

KEY RULES for DRIVING and VEHICLE OWNERSHIP in the UK:

- Traffic in the UK drives on the left-hand side of the road.
- You must be at least 17 years old to drive a car or a motorcycle in the UK (and older for larger vehicles).
- You have to be at least 16 to drive a moped.
- Don't use a mobile phone whilst you are driving unless it has bluetooth or another hands-free system. You can get a fine (currently £60) if you ignore this law. And, if you cause a serious accident when you are using the phone, you can be sent to prison for several years.
- If you ride a motorbike or moped you must wear a crash helmet, unless you are a Sikh and wear a turban.
- To drive on roads in the UK, your vehicle must display a valid tax disc (also called an Excise Licence) that carries the registration number for the vehicle. These are sold at big post offices and are valid for either 6 or 12 months. The registered keeper of the vehicle automatically gets a renewal form in the post. If you don't tax the vehicle or declare it off the road, or if a valid tax disc is not displayed in the front windscreen, you are breaking the law. Your car can be taken away without you being asked, and it may be destroyed.
- To obtain a Tax Disc you must produce valid certificates of insurance and MOT (*vehicle over 3 years old from the date of the first registration, other conditions may apply).
- You must have a valid driving licence for the vehicle you drive. If you want to drive in the UK and have a valid driving licence from your home country, you can use it for up to a year from your date of entry, into the UK (or up to the age of 70 if you are from an EU country). For further details about driving licences, see leaflet D100 available in post offices.
- You must have valid insurance for the vehicle you drive.
- The vehicle you drive must have a valid MOT certificate (to say the vehicle is safe).
- If you do not have any of these documents, do not drive. If in doubt check with your local police.
- The Highway Code gives details of the laws and road signs. Not everything will be the same as in your own country. Read it before you drive in the UK. You can see a copy at your local library.
- If a seatbelt is fitted in a vehicle it must be worn. It is your responsibility if you are over 14. If there is an under 14 year old in the vehicle then it is the driver's responsibility.
- Every passenger must have a designated seat. Carrying more people in a vehicle than the number of seats is dangerous and illegal.
- Drinking alcohol and then driving is a very serious offence in the UK. The safest thing is not to consume any alcohol at all if you are going to be driving.
- If you bring a car into this country from another country, it must have valid tax, insurance and a certificate of roadworthiness (to say it is safe to drive) from the other country. If the car will be here for a long time, you should tell Customs and Excise that you have brought it in (on 0845 010 9000 or www.hmrc.gov.uk).
- If your car fails its MOT, or reaches the end of its certificate of roadworthiness, you must dispose of it at a licensed scrap yard. It is illegal to dispose of it anywhere else.
- If you are involved in an accident you must stop. If there is damage to other vehicles or property you must give your name and address, the name and address of the owner of the car (if different), and the car registration number. If anyone is injured you must give details of your insurance. If you cannot do this, you must report the accident to a police officer as soon as possible or within 24 hours. It is an offence to fail to stop or give details following a road traffic accident.
- The police can stop any vehicle and examine the driver's driving licence, insurance certificate and MOT. If you do not have your documents on you, you will be given 7 days to show them at any police station.
- Should a legal document/ letter be sent to you by the police or court services, don't ignore it as it may have details of your appearance at court, how to get legal advice, how to pay a fine, or other important information. If you ignore this document you could get a bigger fine, or be arrested or sent to prison.