

Driver Awareness Scheme (DAS)

Pre-course Workbook



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Introduction



You have been registered to complete the Dorset Driver Awareness Scheme (DAS) Course and before attending you must complete all sections and exercises in the workbook.

Many drivers assume that passing their driving test means they have the necessary knowledge and skills to drive through to old age, but there can be many human factors that affect your driving abilities along the way. You can make mistakes when driving no matter how experienced you are or how well you have been trained. Sometimes, you may deliberately break the road traffic law believing that it will not be a risk to do so.

Road traffic injuries are consistently one of the top three causes of death for people aged between 5 and 44 years and it is often stated that human error is a major contributor to road traffic crashes.

As more technology is introduced to reduce human error, some level of driver disengagement is inevitable. As well as new skills being required for the assisted driving task, concerns have also been expressed about how increasing automation may lead to driver skills fading so that drivers are ill-prepared for taking over manual control.

The Dorset DAS Course is not a 'Speed Awareness Course'. It is offered for a range of offences including driving through a red traffic light or careless and inconsiderate driving. It may also be offered to people as refresher training if they drive for work.

This workbook will take you through some of the human factors underpinning driving behaviour, whether your offence was due to an error, lapse of concentration or a deliberate violation.

Risk

1.0

1.1 True or False?

First of all, tell us which of these statements are true or false. It's important that you complete this quiz before the course as we will be discussing your answers. Make sure you give your honest opinion or belief and not what you think should be the 'right' answer.

| No. | Statement | True or False |
|-----|---|---------------|
| 1 | It's illegal to eat a sandwich whilst driving | |
| 2 | It's illegal for cyclists to ride two abreast | |
| 3 | Cyclists must use cycle lanes so they don't cause crashes | |
| 4 | Cyclists don't pay road tax so those that do have a priority | |
| 5 | A road marked with 3 lanes is a dual carriageway (depending on direction of travel) | |
| 6 | I'm ok to use my mobile phone while stationary | |
| 7 | An amber light on a traffic light means 'get ready to go' | |
| 8 | Everyone speeds | |
| 9 | Everyone talks on their mobile phone whilst driving | |
| 10 | If you leave a gap, other road users jump in | |

1.2 What's the risk?

Most road traffic incidents are due to risk-taking behaviour such as;

- Poor decision making
- driving when tired
- using a mobile phone whilst driving
- not leaving enough space between the vehicle and other road users

You have the ability to influence the amount of demand on you as a driver. The easiest way to reduce risk, especially when the traffic situation is difficult, is to reduce your speed.

Driving at an appropriate speed for the road you are on, means you have more time to:

- process information
- make safe decisions
- take action
- correct errors

1.3 Assess your Driving Skills

Drivers often believe that they are skilled enough to take risks. Have a look at the following questionnaire and estimate how much skill you have in each aspect of driving. Tick the box that best represents your judgement of your skills using the following scale:

1 = Well below average 2 = Below average 3 = About average 4 = Above average 5 = Well above average

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tolerating other drivers' blunders calmly | | | | | |
| 2 | Performance in a critical situation | | | | | |
| 3 | Perceiving hazards in traffic | | | | | |
| 4 | Driving in a strange city | | | | | |
| 5 | Conforming to the traffic rules | | | | | |
| 6 | Managing the car through a skid | | | | | |
| 7 | Prediction of traffic situations ahead | | | | | |
| 8 | Knowing how to act in particular traffic situations | | | | | |
| 9 | Fluent lane-changing in heavy traffic | | | | | |
| 10 | Fast reactions | | | | | |
| 11 | Paying attention to other road users | | | | | |
| 12 | Driving fast if necessary | | | | | |
| 13 | Driving in the dark | | | | | |
| 14 | Keeping sufficient following distance | | | | | |
| 15 | Adjusting your speed to the conditions | | | | | |
| 16 | Overtaking | | | | | |
| 17 | Conforming to the speed limits | | | | | |
| 18 | Avoiding unnecessary risks | | | | | |

1.4 How did you score?

Look carefully at those areas where you have scored yourself as above average. Are you sure your skills are above average all the time? What are the circumstances under which you are less likely to perform these driving tasks competently? Perhaps you might rate yourself differently when you are in a hurry or in a bad mood?

There are a number of human biases that might be a factor in how you rate your skills as a driver:

1. The tendency to ignore times when you were not driving well
2. Self-serving selection of examples when your driving was skilled
3. A belief that negative outcomes are because of other drivers' decisions and not yours
4. You tend to see what you expect to see
5. The tendency to overestimate your control in risky situations
6. A hindsight bias that means safe outcomes are interpreted as the result of actions you took as a driver rather than due to good fortune

Whatever your perception of your driving skills, there is often a difference between what you think about your driving and your actual driving skills. This disconnect is due to a number of biases in the way humans think. In particular, you may have a tendency to misperceive the way traffic events unfold and selectively process information in your favour.

Even the best drivers make mistakes, do foolish things, or bend the rules at some time or another. Some of these behaviours are trivial, but some are potentially dangerous.

