

YOUR ADVANCED TEST

This note contains valuable advice on your advance test then provides an examiner's perspective (first published in our February 2019 newsletter)

Pre-test checklist

You will normally receive confirmation and contact from your examiner within a fortnight of making the application. Have confidence that WHAM only offers candidates that have reached the correct standard. You'll be fine!

In the days before the test:

- Revise your IAMRoadsmart manual
- Review the Highway Code
- Make sure your bike is taxed, insured and if required a current MOT certificate
- Ride!

The day before the test:

- Make sure of the meeting point and your journey time to get there
- Check the weather forecast
- Sort out the right clothing
- Do you need glasses or contact lenses? Sunglasses?
- Sort out your documents

On the day:

- Take your driving licence, insurance certificate and MOT certificate if you have one
- Eat/drink before you leave home to avoid low blood sugar and dehydration
- Pre ride check
- Allow plenty of travel time to avoid rushing
- Arrive with a full tank of petrol 5 minutes before the arranged time
- Assume the examiner is watching you as you arrive: smooth slow riding as you negotiate the car park.
- Park so you can ride out forwards to save awkward manoeuvring at the start of your test.

The test

- The examiner (they are all v nice people!) will give you a clear briefing.
- You may be asked to read a number plate (Eyesight check)
- Take your time when preparing to ride: helmet on and fastened; gloves on; get comfy...then thumbs up to signal you are ready to go.
- Ride how you normally ride ignoring your examiner (you won't lose them!)
- Ride to the system, be safe and legal but "make progress".
- Don't dwell on any mistakes, especially those caused by nerves early on, but remain focussed.
- At the end, usually over a coffee, you may be asked questions during an astoundingly detailed debrief
- You will be informed of your result.

After the test

- Let your observer know the result

The examiner's view

Written Brian Morgan – formerly a Police Class 1 rider and IAMRoadsmart examiner
You can find his full article in the February 2019 newsletter in our library.

You turn up for the test and wonder what the examiner is thinking. The fact that you have paid for training with observed rides and then submitted yourself for a test is important and recognised as a positive step towards safe biking. Unfortunately a great many riders are only too happy to use high powered machines on our roads, in blissful ignorance of what might happen next. As a serving police officer the examiner will have dealt with the aftermath of this ignorance on more occasions than they can remember so will be pleased to meet someone with a bit more sense.

If an individual makes a positive choice to improve their riding skills and put themselves through an advanced test, the examiner will happily do whatever is possible to help further your progress. They really want to recommend you for full membership (pass the test) and understand that there is no benefit in trying to add any unnecessary pressure or to 'trip you up'.

The book the examiner has slept with is called 'Roadcraft' – not 'witchcraft' – we are all simply bikers who want to stay alive, so the examiner will be on your side.

Everything that the examiner will look for is contained within your training material – and WHAM observers know it back to front and inside out - so stick to what you've practiced. Experience shows that it is the behaviours, as opposed to the abilities, that have caused the problems. My advice is to just keep it simple and stick to what you know.

On test you will probably make a mistake somewhere. If you start dwelling on it, you'll make more, so just get on with the ride. The examiner will see it for what it was and make allowances. They will look at the whole ride and make a decision based on what was good. I can absolutely guarantee that the examiner will have vivid memories of having made the same sort of mistakes over the years.

Don't waste your time trying to work out what the examiner is watching for or what they are thinking – you've got a motorcycle to ride, on test, on a public highway – that's more than enough to occupy you so just get on with it. Keep it simple – the tests that I enjoyed the most were the ones where the associate said they'd relaxed and were having fun! If you like, just think of it as a ride with a mate.

Don't go looking to pull off some brilliant manoeuvre to impress – the examiner will be massively experienced in dealing with human behaviour and will spot it straight away – in any event it generally goes wrong and you'll end up clipping a white line or speeding. Again, keep it simple. For example, if a safe overtaking opportunity presents itself, stick to what your observer has taught you and get on with it. If something about it doesn't feel right – the examiner will undoubtedly have the same feeling so don't be afraid to abandon it. Such decisions are useful talking points at the debrief. Even if it was the wrong decision, the fact that it was made for the right reason (safety) will justify it (live to fight another day).

A number of riding 'bibles' have been published over the years and they tended to be 'of their time', whilst I don't doubt things will continue to develop, what we currently have is more fit for purpose than some older advice. Over the years we've thankfully seen an end to the 'grid system', off siding, mandatory hand signals and the 'Hendon shuffle'. These changes came about mainly due to the

improvements in motor vehicle technology so what we now have is a more sensible set of guidelines that allows you, the rider, to make your own judgement calls with some degree of flexibility. Whilst we have had some administrative changes in recent years, the basics of advanced riding remain constant - Safety Position, Limit points, etc.

What is the examiner looking for?

The bottom line is that they want to see a 'thinking' ride but what does that mean exactly?

A rider that uses good observation and so is aware of anything that is, or might be, a hazard.

A rider that decides for themselves on the safest piece of road to use, the safest speed to travel at and which gear is best suited to that speed.

How to make that decision?

Remember TUG – Take, Use, Give information.

Riding plans are made on the correct assessment of the ever changing scene ahead and behind the rider. An established theory but it still applies. So, take in as much information as you can by using your senses and your experience to anticipate what might happen. Use that information to help you make decisions. Based on what you decide to do, consider giving some information, for example, signal if needed, maybe even a hand signal to reinforce an existing signal or give a horn warning. It will very often involve a change in position or speed – even a minor change can make a big difference. On test, making slight changes in position/speed etc also shows that you've seen the hazard, evaluated it, and done something about it.

The Information phase of IPSGA endures throughout all the other phases (see 'Plan on a Page' in the WHAM library). Simply put, it means that whichever of the phases of IPSGA you are undertaking, the one thing that will keep changing is the world around you requiring you need to constantly evaluate that information.

I have also been asked about the various 'do's and don'ts' - which is where it can get very messy. Human nature being what it is, many people like a set of rules to follow so they know what to do but people can tend to take things too literally or to put their own interpretation on what they hear, which is where myths start to form, and spread. Every year WHAM's observers get together for training and recalibration to make sure that there's just the one hymn sheet. This is complimented by 'check rides' where observers, in effect, review each other's associates.

Clearly, there should be one standard and the IAM have tried hard to make this the case. Having said that, common sense dictates that there will always be slight variances in how individuals view things. This applies to examiners as much as anyone else so you're always going to get slightly different comments from different examiners during the debrief. I think it's safe to say that these don't result in 'fails' but are gems of advice given in an attempt to make you a better rider; a personal favourite were people riding too close to oncoming traffic or not using the 2 second rule, so please take on board any feedback you get because it is all meant to help.

An advanced test pass is no mean feat and should be celebrated but I feel it is best to see it as a step in a process. Bear in mind that Police riders not only practice their skills every day, they attend refresher courses periodically to help diminish the effect of bad habits, everybody develops them including you, so never be afraid to ask an observer for an occasional refresher. Also consider further training to maybe obtain a masters certificate. Keeping the right company helps too.