

Guide to Driver's Eyesight from GEM Motoring Assist

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Guide to Driver's Eyesight

In association with

Say No To Driving Blind

It seems quite obvious that if you're going to drive you need to be able to see properly, but approximately 3,000 casualties occur each year due to drivers having poor vision. Aside from the human cost of being injured these collisions cost the country an estimated £33 million per year.

DRIVING BLIND is a national campaign to ensure that British motorists aren't "driving blind." Supported by MPs and road safety groups, the campaign is calling for mandatory eye-sight testing for all drivers and follows the high-profile court case in March 2017, when a Sutton Coldfield pensioner, who had previously been advised not to drive by an optician,

was jailed for killing three-year-old Poppy-Arabella Clarke at a pelican crossing as she crossed the road with her mother. More information on the campaign can be found at www.drivingblind.org.uk.



Spotting the Signs of Poor Vision...

You shouldn't be driving a car, lorry or motorcycle if your vision does not meet the standards of vision for driving. The best way to test your vision is to get a full eye examination at an optician's. A regular eye exam is simple and lasts roughly 30 minutes.

For a quick and simple way to test your eyes before driving why not try the following: Look in your bathroom mirror, cover one eye and look at your own face, now do the same with the other eye. Do you notice any blurs or differences between each eye – if so you should get to an optician for a full eye exam.

Why not test your eyes each morning before driving and find a car 20 metres away (about 5 car lengths) and see if you can read the number plate, if you can't then it's time for you to have a full eye examination.



The Law

Here's a quick guide to what the law says about eyesight:

- You **must** wear glasses or contact lenses every time you drive if you need them to meet the standards of vision for driving.
- You **must** be able to read (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) a car number plate made after September 2001 from 20 metres away.
- You **must** also meet the minimum eyesight standard for driving by having a visual acuity of at least 0.5 (6/12) measured on the Snellen Scale (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) using both eyes together or, if you have sight in one eye only, in that eye.
- You **must** also have an adequate field of vision (this can be tested by an optician).
- You **must** pass the eyesight test before your driving test begins.
- You **must** tell the DVLA if you've got any problem with your eyesight that affects both of your eyes, or the remaining eye if you only have one (this doesn't include being short or long sighted or colour blind. You also don't need to say if you've had surgery to correct short sightedness and can meet the eyesight standards).

Spotting the Signs of Poor Vision...

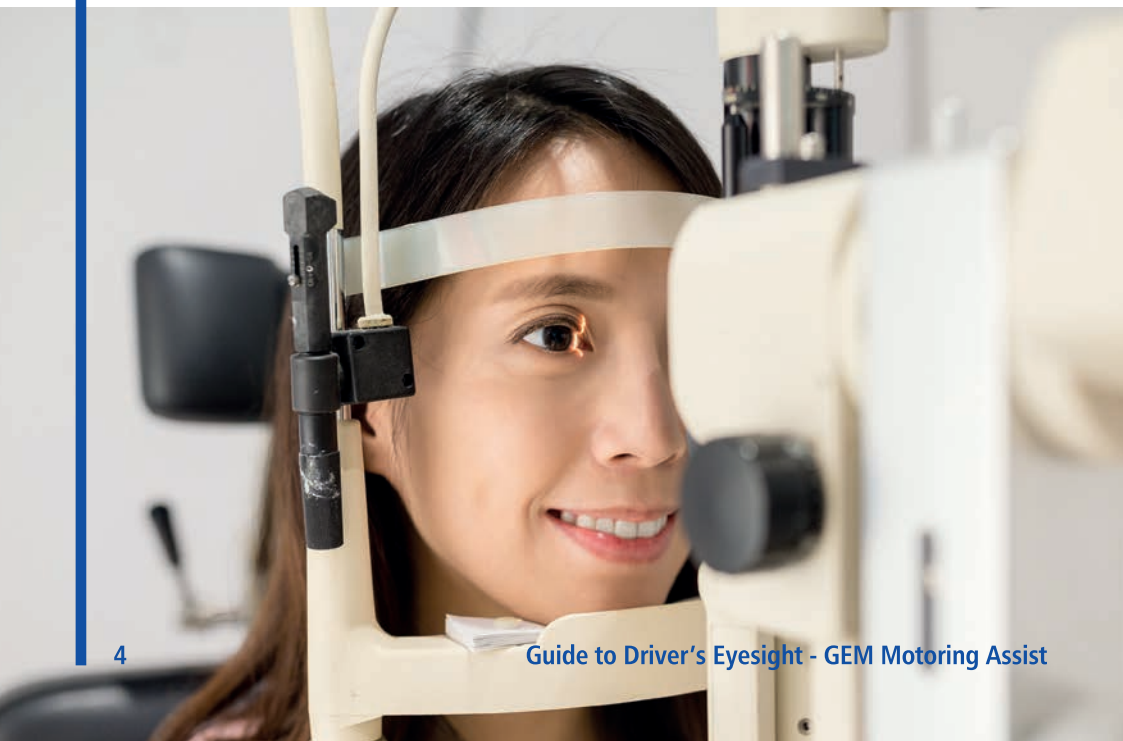


The Law

If you drive a lorry or a bus then you must meet the specific vision standards for these types of vehicles:

