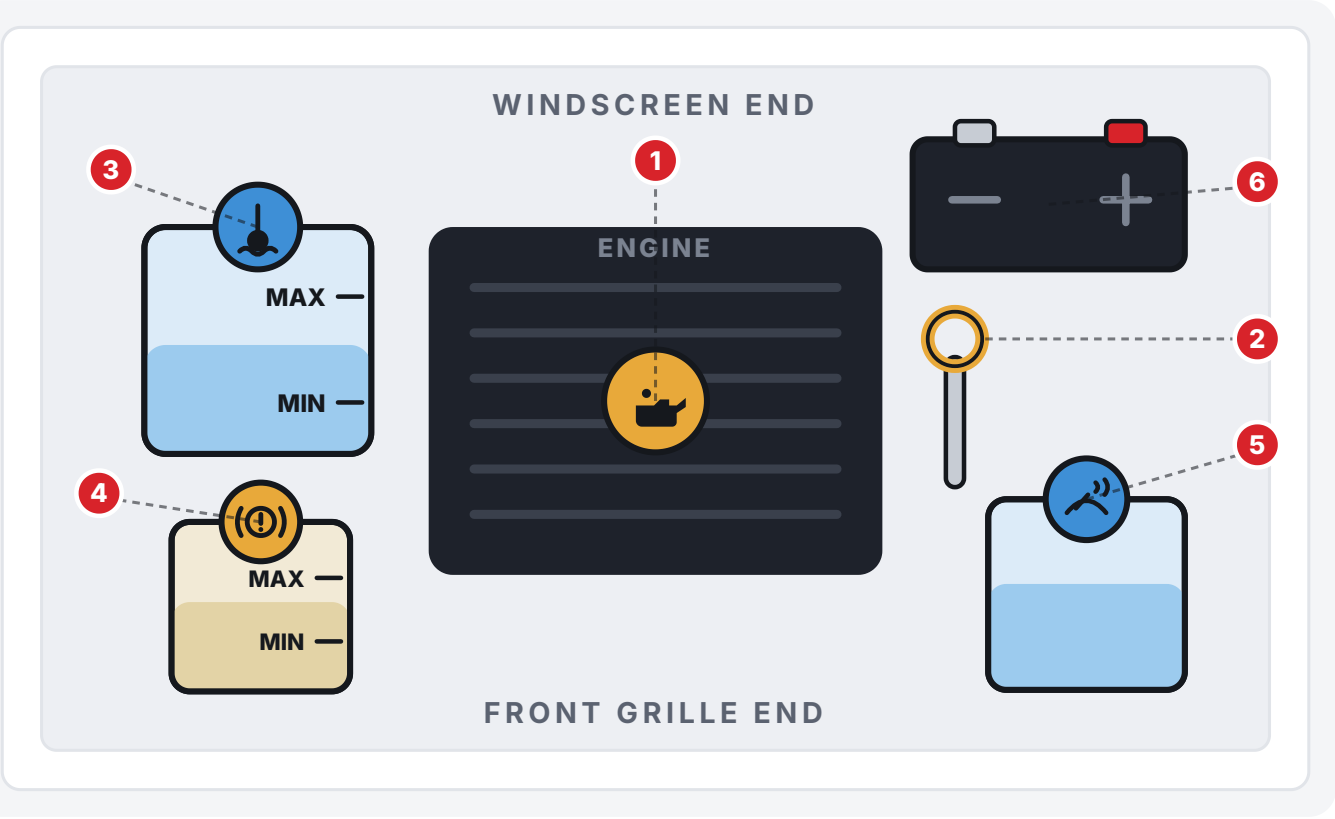
The number on each question in this guide is its number on the official DVSA list, so they are grouped here by subject rather than running 1 to 14 in order. That way you can check any of them against GOV.UK.

TELL ME — UNDER THE BONNET

What is under there

3

Three of the fourteen questions send you under the bonnet. Every engine bay is laid out differently, but the caps are colour-coded and marked with the same symbols in almost every car. Learn the symbols and you can find them in any car.



1 · Engine oil filler cap
Where oil goes in — not where you check it.

