



Older drivers' guide



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:



Help older people to be as well as they can be



Promote a positive view of ageing and later life



Tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)



Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)
to find out more.

What this guide is about

For many people, driving is about more than just getting from A to B. Driving gives you freedom and independence, so this guide looks at how you can stay safe on the roads for as long as possible.

Getting older doesn't necessarily mean you have to stop driving and there's no legal age at which you have to stop. As long as you don't have a medical condition that affects your driving, it's up to you to decide if you're still safe to do so.

In this guide we'll explain your legal obligations when it comes to driving, including some of the medical conditions you must declare. We'll explain how and when to renew your licence, and share advice on ways to keep driving safely for longer. We'll also help you recognise when it's time to stop driving and find other ways to get around.

Before you get started, it's a good idea to have the numbers for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) handy as they pop up throughout the guide.

Licensing enquiries – 0300 790 6801

Medical conditions – 0300 790 6806



Thinking about your driving

Enjoying driving and being safe on the road has a lot to do with how you feel behind the wheel. Do any of the following sound familiar?

“I don’t drive as often as I used to.”

“My daughter mentioned it might be time to think about whether I should stop driving.”

“I don’t enjoy driving like I used to, but I’d be lost without it.”

“I only feel confident driving locally, on roads I know well.”

It’s great to feel confident behind the wheel, but this shouldn’t be the only measure of whether you should keep driving. With years of experience, you may still feel confident even if other factors mean it’s time to think about stopping.

“I think my health is starting to affect my driving.”

“I’ve had a few near misses recently.”

You don’t necessarily have to give up driving if these situations are familiar to you, but it might be a good time to take stock and think carefully about whether you need, or even want, to do it anymore.

If you do want to keep driving, this guide will tell you about changes you can make to help you feel more confident and in control.



Renewing your licence at 70

You must renew your licence when you turn 70, and again every three years after that.

It's important that you renew your licence when you're required to. If it expires and you don't apply for a new one, you won't be legally allowed to drive. You can renew your licence online, or by filling in a form and posting it to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). Renewing your licence is free so you don't need to worry about any extra costs.

Renew by post

The DVLA should send you a D46P application form 90 days before your 70th birthday, which you'll need to complete and return. If you don't receive a D46P form, you can use the D1 application for a driving licence form, which you can collect from a post office. Postal applications take up to three weeks.

You'll also need to send them a recent passport-type photo with your application. You can check the guidelines for the photo at **www.gov.uk/photos-for-passports**.

Renew online

Go to **www.gov.uk/renew-driving-licence-at-70** to renew your driving licence online. When you register online, you'll be given a user ID code and step-by-step instructions. If you have a valid passport you don't need to submit a photo. Your licence should arrive within one week.



Declaring medical conditions

When you renew your licence you have to declare certain medical conditions and confirm that you can meet the eyesight standards for driving. This is a legal duty.

Some of the medical conditions you must declare are:

- dementia
- insulin-treated diabetes
- Parkinson's disease
- epilepsy
- a chronic neurological condition (such as multiple sclerosis)
- a condition that affects both eyes, or sight loss in one eye

You might also need to declare other health conditions, depending on your licence type and how the condition affects you. If you're unsure, you can check online at **www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving** or speak to the DVLA on **0300 790 6806**.

For information and advice about driving and dementia, contact Alzheimer Scotland on **0808 808 3000** or visit their website at **www.alzscot.org/our-work/dementia-support/information-sheets/driving-and-dementia**.

It's understandable to feel reluctant to declare a health problem that could disqualify you from driving, but it's more important that you and other drivers are safe on the roads.

If you have a condition that has worsened since your licence was issued, you should declare it straight away and not wait until your next renewal. If you don't declare a medical condition that affects your driving you could be fined. If you have an accident where your health condition may have been a factor, and you haven't declared it, you could be prosecuted and your insurance might not cover you.



You might worry that you'll lose your licence if you tell the DVLA about your condition, but this isn't always the case. There may be changes you can make that will allow you to keep driving.

How your licence may be affected

After you have told the DVLA about your medical condition they will do one of the following:

- make a decision themselves based on the information provided
- ask your doctor or consultant for more information (with your permission)
- arrange for a doctor or specialist to examine you
- ask you to take a driving assessment, eyesight check or driving appraisal

What happens next?

If there aren't any issues the DVLA will send you a new licence that is valid for three years, and a letter saying that you can continue to drive as before. You should get rid of your expired licence and keep your new one safe.

If you have been asked to take a driving assessment they will give you a temporary driving licence to use during the assessment.

