Show Me â€“ Tell Me: the New Technical Checks of the Irish Driving Test.

By Hiteshbhoi

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The latest round of changes to the Irish Driving Test were implemented on, Feb.14th 2005, as part of a chain of E.U.Directives.

Test Candidates are now required to have a basic level of mechanical knowledge, which any good professional School of Motoring would have been teaching from day one in any event.

The car of today is a very different beast compared with its grandparents and any driver, young or old, should have a range of skills that enable them to identify problems and take the necessary remedial action.

The Driving Examiner will select three questions at random from a list of technical aspects which will include opening the bonnet. While it is not exactly space technology, the ability to identify this range of equipment and to describe how individual checks would be performed, does require some thought and a little practise. Some of the equipment will have accompanying warning lights on the instrument panel some does not, so some of the requirements will already be known (hopefully!)

Candidates will be asked to explain how they would perform checks on three out of the following list:-

Engine Oil: Coolant: Steering: Brakes: Horn: Indicators: Lights: Tyres: Reflectors: Windscreen washer.

The under the Bonnet checks relate to:-Power Steering Fluid; Brake Fluid; Engine Oil; Engine Coolant; and Windscreen washer Fluid. In a newer car all of these pieces of equipment are easily identifiable by coloured tops to the various reservoirs, which have an easily recognisable icon painted or etched into them. The location of these five essential items does vary a little from model to model so if you have changed your car in the lead up to the Driving Test then spend a few minutes double checking.

In the event of very bad weather (rarely a feature of the Irish climate) it is unlikely that the Examiner will ask for the bonnet to be opened but since he or she has already spent time outside the car, checking brake lights and indicators and paperwork, itâ€™s not impossible. If he or she is a fisherman or a boating enthusiast then a few drops of rain will be water off a duckâ€™s back. Just keep an eye on the weather and ensure that your heater or demist controls are pre-set .Two persons in the car during rainy weather will mist up the windows extremely quickly and the candidate needs to be equally deft with the controls.

Questions on brakes will cover both the footbrake and handbrake, and on steering will deal with cars that both have power steering and those that donâ€™t .Of course there are still a few older cars out there without P.A.S. Itâ€™s worth adding to the list , one more item of importance to the Driverâ€”that of th Alternator and itâ€™s drive belt .The fact that all the above need to be demonstrated on the Driving Test should not detract from the need to perform these checks on a regular weekly basis. It is precisely because of the importance of all these pieces of equipment and their monitoring, that it was deemed essential to include them in the scope of the Driving Test.

Show Me â€“Tell Meâ€¦â€¦..Below is an example of the question and answer technique to one of the Test Questions .The full questions and answers will be provided in another follow up article and on the Astral School of Motoring website shortly.

Checking the Oil Level.

â€œShow me the Oil filler cap and tell me how you would check for the correct level of Oil in the Engineâ€•â€¦Examiner

â€œHere is the oil filler cap and to check the oil level I would first withdraw the Oil Dip Stick, wipe it clean and then replace it momentarily. I would then withdraw the dip stick again and ensure that the level of oil showing was between the minimum and maximum marks on the base of the dip stick, preferably nearer the maximum mark. In the event of the oil level being lower than the half way mark I would top up to the maximum levelâ€•â€¦Candidate

This latter sentence has been put in for good measure since itâ€™s not much good knowing how you would check the oil if you didnâ€™t then follow through on the result!

Since all equipment in your car needs to be in tip top shape and regularly inspected if we are to stay safe and avoid accidents, look on the acquisition of these technical skills as two sides of the same coin â€¦.Safety and Economy .If you look after your equipment you will be both safe and economic. In a number of future articles we will explore the advantages of correct techniques and the impact they will have on your safety AND your bank balance.

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Hiteshbhoi - About Author:
a 2012 Chevy Equinox houston

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