

# **CAR CARE GUIDE**

## **FOR FIRST-TIME DRIVERS**



**Problem Solved**



# YOU PASSED! (WELL DONE YOU)

Congratulations - you've passed your driving test. Like others before you, you've proven you have what it takes to get behind the wheel of a car without wiping out a wheelie bin or destroying your neighbour's garden.

But what's next on your journey of motoring discovery? A new car perhaps, or at least a spot on your mum or dad's insurance policy?

To help you take your first steps into the world of driving and car ownership, here's an in-depth car care guide for first-time drivers. From car care basics to new driver etiquette, this guide is packed with tips and tricks to help you be a safe, savvy and decent driver.

## CONTENTS

<b>Get to know your car</b> .....	2
Documentation	2
How to handle car problems	5
Tool kit and jacking points	6
Things to consider	7
<b>Car car basics</b> .....	8
Warning lights	8
Battery	10
Saving fuel	11
Regular checks	12
<b>Unspoken rules of the road</b> .....	16



# GET TO KNOW YOUR CAR



New or used, banger or beauty – it doesn't matter, because those two tonnes of nuts, bolts and paintwork are all yours. That's right, buying your first car is exciting no matter what motor you've bought. Once the keys are in the palm of your hand, the world is your oyster.

But before you hit the open road, there's a pile of paperwork to get through. Luckily these days a lot can be done online, which speeds it up. On top of that, there are several mechanical must-knows you should be aware of before you leave your driveway. So let's get to it.

## DOCUMENTATION

Buying a car isn't like buying a new pair of shoes; there's paperwork to be done before you get behind the wheel. It's fairly straightforward stuff, but this will make sure that everything is legal and the car is yours.

### V5C Registration Certificate

Buying a used car? You and the seller will need to fill out a V5C Registration Certificate. This government-issue document proves who the vehicle belongs to, and the DVLA advises against buying a car that doesn't have a V5C certificate.



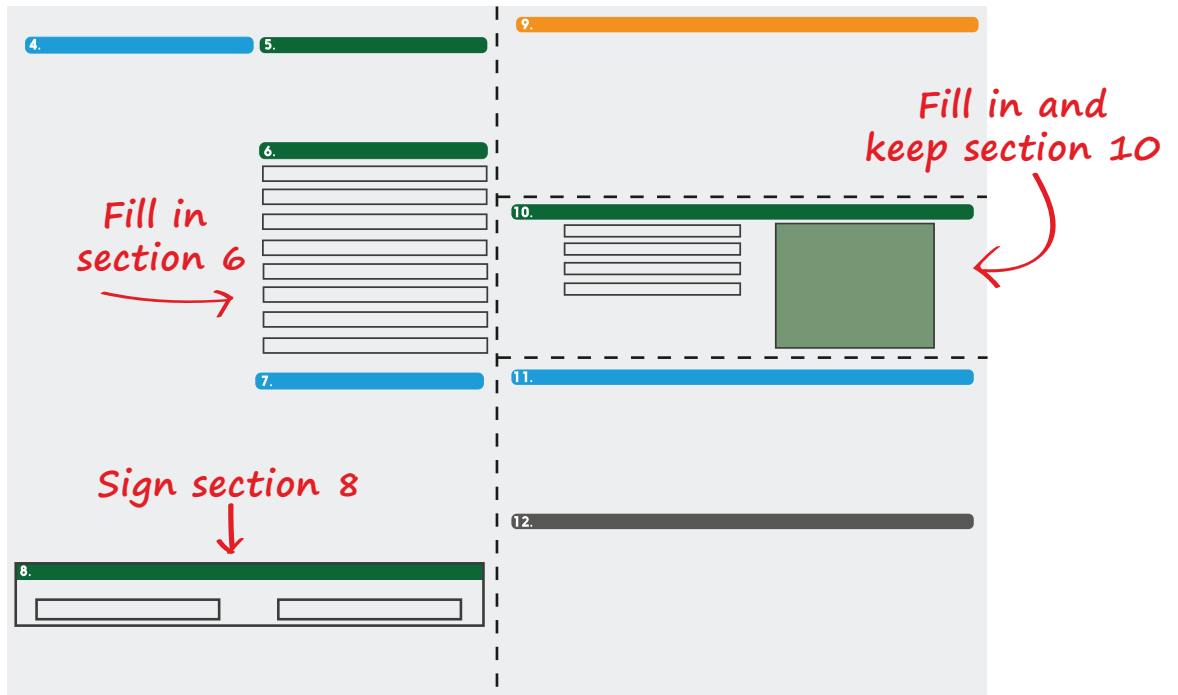
*A V5C Certificate looks like this*

*(certificates issued before 2012 are blue and green)*





*Inside the V5C:*



*Send sections 1-8 to the DVLA*

During the sale of the car, the seller should fill in Section 6 of the V5C and sign the declaration. The V5C/2 or 'New Keeper Supplement' should then be detached and given to you. Be sure to fill this in ASAP and post sections 1-8 off to the DVLA.