The DVLA can also issue you with a licence that says adaptations must be fitted to your car. If there are any changes to your licence or you do have to make adaptations to your car, you should tell your insurance provider as soon as possible. If you don't, you could end up with a fine and your policy not covering you.

If the medical enquiries with your doctor or consultant confirm you are not fit to drive, the DVLA will tell you to stop driving. This may be a real worry, but it doesn't mean an end to your independence; there are still many other ways you can get around.



Driving safely

Older drivers are generally a safe group on the roads, as experience tends to balance out issues such as slower reactions or stiff joints. But even if you've been driving for decades, there may come a point when experience alone isn't enough to keep you driving safely. In this section we'll outline some of the basic things you should be paying attention to as a driver.

Sight and hearing

It's important to get your eyes tested every two years (or more often if advised), and your hearing checked frequently. If you're prescribed glasses or contact lenses to drive, the code 01 will be added to the back of your photocard licence.

Legally, you must be able to read a number plate from a distance of 20 metres (67 feet) in order to drive. If you don't meet the legal standard of vision and you have an accident while driving, you may be fined or prosecuted and your insurance might not cover you.

Check with your optician if there are changes to your vision that you think may affect your ability to drive safely and legally.

Medicines

Many medicines can affect your driving ability. Ask your doctor or pharmacist whether drowsiness is a side effect of any medicines you take and whether you can continue to drive.

Night driving and dazzle

Driving at night can be more dangerous than driving during the day due to a combination of limited vision, potential fatigue and dazzle from oncoming traffic. Think about whether you really need to travel at night, or if there are alternatives.



If you do need to drive at night, one tip is to keep your eyes moving. By scanning the road instead of only looking straight ahead your eyes will stay more adjusted to your surroundings, and you will spot hazards more easily.

If the lights of an oncoming vehicle dazzle you, try not to panic. Glance down toward the left side of the road. You should be able to see the edge of the road or the painted edge line, which will help you keep your path until the vehicle passes. Keeping your vehicle clean, and checking your windscreen wipers regularly, can help to reduce glare due to streaks or smears. You can also have glare-reducing coating added to prescription glasses. Speak to your optician if you think this would help you.

“I’m extra careful driving at night as the headlights on the new cars seem brighter than ever.”

Frank, 70

Your car

As well as servicing your car regularly and taking it for its annual MOT, you should also consider the following:

- If you bought your car some time ago, is it still suitable for your needs?
- Could you choose an automatic car, or one with power steering, parking sensors and cameras, blind spot mirrors or bigger windows?
- Could some adaptations to your car help you to drive more easily?



Your confidence and knowledge

If you are still able to drive but want to feel more confident on the roads, you could consider having some refresher driving lessons. Many driving instructors and schools provide these.

The **Scottish Driving Assessment Service** offers advice and driving assessments to people who wish to start or continue driving after illness or injury, and also advises on adapting vehicles for those with a disability. Assessment is free under the NHS, although a referral from a doctor is required.

The Highway Code may have changed since you passed your test. Find a copy at **www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code** or buy one from a bookshop or online.

But there's a lot more involved in staying safe on the roads. You should consider your reflexes, coordination and motor skills too. For example, can you react quickly enough to sudden changes, such as a car pulling out in front of you? Can you still focus on multiple things at once, such as changing gears and looking for oncoming traffic? Do you have any problems turning to check your blind spot?

ROSPA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents have a website for older drivers, **www.olderdrivers.org.uk**, providing information and advice about keeping driving and retiring from driving.

“I still felt confident behind the wheel but my wing mirrors and bumper beg to differ. It was one scrape too many.”

Terry, 82

Driving assessments and staying on the road

Having a driving assessment can help reassure you, and those around you, that you're a safe driver.

The thought of having a driving assessment at a mobility centre can be off-putting. You might feel you don't need one or feel anxious about having an assessment, but there's really nothing to worry about. It's not a test, and there's no 'pass' or 'fail'; it could actually help you to keep driving safely for longer.

The aim of the assessment is to make sure you and others on the road are as safe as possible, to get you any support you might need, and to help you feel confident again in your driving skills and ability.

The most likely reason for a driving assessment is that the DVLA has suggested you take one, usually following the development of a medical condition. If you're having your driving ability reassessed due to a medical condition, ask your doctor if you can continue driving while you wait for your assessment.

What does the assessment involve?

The driving ability assessment includes:

- a physical assessment to see if you can move your arms and legs easily and operate a car's pedals and other controls
- a cognitive assessment to check your thinking skills
- a visual assessment to check your eyesight
- an on-road driving assessment in a dual-controlled car.