- You **must** have a visual acuity of at least 0.8 (6/7.5) measured on the Snellen Scale in your best eye and at least 0.1 (6/60) on the Snellen Scale in the other eye. You can meet this standard using glasses or contact lenses.
- You **must** have a horizontal visual field of at least 160 degrees, the extension should be at least 70 degrees left and right and 30 degrees up and down. No defects should be present within a radius of the central 30 degrees.

If the police suspect you are driving with poor vision they can stop you and perform a road side eye test. This involves a visual acuity test, where the police officer will ask you to read a number plate from 20 metres away (with glasses or contact lenses as appropriate). If you fail this test then the police will inform the DVLA and your driving licence will be revoked until such time as you can prove your eyesight meets the standards. The maximum penalty for driving with uncorrected defective eyesight is a £1,000 fine and three penalty points or a discretionary disqualification.



Spotting the Signs of Poor Vision...



Notifiable Conditions

Here are some of the eyesight related medical conditions you must tell the DVLA about (further information can be found at their website www.gov.uk):

- ▲ **Tunnel Vision** - You must inform the DVLA if you have tunnel vision.
- ▲ **Visual Field Defects** - You must inform the DVLA if you have visual field defects.
- ▲ **Reduced Visual Acuity** - You must inform the DVLA if you have reduced visual acuity.
- ▲ **Optic Neuritis** - You must inform the DVLA if you have optic neuritis.
- ▲ **Optic Atrophy** - You must inform the DVLA if you have optic atrophy.
- ▲ **Night Blindness** - You must inform the DVLA if you have night blindness.
- ▲ **Diplopia** - You must inform the DVLA if you have diplopia.
- ▲ **Glaucoma** - You must tell the DVLA if glaucoma affects both of your eyes.

You do not need to tell the DVLA if you have glaucoma in one eye and your other eye has a normal field of vision. If, however, you cannot meet the normal vision standards for driving or have a medical condition that affects that eye you must inform them.

- ▲ **Monocular Vision** - You may need to tell the DVLA if you have monocular vision.

It may take several months for you to adapt safely to driving with one eye. In particular, your ability to judge distances accurately may be affected and you may not be so aware of objects to each side of you. If you still meet the standards of vision for driving you do not need to inform the DVLA.

Bus, coach or lorry licence - You must tell the DVLA if you have monocular vision.

- ▲ **Retinal Treatment** - You may need to tell the DVLA if you have had retinal treatment.

If you have had retinal treatment in one eye, you do not need to tell the DVLA. If you have had retinal treatment in both eyes, you must tell the DVLA.

Bus, coach or lorry licence - You must tell the DVLA if you have had retinal treatment in one or both eyes.

Spotting the Signs of Poor Vision...



Notifiable Conditions

- ▲ **Retinopathy** - You may need to tell the DVLA if you have had retinopathy
If you have had retinopathy in one eye, you do not need to tell the DVLA if you meet the standards of vision for driving. If you have had retinopathy in both eyes, you must tell the DVLA.
Bus, coach or lorry licence - You must tell the DVLA if you have had retinopathy in one or both eyes.
- ▲ **Long sighted** - You do not need to inform the DVLA if you are long sighted as long as you meet the standards of vision for driving.
- ▲ **Colour blind** - You do not need to inform the DVLA if you are colour blind.

An optician will be able to identify if you have any of the above or refer you to the right specialist for further tests.



What is the Snellen Scale?

Visual acuity is typically measured using the Snellen Scale. A Snellen test usually consists of a number of rows of letters which get smaller as you read down the chart.

On the Snellen Scale, normal visual acuity is called 6/6, which corresponds to the bottom or second bottom line of the chart. If you can only read the top line of the chart then this should be written as 6/60. This means you can see at 6 metres what someone with standard vision could see from 60 metres away.

The first number of your score corresponds to how far away you are reading the chart (6 metres). The second number corresponds to the number of lines that you are able to read on the chart. The biggest letters, on the top line correspond to 60 and the bottom line is usually 6.



Get Your Eyes Tested!

You can lose 40% of your vision without noticing, which is why opticians recommend that you have your eyes tested at least every two years.

A full eye exam does not only test your vision but your optician will also check the health of your eyes and possibly identify other health risks such as diabetes, glaucoma and cancerous cells or tumours.

There are many parts of your vision an optician will examine; visual acuity, duochrome, astigmatism, distance vision, abnormalities in your retina, whether you are colour blind and the health of your eye. This is why it is so important to have a regular eye exam.

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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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