

Guide to Driving and Mobile Phones

from GEM Motoring Assist

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Dying to take that call?

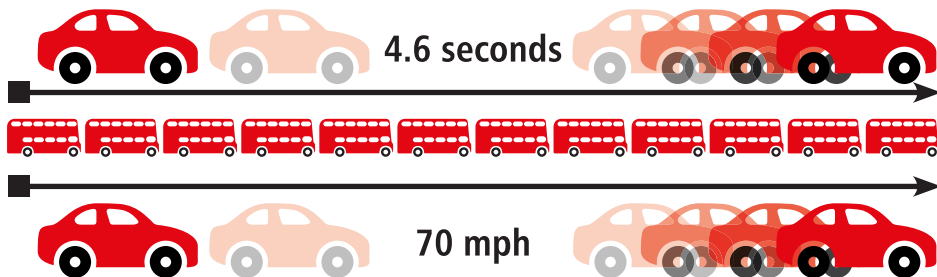
Since mobile phones were introduced into the UK during the 1980s they have driven a revolution in how we communicate. Today your mobile will let you talk, text, browse the internet, watch videos, check social media, order shopping, play games, answer e-mails... you get the picture!



The risk

All of this is great but try doing it behind the wheel and you are **four times more likely to have a crash** than if you weren't being distracted. And that's the point - using a mobile phone when you're driving distracts your attention away from the most important task: driving safely.

Driving is a very complex activity that most of us take for granted, but just think back to your very first driving lesson and that feeling of being overwhelmed by all of the different tasks you had to complete at once. Now add answering your phone, checking social media or texting into that mix and you can start to see why there's a problem. In fact, if you send a text message when driving, your eyes will be off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. Doesn't sound very long but at **70 mph you will have travelled the length of 12 double decker buses!**



When you consider the possible devastating consequences of using your phone behind the wheel then your best bet is to turn it off. Yes it's great to be connected to the world but whatever you use your mobile for, it can wait until you've finished driving.



The law

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile device whilst driving or riding a motorcycle. This includes texting, checking social media and reading e-mails. This also includes when supervising a learner. The only exemption is to call 999 in response to a genuine emergency if it is unsafe or impractical to stop. You must not use your phone at traffic lights or in stationary traffic.



The penalties

The penalty for using your mobile phone behind the wheel is a **£200 fixed penalty and 6 points on your driving licence**.

If you have been driving less than two years you will lose your licence.

To get it back you will effectively start the learning process again – apply for a full licence, re-take your theory and then practical driving tests as well as paying the fixed penalty which could all work out to be rather expensive...

If you are convicted at court you could be disqualified and receive a maximum fine of £1,000 (£2,500 if you are driving a lorry, coach or bus).



What about hands free?

What about hands-free equipment? You can lawfully use hands-free equipment when you're driving providing that you do not have to hold it in your hand.

However, just because you're not holding the phone it doesn't mean you're not being distracted by the conversation! Recent research shows that using a phone hands-free can be as distracting as driving at the drink-drive limit. If the Police believe that you are distracted by your hands-free device you may be prosecuted for careless or, in extreme cases, even dangerous driving. Our advice – wait until you're safely parked!



Can I use my mobile as a sat nav?

Only if it is properly mounted in a cradle or holder and you are not holding it in your hand. Beware where you mount the cradle as you don't want to obstruct your view of the road ahead.



How to keep yourself safe

- So knowing how important your phone is what can you do to stop it from distracting you on your journey?
- First, if you need to call someone or check an e-mail give yourself a couple of minutes to do that before you get in the car.
- Second, turn the phone onto silent/do not disturb or, better still, turn it off and put it away in the glove compartment or boot to stop you being tempted to look at it.
- If you are going to use your mobile as a sat nav then have a look at where you're going before you leave so you've got a rough idea of where you're heading! Make sure you place it where it won't obscure your view or distract you.
- Just a few small simple things that add up to a big change to keep you, your passengers and other road users safe on the road.

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About GEM Motoring Assist

GEM is a road safety organisation, established in 1932. Our aim is to improve safety for all road users through the promotion and initiation of accident prevention measures in the UK, and to provide motoring and safety information to our members.

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