If you have a condition or disability, the trained staff at the mobility centre can assess whether your condition or disability affects your driving and look at how you could keep driving safely.



Who pays for the assessment?

If the DVLA has asked you to take a driving assessment after you've declared a medical condition they will pay for it. If you are referred by your GP, the assessment is free under the NHS.

Outcomes of the assessment

If the assessment shows that a medical condition makes it unsafe for you to drive, the DVLA can tell you to stop driving. You should be provided with a medical explanation as to why the decision has been made.

If it's possible your condition may improve, you'll be advised about when you should reapply. If and when you do reapply, talk to your doctor first as you will need to provide medical evidence showing your condition has improved.

If you are told to stop driving altogether, you'll be given details of your right to appeal to the sheriff court.

Let your insurance provider know if you stop driving. If you're taking some time away from driving because of a health condition rather than stopping completely, the provider may be able to suspend your insurance rather than cancel it.

Adaptations

Keeping you driving safely might just be a case of making a few adaptations. The assessor will decide if any adaptations could help you with driving or getting in and out of your car. If it's decided that adaptations could help you, the assessor will then help you plan any necessary changes. These adaptations can include pedal extensions and switches for windscreen wipers.

The assessment can be really helpful as you get a chance to try out different types of adaptations to see how they suit you.



My Story

‘My daughters and granddaughter live quite far away, so it’s important for me to drive. And I rely on it in the winter. I can’t walk very far and I’m recovering from a couple of bad falls. I was sent to a physio who really helped me, and my GP said it was OK for me to carry on driving’.

‘I lease a car from the Motability Scheme. It’s been adapted with an automatic gear change and a hoist at the back so I can get my scooter in. Motability has really helped me – they helped me work out what adaptations I’d need and met half the costs, and they cover my tax and insurance because of the benefits I receive’.

‘Because of my health, I don’t know if I’ll still be driving in a few years’ time. If my GP is worried about it, I’ll stop’.

Henry, 63



Help to keep you on the road

If you have a medical condition or disability that makes it difficult to drive or get in and out of your car, there are ways to make things easier. It could mean changing your vehicle, making adaptations to it or using specialist equipment. This might seem like a lot of fuss, but if it can help you continue driving safely for longer, it's worth looking into.

Some of the equipment and adaptations available include:

- car key holders
- hoists to lift you and your wheelchair
- cushions or swivel seats to help you get in and out
- modified doors and seats

Speak to your GP about a referral to the Scottish Driving Assessment Service if you want advice about equipment and adaptations that may help you.

Let your insurance provider know if you make any adaptations to your car as it could affect your policy.

Motability scheme

If you're receiving the enhanced mobility component of Adult Disability Payment or Personal Independence Payment, the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, an Armed Forces Independence Payment or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement, you can use your mobility allowance to lease a car, wheelchair or scooter through the Motability scheme. You might also get VAT relief on the cost of leasing and adapting your car.

Contact Motability on **0300 456 4566** or visit their website **www.motability.co.uk**.



RIDC, the **Research Institute for Disabled Consumers**, has practical information for disabled and older people on a variety of topics including choosing a car to suit your needs and specialist adaptations. Visit their website at www.ridc.org.uk.

“I thought I was going to have to stop driving, but with a few adaptations I can still drive when I need to.”

Kate, 78

The Blue Badge scheme

If you or a passenger have reduced mobility or other disabilities, the Blue Badge scheme allows you to park nearer to where you need to be. The scheme includes people with ‘hidden’ disabilities such as mental health conditions.

Your Blue Badge usually lets you park for free in on-street pay-and-display spaces, on single and double yellow lines and in on-street disabled parking bays, subject to parking safety regulations. Private car parks may charge a fee or limit the time you are allowed to park for.

Someone else can use your Blue Badge if you’re in the car with them, for example if they are picking you up or dropping you off, and they need to park close to where you are going.

If you are travelling abroad, check if you can use your Blue Badge with an organisation such as a Tourist Information Centre in the country you are visiting.

You can apply for a Blue Badge online at www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge or by contacting your local council.



Deciding to stop driving

If your driving skills have got worse or you aren't as confident on the road as you used to be, it could be time to consider whether you should stop driving.

It's not always easy to know when you've reached this point. It can be a really hard decision to make, but there may be alternatives so you can still get out and about.

If the decision has been taken out of your hands and you've been told by the DVLA or your doctor that it's time to stop driving, you must do so immediately.