2 · Dipstick
Where you read the oil level. Usually a yellow ring.

3 · Coolant header tank
Thermometer in water. MIN and MAX on the side.

4 · Brake fluid reservoir
Circle with an exclamation mark, in brackets.

5 · Screenwash
Windscreen and spray. Nothing to do with the test answers — just don't mix it up.

6 · Battery
Red cover on the positive terminal.

THE ONE MISTAKE TO AVOID

Screenwash and coolant are both blue-capped and both look like water. Check the symbol, not the colour of the liquid. And never take a coolant cap off while the engine is hot.

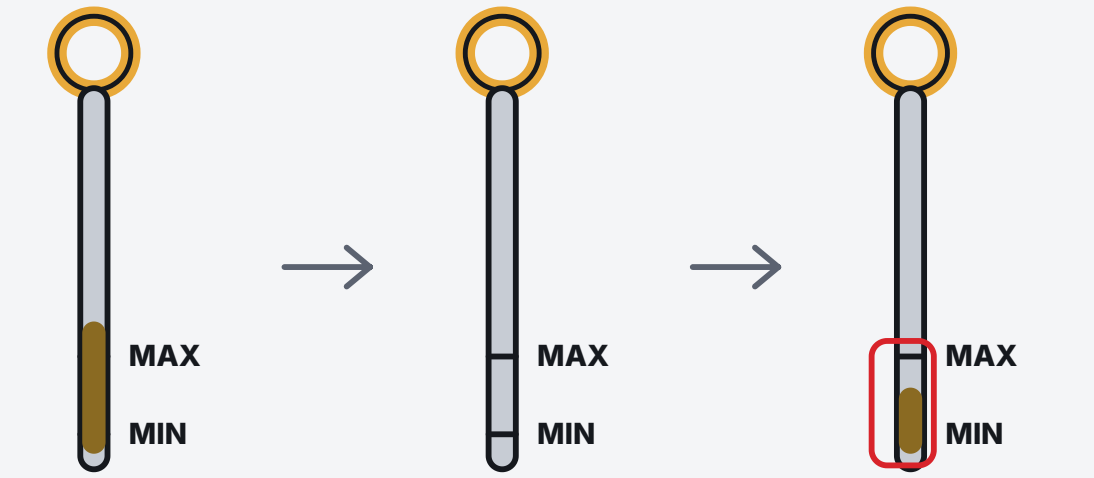
12 Open the bonnet and tell me how you'd check that the engine has sufficient oil.

DVSA ANSWER

Identify dipstick/oil level indicator, describe check of oil level against the minimum and maximum markers.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

This is the dipstick. On level ground with the engine off, I'd pull it out, wipe it clean, push it all the way back in, pull it out again and check the oil sits between the minimum and maximum markers. If it's low I'd top up through the oil filler cap a little at a time and re-check.



1. Pull it out
2. Wipe it clean
3. Push in, pull out, read

Why the wipe matters. Oil splashes all over the dipstick while the engine runs, so the first reading is meaningless. Wipe it, put it fully back in, and the second reading is the real level. Engine off, car on level ground, and ideally left a few minutes for the oil to drain back down.

IF THE EXAMINER PUSHES

"And if it was below the minimum?" — "I'd top up through the oil filler cap, a small amount at a time, wait a minute and re-check. I wouldn't fill above the maximum."

Coolant & brake fluid

13 Open the bonnet and tell me how you'd check that the engine has sufficient engine coolant.

DVSA ANSWER

Identify high and low level markings on header tank where fitted or radiator filler cap, and describe how to top up to correct level.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

This is the header tank. With the engine cold, I'd check the coolant sits between the low and high markings on the side. If it's low I'd top up to the high mark with the correct coolant and refit the cap. I'd never take the cap off while the engine is hot.