“Find out what information the DVLA holds about a vehicle. You’ll need the vehicle’s make and registration number to find out various things about the vehicle, e.g. when its current vehicle tax and MOT expires, the date it was first registered and SORN status (Statutory Off Road Notification).” – [Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency](#)



## Service History

Buy a second hand car, and it should come with a logbook containing details of a car's past repair and maintenance schedule. It's important to look over this log before signing on the dotted line; check that things like mileage match up and that there's no missing info.

A 'full' service history will also contain receipts for work carried out on the vehicle and a diligent previous owner will have kept all paperwork to show what was done, when and why. A huge pile of receipts from several previous owners could signal a car that's likely to cost more to maintain than it was to buy!



**TOP TIP:** For second hand cars, check the mileage on the MOT certificates matches the service record.

## Tax and MOT

Drive without tax, insurance or a valid MOT, and you risk having your wheels impounded and points added to your license. Note that the MOT is only a test of the car's roadworthiness and is no guarantee that the vehicle won't need maintenance in the future. Before buying the car, check when it was last MOTd and serviced. If it needs either, ask the garage or current owner to have it serviced or MOTd before you buy it!

Phoned up, filled in and completed all of the above? Put everything in a safe place – you never know when you might need it.

“When you buy a vehicle, the tax will no longer be transferred with the vehicle. You must tax it before you can use the vehicle on the road. The DVLA holds a digital record of taxed and untaxed vehicles and no longer need you to have a paper tax disc as proof you have paid the vehicle tax.” - [DVLA](#)



## HOW TO HANDLE CAR PROBLEMS

Now you've got that paperwork sorted, it's time to suss out those wheels. If you've bought a spanking new motor, chances are you'll be covered by a robust warranty, so this section won't apply to you. Buy a used car however, and you'll need to know where to find help if you experience problems or a breakdown.



Your first port of call for car care queries should be the manual, which is usually stowed in the car's glove box. The manual, or vehicle handbook, contains general information about the maintenance and upkeep of your car.



If you like getting your hands dirty and think you can do some home fixes, a Haynes manual is the holy grail of maintenance for your car. Full of practical advice and guidance, Haynes has a guidebook for most motors, and they specialise in helping motorists fix problems at home.



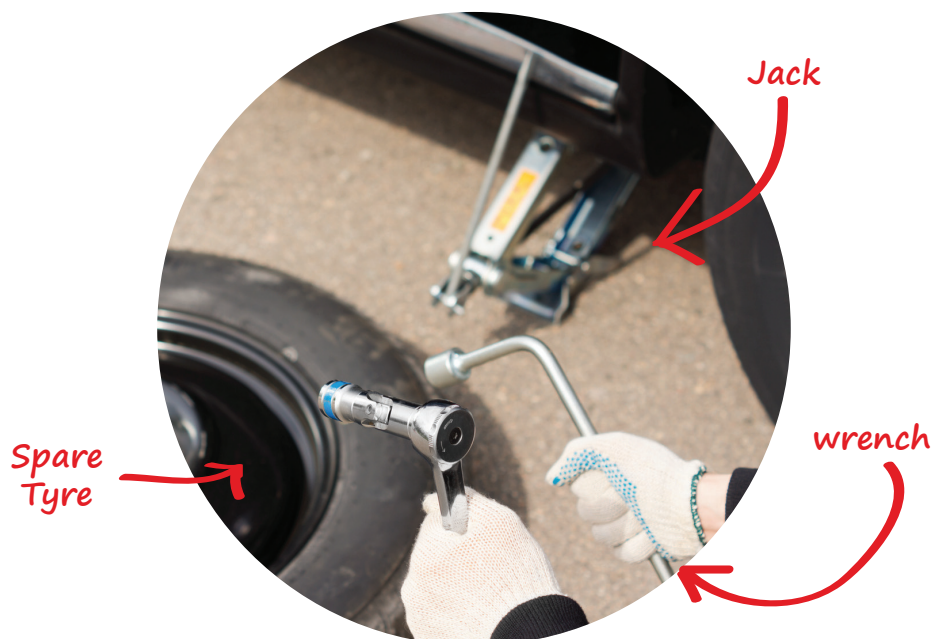
If you're struggling to find the information you need, it might be worth visiting an online forum or two. There are loads of car maintenance forums online run by knowledgeable car owners keen to offer advice and support to a fellow motorist in need. If in doubt though, it's best to take your car to a trusted mechanic.



