

Requirements for towing trailers in Great Britain

For more information go to www.direct.gov.uk/driverinfo



Contents



1	Introduction	3
2	Car driving licences held before 1 January 1997	3
3	Lorry and bus licences held since 1 January 1997	4
4	Driving licences issued on or after 1 January 1997	4
5	Descriptions of vehicle categories	4
6	Upgrading entitlement for trailers	7
7	Provisional trailer entitlement	8



1 Introduction

This leaflet contains information about changes in entitlement to tow trailers. It is not a complete statement of law.

Important note

This leaflet relates only to driver licensing. For details on requirements relating to weights and dimensions of trailers please contact:

Transport, Technology and Standards division

Department for Transport
Zone 2/01
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR.

The phone number is 0207 944 2078.

2 Car driving licences held before 1 January 1997

All drivers who passed a car test before 1 January 1997 keep their existing entitlement to tow trailers until their licence runs out. This means they are generally entitled to drive a vehicle and trailer with a combined weight of up to 8.25 tonnes. They are also entitled to drive a minibus with a trailer weighing more than 750kg.

Drivers who have subcategory C1+E on their driving licence can apply for provisional entitlement to the new subcategory C1+E so they can take the test to drive a vehicle and trailer with a combined weight of 12 tonnes. They do not need to get entitlement to subcategory C1 first, but drivers have to meet higher medical standards and pass both the category C theory test and the subcategory C1+E practical test.



3 Lorry and bus licences held since 1 January 1997

Since 1 January 1997, all drivers who hold category C or D entitlement have been limited to trailers weighing up to 750kg. Category C+E or D+E must be held to tow trailers weighing more than this.

4 Driving licences issued on or after 1 January 1997

Drivers who passed a car test on or after 1 January 1997 **must pass an extra driving test** to get entitlement to drive category B+E and all larger vehicles. Drivers of vehicles which fall into subcategories C1, C1+E, D1 and D1+E also have to meet higher medical standards.

5 Descriptions of vehicle categories

Except for category B1, all weights quoted for the relevant vehicles relate to the 'maximum authorised mass'. This is the total weight of the vehicle when 'laden' (loaded). Where we refer to an 'unladen weight', this means the weight when not carrying a load.

B1	Three, or four-wheeled light vehicles  Motor, tricycles, quadricycles and three, or four-wheeled vehicles with an unladen weight of no more than 550kg	17	See note 1
B	Cars  Cars with a maximum authorised mass of no more than 3500kg, having no more than eight passenger seats, towing a trailer up to 750kg. A car and a trailer, where the total maximum authorised mass of both is not more than 3500kg and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen weight of the car. A car with an unladen weight of 1.25 tonnes and a maximum authorised mass of 2 tonnes towing a trailer with a maximum authorised mass of 1.25 tonnes could be driven under category B entitlement as the maximum authorised mass of both is not more than 3.5 tonnes and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen weight of the car.	17	See note 1
B auto	Automatic cars As cars, but with automatic gearbox	17	See note 3



B+E	Cars with trailers  Combinations of a car in category B and a trailer over 750kg	17	See note 8
C1	Medium-sized vehicles  Lorries between 3500kg and 7500kg with a trailer up to 750kg	18	See notes 2 and 8
C1+E	Medium-sized vehicles with trailers  Combinations of vehicles where the towing vehicle is in category C1 and its trailer has a maximum authorised mass of over 750kg as long as the maximum authorised mass of the vehicle and trailer is not more than 12000kg and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen weight of the towing vehicle	21	See notes 2, 3 and 8
C	Large vehicles  Vehicles over 3500kg with a trailer up to 750kg	21	See note 3
C+E	Large vehicles with trailers  Vehicles over 3500kg with a trailer over 750kg	21	See note 3
D1	Minibuses  Vehicles with between nine and 16 passenger seats with a trailer up to 750kg	21	See notes 4 and 8
D1+E	Minibuses with trailers  Combinations of vehicles where the towing vehicle is in category D1 and its trailer has a maximum authorised mass of over 750kg, as long as the maximum authorised mass of the vehicle and trailer is not more than 12000kg, and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen weight of the towing vehicle	21	See notes 4 and 8
D	Buses  Any bus with more than eight passenger seats with a trailer up to 750kg	21	See notes 4 and 7
D+E	Buses with trailers  Any bus with more than eight passenger seats with a trailer over 750kg	21	See note 7



Note 1

At age 16 you can get a licence if you receive the higher-rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance. However, if you stop getting the higher rate, the normal minimum age for driving a car (17) applies.