Once you understand how your beliefs about risk and confidence in your driving skills might influence your driving behaviour - then take steps to recognise this tendency when you're behind the wheel. It's at this point that you have the opportunity to make safer decisions.

1.5 Reduce your risk

Biases in your beliefs about your driving skills are a common human tendency that we are mostly unaware of. Reflect and acknowledge how biased your view of your driving skills might be.

Next time another driver is aggressive towards you for making a mistake, instead of automatically defending your actions, consider what element of your driving needs to be improved.

For example

- Were you driving too close?
- Did you force another driver to brake quite harshly?
- Were you driving too fast for the conditions?
- Did you fail to look in the mirror and see this road user?



Influences

20

The association between stress and crash involvement has been well established. Studies have found that individuals who have experienced recent traumatic life events have a greater risk of crash involvement.

There may be two main reasons for this link:

- Drivers who are stressed may be distracted by thoughts about their personal problems.
- Stress may cause drivers to lack the necessary motivation to avoid hazardous driving situations.

2.1 Time pressure

Driving under time pressure often leads to high risk driving such as speeding and dangerous overtaking. This is particularly the case for those people driving for work or with a busy schedule.

2.2 The Transactional Model

The Transactional Model of Driver Stress shows how we commonly react to a situation based upon our first thoughts and coping mechanism which usually results in some stress. The example that follows includes another emotion that can often lead to crashes which is anger. Angry drivers frequently express their irritation by behaving aggressively towards other road users. Not surprisingly, such behaviour is known to be dangerous. This is because strong emotions such as anger tends to take up a lot of your brain's processing capacity, leaving less for you to concentrate on your driving. Angry drivers spend less time assessing situations and are quicker to allocate blame to others.

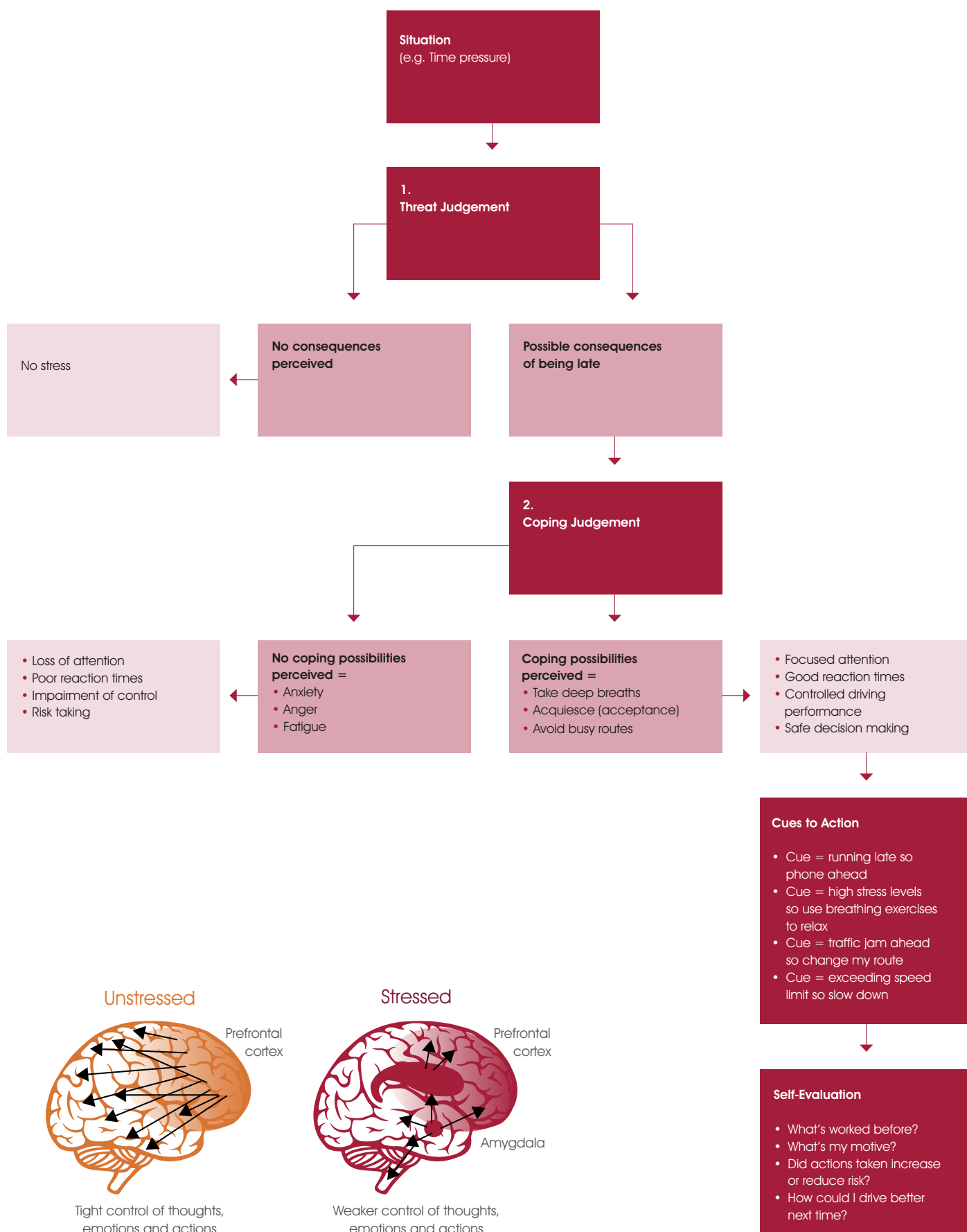
2.3 Cues to Action

Understanding your own triggers to emotions behind the wheel is the first step to controlling your responses and improving your risk.

