



Lesson 16: Dual Carriageways

Dual Carriageways

These multi-lane and mainly high speed roads which have a central reservation/barrier separating the two carriageways. There are three ways of joining a dual carriageway:

- Your road may simply turn into a dual carriageway ahead
- You may need to join via a slip road
- You may need to emerge directly onto a dual carriageway

Emerging - Your road turning into dual carriageway



Look out for the sign where you have a dual carriageway ahead and be aware of a likely change in speed limit. Check your mirrors well before changing speed suitable for new road.

Emerging from a slip road

Take a note of the speed limit that applies for dual carriageways and use the slip road (also known as an acceleration lane) to build up speed to that of the traffic on the dual carriageway to make it easier to join. If the dual carriageway is not particularly busy then most traffic will travel at the maximum speed - make use of your lower gears to build up speed quickly.

Look for a gap in the traffic and move into the left hand lane applying the MSM routine (always apply a right signal in good time before emerging). Try not to look too far round over your shoulder when emerging as regular looks in the mirrors with perhaps a quick glance for blind spot will be enough to be sure it's safe to join the carriageway. You should aim to emerge without causing traffic on the carriageway to alter speed or direction.

After you have joined the carriageway

- Check your mirrors
- Cancel signal



- Keep in the left lane - until you have had time to assess the traffic and conditions on the carriageway
- Make good progress

Emerging directly onto dual carriageway

To turn left

Where there is no slip road you would need to emerge as you would to turn left onto a major road - take into account the speed limit on the dual carriageway to help judge a safe gap as traffic may be approaching very fast.

To turn right

When joining a dual carriageway to take a right turn you will need to cross the first carriageway before you can join the carriageway you want. This is easiest where the central reservation is deep enough to have room to protect the full length of your vehicle to enable you to emerge from one carriageway at a time. Where there is not enough room you would need to be extra careful and turn right when both carriageways have a safe enough gap for you to drive across safely.

Making progress on the dual carriageway

Where there is a specific speed limit i.e. if it was a 70mph limit then if the road was clear and the weather conditions were good then that speed would be perfectly appropriate. Where the dual carriageway has a national speed limit the maximum speed will be 70mph.

Dealing with traffic joining the dual carriageway

You must look out for traffic that wants to join the carriageway so that you can be prepared to help them join. The main areas where you can expect traffic to join would be:

- As you approach slip roads
- Where there are junctions
- Out of garages
- Pulling out from parking areas

You will have three options to help traffic join:

- Moving out of the left lane
- Speeding up
- Slowing down

The best option is to move out of the left lane. Therefore, you should be checking your mirrors well before approaching the areas

where traffic may want to join, in order to be confident it is safe to switch lane.

Exiting the dual carriageway



On most carriageways you will get a sign for your exit giving you at least half a mile before the junction. Try to ensure you do not leave it too late to get into the left hand lane ready to exit.

These countdown markers are placed at 300yds (270m) - 200yds (180m) - 100yds (90m) up to your slip road for exit. You can use these as a guide for starting the M-S-M routine.

Look out for any signs that warn you of a sharp bend or change of direction to ensure you get your speed down in time and select the correct gear. Try not to slow down unnecessarily on the carriageway unless your mirrors show traffic is far away in the distance. Use the slip road to reduce your speed and be careful you do not travel too fast on the new road

(Read pages 217-219 of Driving Essential Skills and Highway Code rules 137, 138 and 173)

