

# COMMON CONFUSIONS

There has been a call for some central guidance in relation to 'Common Confusions' on the subject of both Observing and Examining within the IAM. In order to alleviate this, the following has been produced in consultation with Staff Examiners across the country and will be added to as further 'confusions' are identified.

## 1. What to expect in the way of a briefing from the Examiner?

The Examiner, having completed introductions, will:-

- Wish to check documentation for the Candidate and machine, carrying out an eyesight check and make a visual check of your machine both for its legality and suitability for use in the test.
- Outline what it is they will expect from the Candidate. In essence this will be a ride incorporating the advice set out in How to be a Better Rider (HTBABR), in particular the sections titled 'Examiner Checklist'. This amounts to providing a safe, systematic, smooth and progressive ride that complies with the law in all respects.
- Explain how they intend to guide you, either by means of signalling or via use of radios. They will explain their positioning in relation to you and that you should ignore their positioning for the purposes of your own positioning.
- Explain how they intend to stop you should that become necessary and what to do in the event of separation, or your missing one of their directions. They will explain that missing one of their directions will not impact on the result of the test unless this keeps happening, which might indicate poor observations on the Candidate's part.
- Point out any local anomalies applicable to the test route that might lead to confusion and they will agree a 'move off' signal and will ask if there are any questions. It is a good idea to think beforehand of any points that may need clarification, and if they are not covered in the briefing, to raise them at the end. However matters of legality are not within the Examiner's remit to make allowance for.

Examiners may appear more detached than Observer(s) but this should be viewed as a professional detachment owing to the nature of the exercise. In the end they will be wanting exactly the same result as the Candidate, after all giving good news is always preferable to giving bad news, but they have to ensure that the standards set out for the test are met.

2. What will be expected of a Candidate on test clarification:

Candidates will be expected to provide a safe, systematic, smooth and progressive ride that complies with the law in all respects following the advice set out in How to be a Better Rider (HTBABR). The Examiner will direct the Candidate with signals from behind (or via radios if both the Candidate and Examiner are agreeable to this). The test will be conducted on a route that encompasses a cross section of differing road types and circumstances and will last between 60 and 75 minutes depending on traffic conditions. Towards or at the end of the test the Candidate will be required to carry out a simple slow speed manoeuvring exercise such as figures of eight or circles which will count towards the marking of the test.

3. Examiner debriefing of Candidates:

The main benefit of the test for the Candidate, is usually considered to be the Examiner's post-test debrief.

- Good points will be highlighted and reinforced whilst weaknesses will be identified and solutions presented for consideration.
- Examiners' debriefs can vary and while it would be wrong to cramp any individual's style, the feedback to the Candidate will be more than a cursory 'recommended' or 'not recommended' followed by a couple of minutes on some weakness.
- Feedback will be informative, reinforce the better aspects of the Candidate's performance and illuminate the areas of weakness. The Examiner will endeavour to make sure that the Candidate leaves in no doubt when it comes to areas that have been identified as strengths and weaknesses.
- The IAM have no objections to Examiners liaising with Groups and attending 'meet the Examiner' events.
- Examiners are encouraged to feedback to Observers on their Candidate's performance to assist further preparation in cases of 'Non - Recommendation', or to assist more generally in Observer development where Candidates pass the test.
- Examiners are not expected to be actively involved in the on-road training of any of their potential Candidates.
- Examiners should not test Candidates they have trained. Refer to the Chief Examiner for a decision if the training took place over one year ago.

4. Misconception – A pre ride check and running brake check is a requirement of the test:

There is no requirement to carry out a pre ride check or undertake a running brake check as part of the test, as the Candidate has already ridden the machine to the test venue. However, if the Candidate wishes to demonstrate their knowledge in this respect they will not be discouraged from doing so.

5. Test postponement clarification:

There may be circumstances where weather conditions could make testing on 2 wheels unsafe. Similarly both Examiners and Candidates may have 'family emergencies', which require short notice test rescheduling. In cases other than for weather-related ones for safety reasons, a one-off rescheduling of test dates may occur without financial consequences for the Candidate.

In all other cases a period of at least 24 hours notice of a need to reschedule must be given. Such rescheduling will then be catered for without financial consequences. Repeated postponement should not be necessary, whilst Examiners should exercise reasonable discretion and common sense, if this arises they should seek advice.

6. Legality or condition of the machine clarification:

If, for any reason, an Observer considers the machine a Candidate is riding to be either unsafe or illegal, the Candidate should be advised of the fact, the reason for it, and that the observed session will not take place until the faults/issues are remedied. Similarly, if the Examiner considers the machine to be unsafe or illegal, the test will not take place.