How do you go about finding a reliable mechanic? Start by googling local garages in your area, and check the reviews left by other motorists. Most decent mechanics will be a member of the NFDA (National Franchised Dealers Association) or the IGA (Independent Garage Association), so this is something to look out for when choosing one.



## TOOLKIT AND JACKING POINTS



Did you know your car is likely to be fitted with a number of tools that can help fix basic issues by the roadside? Look inside your boot lining, and you should find a jack, lug wrench and often a spare tyre or puncture repair kit.

If you find yourself needing to jack up your car to fix a puncture, your manual can tell you where the safe jacking points are, as well as the tow points. Just remember to ensure the car is parked on a flat, even surface with the handbrake on!



To make it easier, you can carry a can of Holts Tyreweld, which is an emergency puncture repair designed to get you back on the road quickly, without the need for tools.



## THINGS TO CONSIDER

Driving a car is, for the most part, brilliant. But sometimes things go wrong, so here are a few pointers for your first year of driving:

- ↘ **Find a Trustworthy Mechanic** – Most mechanics are reliable, trustworthy and not about to rip you off. It pays to have a mechanic you know you can trust in an emergency.
- ↘ **Breakdown Cover** – It's not a legal requirement, but buying breakdown cover is well worth considering as a first-time car owner. Breakdown teams will come and help you in an emergency, so you won't be stuck at the roadside wondering what to do.
- ↘ **Car Insurance** – In your first few years as a motorist, insurance can be eye-wateringly expensive, but you've got to have it. Don't give them reason to put your premium up even more. Drive carefully and sensibly.
- ↘ **Emergency Car Kit** – You know those news reports of bad traffic jams and people stuck on motorways for hours? It can be pretty miserable. Make sure you have an emergency car kit with supplies to see you through if you get stranded.
- ↘ **Handy Products to Keep in Your Boot** – Some car maintenance products, such as our brilliant Holts Tyreweld emergency puncture repair kit, are designed to get you back on the road without the need for tools or phoning your breakdown provider. Keep a few products handy in case of emergencies.

"The most common emergency is a breakdown. What should you keep in your car in case this happens? Your breakdown service emergency number, red warning triangle, reflective jacket, spare mobile battery, road map, rug, warm clothing and walking shoes. Don't forget a supply of chocolate!" – [YoungCarDriver.com](http://YoungCarDriver.com)





# CAR CARE BASICS



Knowing how to care, maintain and look after your car is a learning curve for all new drivers. Here are some basic tips on how to give your car the best chance of a long and happy life on the road.

## DASH/INSTRUMENT WARNING LIGHTS

To panic or not panic? That is the question when it comes to dashboard warning lights. It can be difficult to know which lights are worth worrying about – especially if you’re a new driver behind the wheel of an unfamiliar car.

In the crash course below (no pun intended), we’ve provided an explanation of what each light means and what to do if one lights up on the open road.



### **Battery Charge Warning Light**

**Don’t Panic:** The battery charge warning light should light up when the ignition is switched on, before switching off when the engine starts.

**Panic:** If it doesn’t light up, or comes on while you’re driving, there might be a fault in the charge system that you should have checked by a mechanic as soon as possible.



### **Brake System Warning Light**

**Don’t Panic:** The brake system warning light should only come on when the handbrake is engaged.


**Panic:** If the light comes on at any other time, your brake fluid could be low. Stop your journey and get some help before driving any further. The brake system warning light may be linked to ABS or brake pad wear, so it’s always a good idea to have a professional mechanic take a look.

