



How to control your nerves

If you are finding it hard to deal with pre driving test nerves and anxiety, then this guide has a few ideas to help you.

WHAT ARE NERVES?

Nerves are the body's reaction to chemicals and energy that is being released in reaction to a stressful or anxious situation - this can create uncomfortable changes in the body. It is important to remember that being nervous is perfectly natural and a normal reaction. We get nervous when something is important and passing your driving test is one of the most important things you will do. When nerves are controlled they can be helpful, but uncontrolled nerves can negatively impact your driving especially your judgement and can cause you take more risks, which could lead to dangerous or serious faults occurring on your test.

The most common symptoms are sweating, a dry mouth, shaking & trembling, butterflies in the stomach, shallow breathing and fast heartbeat. You may also experience less common symptoms such as a difficulty in concentrating, having a stammering or shaky voice, dizziness, biting your nails, or having a defensive body language.

HOW TO CONTROL YOUR NERVES

There are many different ways that you can control your nerves; we suggest a few methods that work by calming your body, by calming your mind, by redefining your mood, or just by easing your concerns. You may need to experiment a little to find the best method for you.

CALMING YOUR BODY

- **Deep breathing.** Taking calm, deep breaths have a soothing effect on your body. The simplest way to do this involves sitting down with your back straight and your arms relaxed. You take a deep, slow breath in through your nose lasting around 5 or 6 seconds. Hold this for a few seconds, and then breathe out again very slowly through your mouth as if you're whistling. Repeat this until you feel it having an effect.
- **Listening to music.** Listening to calming music (e.g. Classical) has been shown to lower your heart rate and blood pressure – this can combat the chemical and energy reactions happening in your body. Just close your eyes and concentrate on the music until you feel calmer.
- **Aromatherapy.** The two most common oils used for relaxation and stress relief are lavender and lemon. You could use the oil at home the night before your test to help you get a good nights sleep, or put the oil on a piece of fabric and carry it with you so you can smell it when you need to. Oils can be bought from most pharmacies or health food shops, and are fairly inexpensive.

CALMING YOUR MIND

- **Visualisation.** Visualising yourself in a comfortable and relaxing place (such as a beautiful beach or garden) can help calm your nerves and improve your mood. It is a really simple technique to do and can be done anywhere. Make sure you are sitting comfortably, with your arms relaxed. Next, take a few deep breaths and began to imagine yourself in a relaxing setting. Start adding details to the setting such as colours, objects, smells or anything you can feel on your skin. Try to maintain a slow rate of breathing (in through your nose and out through your mouth) and stay with your visualisation for as long as it takes for you to feel calmer.



- **Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is about experiencing the moment, no matter how ordinary. Pick an object that you have clear sight of - this might be a tree, a building, a sign, a flower or even another car. Really look at the detail of this object – it's shape, colour, size, or even the smell, and allow all of your senses to be engaged until you are feeling calm.

REDEFINE YOUR MOOD

- **Use laughter.** Think of something funny, and laugh. It doesn't matter what you are laughing about, as long as you are laughing then that is great. Laughing for a few minutes will benefit you in many ways - you will take on more oxygen (this can help stimulate your heart, lungs and muscles) and increase your positive thoughts - releasing stress-fighting chemicals.
- **Smile.** Just think of something that makes you smile - even if the smile is fake at first, it will trick your mind into thinking more positively, reducing any negative thoughts you may be thinking.
- **Power Posing.** Put your body in a pose that you think signifies power, strength and confidence. This can help your mood become more relaxed and confident.

EASING YOUR CONCERNS

- **Be prepared and organised.** Spend some time prior to your driving test going through the 'Show me, tell me' questions, talk through the structure of the test with your instructor, visit the test centre to familiarise yourself with the place and make sure that you have your license and anything else you wish to take with you to the test ready the night before.
- **Talk positively to yourself.** Tell yourself that you can pass your driving test. Tell yourself that you are a safe and confident driver. Talking to yourself in this way will help block out negative thoughts that could increase your nerves.
- **Don't rush yourself.** Give yourself enough time before your test to get there. Plan your day allowing yourself plenty of time to get ready to go to your test. If it means setting your alarm a bit earlier then do it, if it means catching an earlier bus to meet your instructor then do it. The last thing you want to do is rush around, increasing your heart rate and the feeling of being nervous.
- **Keep things in perspective.** Yes, passing your test is important to you, but if you fail it is not the only opportunity you will have to pass. Not everybody passes first time. You will have gained the experience of taking a driving test and will be better prepared for what it involves the next time you take it.

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

We will do everything we can to help you remain positive, confident and be as prepared as you can possibly be. We will help you use any of the techniques we have talked about in this guide, so you can find the best method for you to control your nerves. So you know what to expect on the Practical Test, we will carry out several mock tests and provide you with feedback, tuition and coaching to gain competence in any development areas identified. Our aim is to support you from the beginning of your driving journey, until the very end where you can be proud of your success when you pass your practical Driving Test and gain your full UK driving license.