Note 2

You can drive at 18 if the combined weight of the vehicle and trailer is under 7500kg. If the combined weight is over 7500kg, you must be 21 or over.

Note 3

You can drive at 17 if you are a member of the armed forces. You can drive at 18 if you are a member of the young drivers' scheme.

Note 4

You can drive at the age of 17 if you are a member of the armed services.

You can drive at the age of 18;

while learning to drive or taking your passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) test or CPC Initial Qualification; or

after passing a PCV test and CPC Initial Qualification when:

- Driving on a regular service where the route does not exceed 50km, or
- Not engaged in the carriage of passengers, or
- While undergoing a national vocational training course to obtain a CPC Initial Qualification: or

if the PCV licence was obtained before 10 September 2008, when:

- Driving on a regular service where the route does not exceed 50km, or
- Not engaged in the carriage of passengers, or
- Driving a vehicle of a class included in sub-category D1, and
- Driving under a bus operator's licence, minibus permit or Community bus permit.

For further advice you will need to contact the Driving Standards Agency on 0300 2001122 or you can e-mail drivercpc@dsa.gsi.gov.uk

Note 5

At 16 you can drive tractors less than 2.45m wide. It must only pull trailers less than 2.45m wide with two wheels, or four wheels that are close together.



Note 6

At 17 you can drive small roadrollers with metal or hard rollers. They must not be steam powered, weigh more than 11.69 tonnes or be made for carrying loads.

Note 7

You need category D entitlement to drive an articulated bus (for example, a 'bendibus'.) You can get more details from us.

Note 8

If you passed your test for category B or B automatic before 1 January 1997 your licence will already show C1, C1E (8.25 tonnes), D1, D1E (not for hire or reward) as entitlement.

- If you want to drive medium or large vehicles, minibuses or buses in the EC or EEA, you must apply for the appropriate provisional entitlement.
- You must not apply for theory or practical tests until the provisional entitlement is shown on your licence.

6 Upgrading entitlement for trailers

In general, drivers need to take an extra driving test for each category or subcategory of entitlement. But there are certain exceptions to this if drivers have already passed a test which gives entitlement for a larger or equivalent-sized vehicle.

This means that passing a test for subcategory C1+E or D1+E upgrades category B entitlement to B+E.

A test pass for subcategory C1+E upgrades subcategory D1 (if held) to D1+E. But a test pass for subcategory D1+E does not upgrade subcategory C1 to C1+E because the trailer size for subcategory D1+E is smaller than that for a subcategory C1+E test.

Passing a test for category C+E upgrades category B entitlement to B+E and also gives entitlement to subcategory C1 and C1+E and, if category D or subcategory D1 is held, these are upgraded to category D+E or subcategory D1+E.

A test passed for category D+E upgrades category B and subcategory D1 to category B+E and subcategory D1+E. But it does not upgrade category



C or subcategory C1 entitlements because the trailer size for a category D+E test is smaller than that for a category C+E or subcategory C1+E.

For details of driving tests please contact the Driving Standards Agency. Their address and phone number are given at the end of this booklet.

7 Provisional trailer entitlement

Since 1 January 1997, drivers can no longer take a test in a heavy vehicle with a trailer (for example, category C+E or D+E) unless they have first passed a test in the relevant vehicle (for example, category C or D).

This means that although drivers may have been driving a vehicle and trailer combination with 'L' plates, they cannot take a trailer test with that vehicle until they have passed a test in the required category without a trailer attached.

Other information leaflets are available to download from
www.direct.gov.uk/motoringleaflets

INF28 – Driving a minibus

INF29 – Minimum Test Vehicles

INF38 – Driving in Great Britain as a Visitor or New Resident

INF40 – Renewing your car driving licence

INF45 – Your Photocard Driving Licence explained

INF52 – Special Licensing Arrangements for drivers of large vehicles

INF93 – Photocard Driving Licences

INF95 – A General Guide to Driving Licensing

You can get more information on driving licences by ringing Customer Enquiries on 0870 240 0009. The lines are open between 8am and 8.30pm Monday to Friday, and between 8am and 5.30pm on Saturdays. You will be answered by an automatic system but will be able to speak to an operator during office hours. We monitor or record some calls for quality purposes.

If you want to send us an e-mail, our e-mail address is **drivers.dvla@gt.net**

If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have a textphone you should phone 01792 766366.



You can get more information on driving tests from:

**Customer Services Unit
Driving Standards Agency
The Axis Building
112 Upper Parliament Street
Nottingham
NG1 6LP.**

Phone: 0300 200 1122

If you have changed your name, address or vehicle, please tell us immediately.

If you don't you may have to pay a £1000 fine.



Road Safety