7. Misconception – At least one brake must be covered/applied while stationary in traffic:

This is not a requirement of the test on a level road if the bike is stable and does not have to be stopped from moving forwards or backwards by use of the rider's legs. The rider should nevertheless be in full control of their machine at all times.

8. Declining an Associate – clarification:

The Observer has the right to decline to ride with any Candidate or any other rider. The refusal should be made through a suitable Group contact.

9. Misconception – Use of front brake, the front brake must not be used when coming to rest:

Use of the front brake only when coming to rest will not result in adverse marking *per se* unless the Examiner considers that insufficient control is being exercised i.e. its coarse application affects the stability of the machine. The machine should be brought to rest safely, smoothly and in complete control and ridden away again in a similar fashion.

10. Misconception – ‘Hendon shuffle’, this procedure must be used:

This has never been a requirement of the test. When coming to a stop it is immaterial which foot is placed on the ground first or leaves it last providing the machine is stopped safely, smoothly and in control and is moved away from rest in a similar fashion.

11. Misconception – Use of Handlebars, keep at least one hand on the handlebars when stationary:

This is not a requirement for the test but the bike must remain stable at all times.

12. Erroneous statement – Indicators must be used whenever one changes lane or carries out a left or right turn:

Indicators need only be used when they would be of benefit to other road users. However, use of indicators without obvious benefit is unlikely to affect the test result unless they are misleading to other road users.

If there is any doubt then rule 103/page 34 of the Highway Code applies.

13. Misconception – A ‘Lifesaver’ must be carried out whenever changing course or speed:

This is wrong and they should not be carried out by rote. They should only be carried out when they would be of benefit and serve a purpose. However, failure to execute a lifesaver when the scenario dictates the need might adversely affect test success.

‘Lifesavers’ are now referred to as ‘Blind-spot checks’.

14. Mini roundabout stalemate – clarification:

Highway code rule 184, 185, 188, 189, 190 (HC revised 2007) applies.

If a Candidate has stopped at the give way line to give priority to traffic from the right then they have fulfilled their obligation within the confines

of the Highway Code. If the vehicle from the right is not going to move (because they are waiting for the vehicle from their right who, in turn, is waiting for the vehicle from their right who is probably waiting for the Candidate) then they should cautiously make the first move and proceed.

Do not wave vehicles on.

15. Misconception – Neutral must always be selected when stationary in traffic:

This is not true. Neutral should be selected when the Candidate is likely to be stationary for some time. This counts towards the test competencies of Vehicle Sympathy. To not select neutral will not attract adverse marking on its own but might contribute with other faults to an adverse result overall.

16. Definition clarification: 'Off-siding' = the crossing of the centre line/hazard line, (or in the absence of such a line, the centre of the carriageway) in order to extend a view.

Off-siding\* – Single track road clarification:

In situations where there is no possibility of passing an oncoming vehicle due to the width of the road and in order to enable your presence to be seen earlier, this is acceptable, providing it is both advantageous and gives no risk of conflict.

Off-siding (to extend view) – two-way carriageway clarification:

Experience is showing that this is causing Candidates to put themselves in danger. The IAM actively discourages this practice and it is therefore not acceptable on test.

17. Set of open bends – straight-lining/trimming clarification:

Trimming or straight-lining a set of open bends whilst acceptable on test must not be carried out if there is a risk of conflict with other road users or where it will inconvenience, confuse or cause alarm or distress, to others.

If the Candidate compromises their own or any other road user's safety they will fail the test.

18. Roundabouts – ‘Straight lining’/‘Trimming’ clarification:

‘Trimming’ or ‘Straight lining’ roundabouts is often encouraged to enhance safety, stability & progress. This is correct if the situation is appropriate.

This must not however be carried out if it will inconvenience, confuse or where there is a risk of conflict with other road users. The risk from traffic approaching from the rear is also a serious consideration in the decision as to whether to ‘straighten’ a roundabout.

If the rider compromises their own or any other road user’s safety they will fail the test.

19. Small indicators clarification:

There is no rule to say that Observers cannot accompany a Candidate that has non-standard indicators fitted to their bike. However, they should comment on the Associate’s assessment ride form if the indicators proved difficult to see when illuminated. Illegal indicators will not be accepted on test.

20. Small number plates clarification:

There is no rule to say that Observers cannot accompany a Candidate that has a non-standard number plate fitted to their bike however an illegal number plate will not be accepted on test.

21. Crossing of solid white lines – clarification:

Highway Code rule 129 p43 (HC revised 2007) applies.

You can cross a solid white line in the following circumstances providing it is done safely and causes no conflict with other road users:

- To pass stationary vehicle(s); N.B. Queuing traffic is not considered to fall within the meaning of this term.
- When it is necessary to turn right into a side road, premises, drive or other access but you must not straddle the line whilst waiting for a gap in oncoming traffic or for your exit to be clear;
- To pass a bicycle, horse or road maintenance vehicle providing they are not travelling at more than 10mph; The road maintenance vehicle has to be actively engaged in road maintenance with its amber light on and keep right arrow on the back;
- If you are directed to do so by a Police officer, VOSA or HATO officer.

