

Notice Board Bulletin for Week ending Saturday 12th October 2019

“How long will it take me to learn to drive?” is a question I’m often asked when my customers first start lessons with me. Often the answer is taken with a pinch of salt or like a bitter pill that’s hard to swallow.

When I learnt to drive in the late 1970s roads were far less busy, not many families had more than one car, milk was delivered to your doorstep and sweets were bought in the quarter pounds. Life was very different then... except my milk is still delivered to my doorstep here in lovely Chester! Parents, or the bill payer think back to when we learnt and think “Really? How many hours?!!”

Yes, the reaction is often a hard conversation. Let me go into a bit of detail. For a start, everyone is different, what might take one hour to teach one student, can take another student ten hours, for a number of reasons. People learn at different rates and some find certain aspects of the process easier, e.g. dual carriageways, or reverse parking, while others really struggle at first.

The secret is to keep what you’re learning to yourself at work or college, let people, like your parents know the details and be a bit scant when talking to your friends. Your friends are very likely to exaggerate what they were doing at your stage, say how easy reverse parallel parking is and how they were doing dual carriageways and roundabouts on their second lesson. I say, “nonsense”! They are boasting and damaging your confidence. In the very unlikely scenario they were - and are telling the truth, then any responsible qualified driving instructor should not be letting them loose on more than they’re truly ready for. We want everyone to be safe.

How people start out, how much they achieve in time varies with everyone and by the time you all reach about twenty to thirty hours of driving tuition you all more or less even out. There’s no need to worry and be patient with yourself and don’t listen to anyone outside of your own trusted family and close friends.

So, how many hours? According to the Official DVSA Guide to Learning to Drive learners who pass their practical driving test have had, on average, 45 hours of professional training combined with 22 hours of private practice assuming the pupil has had no previous experience. With this the age of the pupil is average, the learning ability is average. So there you are, if you think it’s just ‘turn up for a few lessons’, sorry, it’s quite an involved and lengthy process and the standard has to be rather high; you have to prove you can drive a car in a variety of surroundings in town and rural roads and perform a set series of forward and reverse manoeuvres safely. The safe co-ordination of controls, observation and accuracy has to be consistent throughout the test. Any serious or dangerous errors result in a missed opportunity I’m afraid and your brave performance ends in a ‘come back again soon’ finale.

You must also be able to answer a series of safety ‘show me tell me’ questions which often start with knowing how to open the bonnet of the car. You must learn the answers before the test and be able to operate a few simple tasks whilst the car is moving, such as operate the front windscreen washer. (See my DVSA Links page on this website for further details).