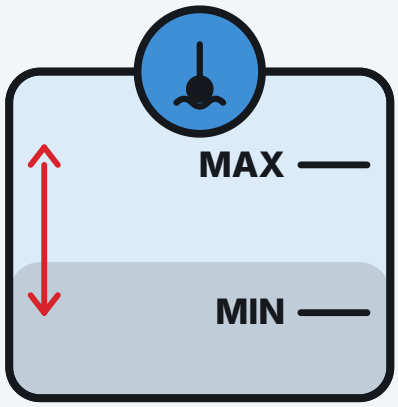
14 Open the bonnet and tell me how you'd check that you have a safe level of hydraulic brake fluid.

DVSA ANSWER

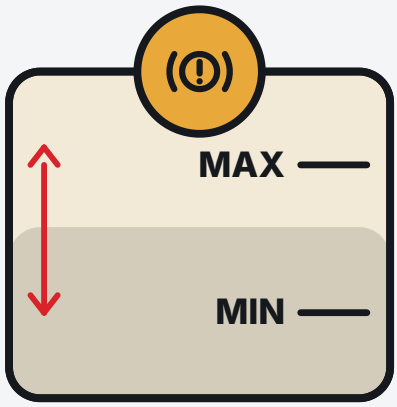
Identify reservoir, check level against high and low markings.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

This is the brake fluid reservoir. I'd check the level is between the low and high markings on the side. If it's dropped I'd get it looked at, because the level usually only falls as the pads wear or if there's a leak.



Coolant header tank



Brake fluid reservoir

Both tanks are read the same way. Look through the side of the tank and check the fluid sits between the low and high markings.

COOLANT — THE SAFETY LINE

The system is under pressure. Taking the cap off a hot engine can throw scalding coolant out. Always say **"with the engine cold"** — examiners listen for it.

BRAKE FLUID — THE SAFETY LINE

Brake fluid is not used up in normal driving. A level that keeps dropping means worn pads or a leak, so the answer to "what would you do?" is **get it checked**, not just top it up.

4 Tell me how you'd check the tyres to ensure that they have sufficient tread depth and that their general condition is safe to use on the road.

DVSA ANSWER

No cuts and bulges, 1.6mm of tread depth across the central three-quarters of the breadth of the tyre, and around the entire outer circumference of the tyre.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

I'd look all the way round each tyre for cuts and bulges, and check there's at least 1.6mm of tread across the middle three-quarters of the tyre and all the way round it.



The 20p check is a rough guide, not the law. Drop a 20p into the main grooves — if you can see the coin's outer band, the tread is getting low and wants measuring properly with a gauge. The legal minimum is 1.6mm.

2 Tell me where you'd find the information for the recommended tyre pressures for this car and how tyre pressures should be checked.

DVSA ANSWER

Manufacturer's guide, use a reliable pressure gauge, check and adjust pressures when tyres are cold, don't forget spare tyre, remember to refit valve caps.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

They're in the manufacturer's handbook, and usually on a sticker in the driver's door shut or inside the fuel filler flap. I'd check them with a reliable gauge while the tyres are cold, not forget the spare, and refit the valve caps.

Where the sticker lives. Driver's door shut, inside the fuel filler flap, or the handbook. Pressures are set for a cold tyre, so check them before a long drive, not after one — and do the spare too, if the car has one.

Brakes, steering & seat

1 Tell me how you'd check that the brakes are working before starting a journey.

DVSA ANSWER

Brakes should not feel spongy or slack. Brakes should be tested as you set off. Vehicle should not pull to one side.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

Before I set off I'd press the brake pedal — it shouldn't feel spongy or slack. Then as I move off I'd test them at low speed, and the car shouldn't pull to one side.

9 Tell me how you'd check the power-assisted steering is working before starting a journey.

DVSA ANSWER

If the steering becomes heavy, the system may not be working properly. Before starting a journey, 2 simple checks can be made. Gentle pressure on the steering wheel, maintained while the engine is started, should result in a slight but noticeable movement as the system begins to operate. Alternatively turning the steering wheel just after moving off will give an immediate indication that the power assistance is functioning.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

There are two checks. I can hold light pressure on the wheel as I start the engine — the wheel should move slightly as the system kicks in. Or I can turn the wheel just after moving off; if the steering feels heavy, the power assistance isn't working.