You may overtake moving traffic by staying on the correct side of the solid white line providing there is sufficient space available between the vehicle(s) to be overtaken and the solid white line and the manoeuvre is carried out safely and causes no conflict or confusion with other road users.

Crossing a solid white line under any other circumstances, such as at the end of an overtake will result in a test failure.

22. Overtaking speed clarification:

Any overtake needs to be accomplished safely and without risk of conflict with other road users. If to overtake successfully a Candidate will have to exceed the speed limit they should not commence the overtake. If the posted speed limit has to be exceeded the Candidate must ask themselves the question as to whether they should have attempted the overtake in the first place.

HTBABR states (page 74) 'Where an overtake is justified, you should make the manoeuvre as safely, decisively and quickly as legally possible.'

23. Speed limits – Slowing for a change in speed limit:

Misconception 1: Brakes must not be used when reducing speed to a lower speed limit.

Misconception 2: A brake light must be shown when slowing for hazards or a change in speed limit.

It depends on how much speed must be lost and over what distance and relative to other traffic.

'Acceleration Sense' should be encouraged where it is practical so as to promote smooth yet progressive riding. In many situations there may be no need to brake if the manoeuvre has been planned properly unless it is considered that a brake light needs to be shown to traffic following too closely or approaching too fast. Brakes should be used when it is necessary, even if it is only to reduce the need for excessive/hard engine braking which is not good for a bike or its stability.

It is important that the Candidate does not get into the habit of always braking under the guise of showing a brake light as an excuse for poor 'Acceleration Sense' or a lack of planning or observation.

The point at which a speed limit starts and ends is at the change of limit signs. When entering a lower limit, the change of speed should have been

achieved by the sign. When entering a higher limit the increase of speed should only commence on actually passing the higher limit signs. However where a speed limit sign is obscured or can only be seen very late the Examiner – whilst expecting the Candidate to slow to the speed limit promptly – will make allowances for the situation as presented.

24. Misconception – Accelerating to a higher speed limit:

Exiting a low speed zone (or junction or other hazard) and increasing speed to a higher posted limit is sometimes thought by the Candidate to have to be race-like. This is incorrect. Progressive acceleration should be encouraged but not to the point of a drag start or racing-type behaviour. Brisk instead of fast is a better descriptive word to use.

Acceleration needs to be smooth, progressive and controlled with due regard for the prevailing conditions.

25. Misconception – You must make good progress and need to ride at the speed limit plus 10% or some other margin that is above the speed limit.

This is wrong.

The IAM briefing statement made to all Candidates is that they must comply with all traffic regulations. HTBABR (page 10) states that "You must always stick to the speed limits, whilst riding as progressively as conditions allow."

The Candidate should rely on their own speedometer on the day of the test and not try to make any adjustments for perceived inaccuracy. The Examiner will realise if the Candidate's speedometer reads inaccurately and will not penalise them for this unless there is a significant defect with the reading which would then class the vehicle as not roadworthy (something the Observer should pick up prior to the test anyway). Candidates should be discouraged from using their SatNav on assessment rides as they will not be allowed for the test.

Although the Candidate might be marked down for making insufficient progress (a significantly more involved set of skills than mere speed alone), they will be failed for exceeding a speed limit.



26. Misconception: At STOP lines the rider must place at least one foot onto the road surface.

There is no specific requirement for the rider to do so. The essential requirement is that a rider's machine must come to a complete STOP.

27. Cutting into RH Junctions off a main road clarification:

Query – Under what conditions can a rider 'cut into' a RH junction, if any, initially proceeding on the wrong side of the road.

This should not necessarily be taught to a Candidate, but as with other actions, if it is done correctly, and without any danger or potential danger whatsoever, it may be allowed. It should be part of an early plan.

28. Joining a Motorway clarification:

Query – Does it have to be Lane 1 for a short distance initially?

As an Advanced rider in the making, planning a motorway entrance should be early and accurate. If progress can be made into Lane 2 or 3 safely, it should be done.

29. Use of rear brake clarification:

Query – Will I be expected to make use of my rear brake on test?

The Examiner will expect to see use being made of both brakes as appropriate. In dry conditions use of only the front brake should not adversely affect the marking of the test unless its use is seen to have an adverse effect on machine stability. In wet or slippery conditions use of the front brake only will have an adverse effect on the marking of the test. Where a machine has linked brakes, failure to make use of the rear brake pedal will not adversely affect the marking of the test providing the rider has an understanding of the result of their actions. This may involve some questions from the Examiner to establish this.