

Changing gear works in relation with the clutch and the accelerator. With practice you will be able to change gear at the correct time and smoothly. As a learner it is tempting to look down at the gears whilst driving. This is not only dangerous but will fail your driving test. Practice in your instructors or family car, keeping the clutch pressed down and whilst stationary with the engine turned off.



Most modern cars have 5 forward gears and 1 reverse gear as detailed in the diagram. Although the 5 forward gears will always be in the same place, reverse gears can be in various places. Great care and practice is needed to ensure the correct gear is used whilst driving. If for instance you intend to change into 3rd gear but by mistake put it into 1st, then this can not only be dangerous by drastically slowing the car down but incorrect gears could fail your driving test and even damage your car.

Neutral

This is where no gear is selected. Before you start the car during your driving test you will need to ensure the gears are in neutral and the handbrake is applied. Also when the examiner asks you to park up on the left you will be required to select neutral and apply the handbrake.

1st gear

Use this gear for moving off and for moving very slowly in traffic. Also use 1st gear for manoeuvres combined with clutch control.

From neutral, cup your hand around the gear lever facing away from you. Push the lever as far left as it will go and push up till it stops. This way you ensure you have selected 1st gear.

2nd gear

Used for gaining speed after 1st gear. For moving off down a steep hill or for driving at a low speed.

As a learner, you may find that you accidentally select 4th gear instead of 2nd. From 1st gear cup your hand around the top of the lever facing away from you. Push the gear lever to the left and pull down. This will eliminate you accidentally putting it into 4th gear.

3rd gear

Used for gaining speed after 2nd gear. In some cars 3rd is an ideal gear for traveling around towns and cities at 30mph.

Learners can occasionally select 1st gear when their intention was for 3rd. When the clutch is brought up, this will have an effect of braking heavily and can be dangerous. To ensure you select 3rd from 2nd, as you push the lever up from 2nd into neutral, the gear lever naturally sits between 3rd and 4th, so by releasing your hand from the lever briefly when in neutral, the lever will sit directly between 3rd and 4th. Then simply push the lever up into 3rd.

4th gear

Used for gaining speed after 3rd and in certain cars an ideal gear for traveling at 30mph in and around cities or towns. If traveling at speed in 5th gear, changing back down into 4th will provide more acceleration. Ideal for overtaking.

From 3rd, cup your hand round the lever palm facing you and simply pull straight down.

5th gear

Used on open roads for traveling at high speeds.

From 4th, cup your hand under the lever and push up into neutral. Once in neutral pull the lever as far right until it stops and then push up.

Practice changing up and down gears.

On a quiet, clear road select 1st and move off when safe to do so. Change into 2nd as soon as you can. At around 15 - 20mph select 3rd gear and at around 30mph select 4th. Whilst at 30mph check your mirrors and if safe to do so gently apply the brake to slow the car to around 20 - 25mph and change down into 3rd. Continue to slow to around 15mph and select 2nd.

Block changing

Usually when building up speed you will need to start with 1st gear working your way through the gears until you reach 5th. Slowing down however there is no need to go through all the gears in sequence. This is an old technique that is no longer used with modern cars. If for instance you are driving along in

4th at 30mph and you are going to stop behind a queue of traffic, you would look in your mirror and gently apply the brake until you reach around 10 - 15mph. Just before you stop, press the clutch and select 1st gear. There would be no need to work your way down through the gears.

Older cars were not quite as capable of using this technique, although modern cars are. This means that your hands remain on the steering wheel longer and you can concentrate on the road instead of the gears.