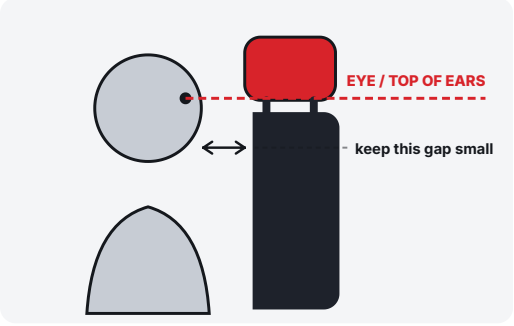
3 Tell me how you make sure your head restraint is correctly adjusted so it provides the best protection in the event of a crash.

DVSA ANSWER

The head restraint should be adjusted so the rigid part of the head restraint is at least as high as the eye or top of the ears, and as close to the back of the head as is comfortable. Note: Some restraints might not be adjustable.

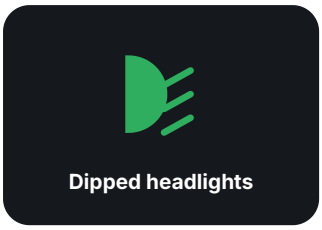
SAY IT LIKE THIS

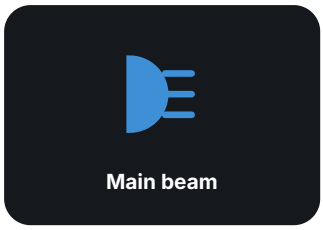
I'd set it so the solid part is at least as high as my eyes or the top of my ears, and as close to the back of my head as is comfortable. Some head restraints don't adjust at all.

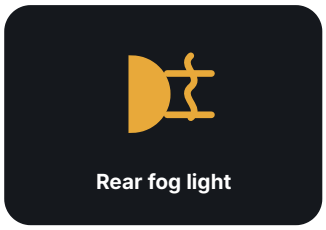


Height first, then the gap. The solid part of the restraint has to reach at least your eye line or the top of your ears — that is what stops your head snapping back in a shunt. Then slide it as close to the back of your head as is still comfortable. Saying "some are fixed and don't adjust at all" is part of the official answer too.

Warning lights & checks









Colour tells you the job. Green means something is simply switched on, blue is main beam, and amber is a warning — including the rear fog lights, which is why you notice when you have left them on.

5 Tell me how you'd check that the headlights and tail lights are working. You don't need to exit the vehicle.

DVSA ANSWER

Explain you'd operate the switch (turn on ignition if necessary), then walk round vehicle (as this is a 'tell me' question, you don't need to physically check the lights).

SAY IT LIKE THIS

I'd turn the ignition on if it needed it, switch the lights on, then walk round the car and check the front and rear lights are lit.

7 Tell me how you'd check the direction indicators are working. You don't need to exit the vehicle.

DVSA ANSWER

Explain you'd operate the switch (turn on ignition if necessary), and then walk round vehicle (as this is a 'tell me' question, you don't need to physically check the lights).

SAY IT LIKE THIS

I'd turn the ignition on, put the hazard warning lights on so all of them flash together, then walk round the car and check front, back and the side repeaters.

8 Tell me how you'd check the brake lights are working on this car.

DVSA ANSWER

Explain you'd operate the brake pedal, make use of reflections in windows or doors, or ask someone to help.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

I'd press the brake pedal and look for the red reflection in a shop window, a garage door or another car behind me — or ask someone to stand at the back and tell me.

Fog, main beam & ABS

10 Tell me how you'd switch on the rear fog light(s) and explain when you'd use it/them. You don't need to exit the vehicle.

DVSA ANSWER

Operate switch (turn on dipped headlights and ignition if necessary). Check warning light is on. Explain use.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

Ignition on, dipped headlights on, then this switch here — and the amber warning light on the dash tells me they're on. I'd only use them when visibility drops below about 100 metres, and switch them off as soon as it clears, because they dazzle the driver behind.

11 Tell me how you switch your headlight from dipped to main beam and explain how you'd know the main beam is on.

DVSA ANSWER

Operate switch (with ignition or engine on if necessary), check with main beam warning light.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

With the engine on and dipped headlights already on, I'd push the stalk away from me, and the blue main beam light on the dashboard tells me it's on.