It might be a friend or family member that has suggested it's time to stop. Ask them to explain why they don't think it is safe, and try to bear in mind that they are likely just wanting to look out for you. If you want a second opinion, you could speak to your doctor about whether they think you are fit to continue driving.

If you've been driving for a long time it can feel like a huge part of your life has changed when you stop. It is normal to feel a sense of loss or even frustration. You might worry that you'll become reliant on others and lose some of your independence because you're unable to do all the things you used to, such as grocery shopping or visiting family and friends.

But you might also feel relieved to be free of the responsibility that comes with being behind the wheel, and even the cost and paperwork involved in keeping the car on the road. It is a very difficult decision for many, but it's always better to stop before you become unsafe on the road.

“My daughter looks out for me. She mentioned my driving after a prang at the supermarket. I realised it probably is time to call it a day.”

Rebecca, 87

Other ways to get out and about

Giving up driving doesn't have to mean giving up your independence. There are many other ways to get around and keep in touch with friends and family. It's a good idea to try these out before you stop driving completely. That way, you'll know what form of transport suits you best and will be prepared for any differences you need to allow for, such as timings and cost.

Mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs

If you have trouble walking, you could get a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair for travelling short distances.

If you receive the enhanced mobility component of Adult Disability Payment or Personal Independence Payment, the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, an Armed Forces Independence Payment or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement, you can use your mobility allowance to lease a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair through the **Motability** scheme, if you don't want to lease a car from them. Contact **0300 456 4566** for more information, or visit **www.motability.co.uk**.

The **Shopmobility** scheme lends wheelchairs and scooters to people with mobility issues so they can visit shops and leisure facilities within the town or shopping centre. There may be a fee for this service.

To find out if there's a scheme in your area, visit the Shopmobility website **www.shopmobilityuk.org**. If you are not online, call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222**, and we will find your nearest scheme.



Will using public transport cost more?

You might be worried about the costs or inconvenience of using public transport. But if you add up the amount you spend on car tax, insurance, maintenance and fuel in a year you'll probably find that using public transport works out the same as, or less expensive than, running a car.

Travel by bus

If you are over 60 you can apply for a **National Entitlement Card**, which gives you free bus travel throughout Scotland on almost all local and long distance services.

Some councils also allow free or discounted travel on their rail, tram or subway services, and cardholders living in Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles receive two free return ferry journeys each year to the Scottish mainland.

If you have a disability that means you are not able to travel alone, you may also be able to apply for a companion card.

To apply for a National Entitlement Card, contact your local council office.

Travel by train

If you're over 60, you can buy a **Senior Railcard**. This gives you a third off rail fares and is valid for either one year or three years. If you receive disability benefits or are registered deaf or visually impaired, you can apply for a **Disabled Persons Railcard**, giving you and a companion travel discounts.

Visit **www.senior-railcard.co.uk** and **www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk** for more information, or call National Rail on **0345 605 0525**.

If you have mobility issues, and will need help to get on and off the train, you can book travel assistance in advance. Call **Passenger Assist** on **0800 022 3720**, visit the website at **www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/plan-assistance.aspx** or download the Passenger Assistance by Transreport app from the Google Play store or the Apple App Store. Scotrail have useful information about the wide range of railcards that are available. Visit their website at **www.scotrail.co.uk/tickets/railcards**.

Taxi services

You can set up an account with a reputable taxi or private hire car company to make booking and paying for taxis easy. Ask for a regular driver and whether they will give you a discount if you use the company frequently.

Some councils offer a **Taxi Card** scheme, which can give you discounted taxi travel if you can't use the bus due to a disability or health condition. Contact your local council to find out if there is a scheme in your area.

There's also a growing number of **ride-hailing** services operated via mobile phone apps, which allow you to order a car and pay through your mobile phone. Make sure you choose a reputable provider and check the safety procedures carefully before using one of these services.



Community transport

If you have mobility or health issues that prevent you from accessing public transport, there may be community transport services in your area that could help you.

Dial-a-Ride

Dial-a-Ride can provide door-to-door transport, in vehicles which are specially adapted to carry wheelchair users, and other people with limited mobility, safely.

Dial-a-Bus

Dial-a-Bus vehicles have ramps to allow access for wheelchair-users and those who cannot manage steps. The driver can help you to get on and off the bus if needed. The service will pick you up close to your home and drop you off close to your destination.

To find out about community transport in your area, contact your local council or call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.

“It took some getting used to, but I really enjoy hopping on the bus into town.”

Stephen, 77

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting **age.scot/roundup**



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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[/AgeScotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AgeScotland)

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Contact us:

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Email

info@agescotland.org.uk

Visit our website

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