

Keep an eye on your vision for driving

New Vision Panel Secretary Dr Cathy Armstrong shares her professional advice on getting your eyesight checked for driving, and the extra challenges of driving in winter.



I was recently appointed joint DVLA Vision Panel Secretary alongside [Dr Gareth Rees](#), and I've worked at DVLA for 2 and a half years. As it's Road Safety Week, I thought it would be a good time to blog about eyesight and driving.

As drivers we often forget just how complex driving is, and being able to meet the vision standards for this complex activity is extremely important for road safety. It's particularly important that if someone has been prescribed glasses or contact lenses for driving, they must wear them every time they drive to stay legal on the road.

Many of us wear glasses; maybe just for reading, maybe for all aspects of daily life – or a bit of both. However many people are prescribed glasses to make sure their eyesight meets the vision standards required by law for driving. Unfortunately, forgetfulness, vanity and difficulty tolerating glasses can result in unloved spectacles cluttering up car gloveboxes and handbags. But if they're not worn, drivers are risking their own and other road users' safety.

All drivers must be able to meet these [eyesight standards](#) as a legal requirement. They test both visual field and acuity – that is, the area your sight covers and how clearly you can see. A defect in your visual field may mean you struggle to see approaching hazards without having to look away from the road ahead. A reduction in your visual acuity could give you difficulty in reading road signs and signals. It's also important to remember that those who drive for a living and have a group 2 (vocational) licence must meet higher standards for vision. This is because of the size and type of vehicles they drive, and the longer time spent behind the wheel.



Driving during the winter months can be particularly challenging, since weather conditions can make it difficult to see clearly. There are the darker mornings, glare from the low setting winter sun, reduced visibility in rain and fog, as well as wet and icy weather and shorter daylight hours... All of these factors can make driving conditions more hazardous at this time of year, particularly if you have any problems with your eyesight.

Eyesight deteriorates over time and this can happen at any age. Some drivers may be noticing some of the tell-tale signs that their eyesight is not as good as it used to be. You might be finding it harder to judge distances, struggling to read a newspaper, or maybe it's getting more difficult for you to drive at night. That's why we recommend that all drivers have their vision tested at least every 2 years. If you notice any change in your eyesight, go and see your optician straightaway – don't wait until your next check-up or when your driving licence is due for renewal.

If you don't meet the eyesight standards, stop driving immediately and [tell DVLA](#). It's better to be safe than sorry.

[Check the eyesight rules for driving](#)

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