6 Tell me how you'd know if there was a problem with your anti-lock braking system.

DVSA ANSWER

Warning light should illuminate if there is a fault with the anti-lock braking system.

SAY IT LIKE THIS

The ABS warning light on the dashboard would stay on. It comes on with the ignition and should go out shortly after — if it stays lit, there's a fault.

THE RULE BEHIND THE FOG LIGHT ANSWER

Rear fog lights are for when visibility drops below **100 metres** — roughly the length of a football pitch. Leave them on when it clears and you dazzle the driver behind and hide your brake lights, which is why examiners want to hear the "switch them off" half of the answer as well.

The seven show me questions

Each one starts *"When it's safe to do so, can you..."* — and those first five words are the whole point. Answer when the road is quiet and straight, keep your eyes up, and use one hand.



1. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you wash and clean the rear windscreen?**

Push or twist the wiper stalk the way that works the rear washer — usually push the stalk away from you, or twist the collar — and hold it long enough for the screen to clear.



2. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you wash and clean the front windscreen?**

Pull the wiper stalk towards you and hold it. The washers and wipers run together, so keep it held until the screen is clean.



3. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you'd switch on your dipped headlights?**

Turn the light switch round to the dipped headlight symbol. The green headlight light appears on the dashboard.



4. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you'd set the rear demister?**

Press the rear demister button — the rectangle with three wavy arrows going up. A light in the button shows it is on.



5. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you'd operate the horn?**

Press the centre of the steering wheel. One short press is enough — you only need to show that you can find it.



6. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you'd demist the front windscreen?**

Fan up, temperature up, air direction to the windscreen, air on fresh rather than recirculate, and the heated screen on if the car has one.



7. **When it's safe to do so, can you show me how you'd open and close the side window?**

Use the switch on your own door — down, then straight back up. Do not lean across to the passenger window.

IF YOU CANNOT FIND THE CONTROL

Say so, keep driving normally, and find it when you next stop. A fumbled search that wanders the car across the lane is far more expensive than admitting you need a moment.

All 21, at a glance

Cover the page with your hand, work down the list and say each answer out loud. Tick the ones you got word-perfect; the ones you leave blank are your revision.

Tell me 14 questions · you get 1

- [ ] 1 Brakes working before setting off
- [ ] 2 Where to find tyre pressures, and how to check them
- [ ] 3 Head restraint adjusted correctly
- [ ] 4 Tyre tread depth and general condition
- [ ] 5 Headlights and tail lights working
- [ ] 6 Knowing there is a problem with the ABS
- [ ] 7 Direction indicators working
- [ ] 8 Brake lights working
- [ ] 9 Power-assisted steering working
- [ ] 10 Rear fog lights — switching on, and when to use them
- [ ] 11 Dipped to main beam, and how you know it is on
- [ ] 12 Engine oil level — bonnet up
- [ ] 13 Engine coolant level — bonnet up
- [ ] 14 Hydraulic brake fluid level — bonnet up

Show me 7 questions · you get 1

- [ ] 1 Wash and clean the rear windscreen
- [ ] 2 Wash and clean the front windscreen
- [ ] 3 Switch on dipped headlights
- [ ] 4 Set the rear demister
- [ ] 5 Operate the horn
- [ ] 6 Demist the front windscreen
- [ ] 7 Open and close the side window

ON THE DAY

The tell me question comes before you turn a wheel, so it is the first thing you do in front of the examiner. Getting it out cleanly settles the nerves for everything after it.

STILL NOT SURE ON ONE?

Bring it to your next lesson and we will do it on the car, with the bonnet up. Five minutes in a real engine bay beats an hour of reading.

THE ONES TO GO OVER AGAIN

LEARN IT ONCE.
PASS IT FIRST TIME.

Manual and automatic lessons across Birmingham with Ashraf, a DVSA approved driving instructor. Beginners, partly trained, and people who just need the last few hours before a test.

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BOOK A LESSON

LEAVE A REVIEW

Free to keep and free to pass on — send it to anyone you know who is learning.

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