2.4 Self-Evaluation

Reflect on the circumstances under which you may lose your temper when driving and what you can do to reduce your levels of stress and frustration. Finding different strategies on how to tackle difficulties and frustrations in traffic often makes you feel more in control and less prone to stress and angry outbursts.

2.5 The Transactional Model Diagram



Strategies for Safer Driving

3.0

3.1 Control of the vehicle

More accidents occur in 30mph zones than in any other and this is why it's important to limit them to 30mph – because people die or are injured in them. 75% of all motoring insurance claims arise from crashes in 30mph zones yet fewer than 4% of claims originate from motorways.

With few exceptions, generally drivers who increase their speed in 30 and 40mph zones do so as a direct consequence of impulsively changing up into higher gears rather than consciously selecting the most appropriate gear for the circumstances.

Did you know? To keep control of your vehicle in lower speed zones it is recommended using a lower gear (working gear) 2nd or 3rd.

3.2 Keeping your eyes moving

Drivers who rapidly scan the whole road environment looking for different kinds of hazards have a much lower risk of a crash than drivers who concentrate on one area. Eye scanning helps you to process information, spot hazards and stay aware of the situation as it changes.

Next time you're driving, use your eyes in a scanning motion which sweeps the whole road environment – the far distance, the middle distance, the foreground, the sides and rear – to build up a picture of what is happening all around you, as far as you can see, in every direction. That way, you will be prepared for hazards as they emerge.

Scanning is a continuous process. When a new view opens out in front of you, quickly scan the new scene. By scanning the whole of the environment, you will know where the areas of risk are. Check and re-check these risk areas in your visual sweeps. Avoid fixing on particular risk areas because this means that you might miss other areas of risk. Use all your mirrors to help you become fully aware of what's going on around you.

3.3 Commentary Driving

One of the best strategies for concentrating and therefore being in control is to do a commentary drive. A commentary drive will help you to stay focused and to re-adjust your priorities as the situation develops. With practice you can learn to concentrate on the priorities. A running commentary means that you briefly say out loud the hazards you can observe and how you plan to deal with them. Hazards include road features such as junctions, other road users, and road signs. Hazards should be prioritized according to their danger including how close it is to you, whether the hazard is stationary or moving and how fast you are approaching it.






3.4 Speed Limits

Because we miss signs, something like a speed limit sign is not registered, possibly because of its position or possibly because we think we know the speed limit or make up our own speed limits.

Did you know? There are 2 'blanket' speed limits, 30 mph and the National Speed Limit (NSL), referred to as 'blanket' because they cover a large area. You will see where a speed-limit starts as there is a sign on both sides of the road which is referred to as a 'gateway'. When a blanket limit is declared you won't see any other signs.

The presence of streetlights generally means that there is a 30 mph (48 km/h) speed limit unless otherwise specified.

Highway Code – Rule 124

| Type of Vehicle | Built-up Areas / Street Lights | Single Carriageways | Dual Carriageways | Motorways |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| | MPH | MPH | MPH | MPH |
|  Cars and Motorcycles (including car derived vans up to 2 tonnes maximum laden weight) | 30 | 60 | 70 | 70 |
|  All vehicles towing (including car derived vans, motorcycles and goods vehicles) | 30 | 50 | 60 | 60 |
|  Buses and Coaches (not exceeding 12 metres in overall length) | 30 | 50 | 60 | 70 |
|  Goods Vehicles (not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight) | 30 | 50 | 60 | 70 |
|  Goods Vehicles (exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight) | 30 | 50 ⁺ | 60 ⁺ | 60 |

⁺ The National Speed Limits for Goods Vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes apply to all roads in England & Wales. You can meet the challenge of changing your driving behaviour and improving your driving abilities. Imagine how good you will feel when you are driving safer with the confidence of knowing that you are driving within the law.

Action Plan



Make a commitment to change the way you think and feel about your driving so that you can manage the risks you've identified and start with a personal goal.

My personal goal is to:

.....

.....

.....

To achieve this, I will:

.....

.....

.....

My plan might not work because:

.....

.....

.....

The coping strategies I will use to overcome these barriers are:

.....

.....

.....

I will review my progress every:

.....

.....

.....



For further details on this course please contact:

Mel Vincent - Road Safety Education

E-mail: melvin.vincent@dorset.pnn.police.uk

www.dorset.police.uk