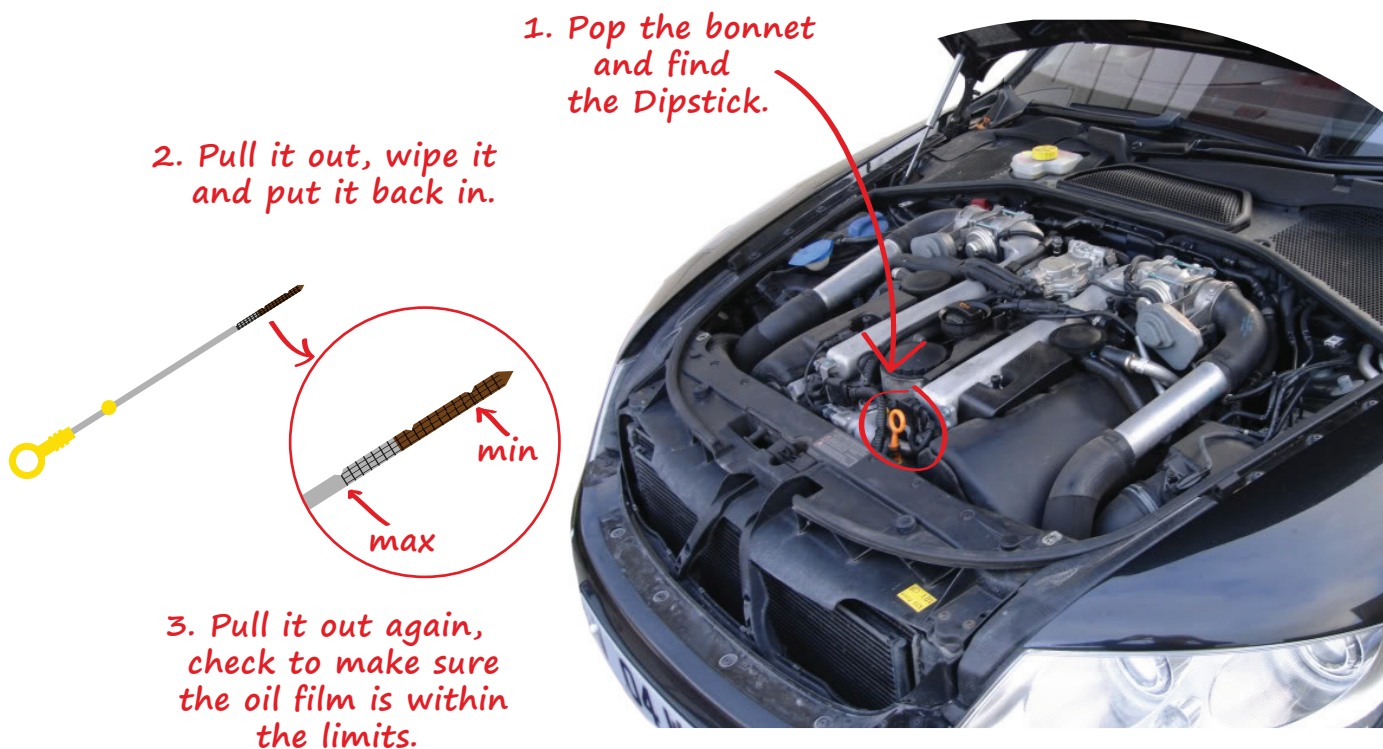


## Oil Pressure Warning Light

**Don't Panic:** The oil pressure light should come on when the ignition is switched on, before going off when the engine starts.

**Panic:** If the light stays on or comes on whilst driving, turn off the engine immediately. On older cars, the oil pressure warning light could be triggered by a low oil level, so pop the bonnet and check your oil level. If the level is low, only drive at low speed and top up as soon as you can. If the oil level is OK, the pressure could be low and it's best to have a garage mechanic take a look.

 **TOP TIP:** To check your oil level, park on a flat surface, pop the bonnet and find the dipstick. Pull this out, give it a wipe and then push it back in. When you pull it out again, notice the film of oil at the end of the dipstick. The oil should be within the Max and Min markers - any lower than the minimum, and you'll need to top it up.





## **ABS Warning Light**

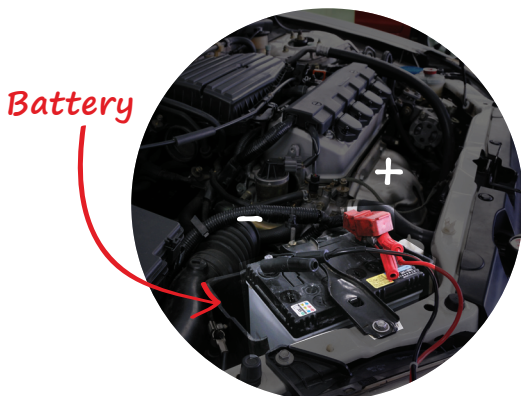
**Don't Panic:** The ABS warning light should light up when the ignition is switched on, before switching off when the engine starts.

**Panic:** If the ABS warning lights up while you're driving, it could mean you have a brake malfunction. In most cars, it's safe to continue driving, but you should still have it checked as soon as possible.

## **BATTERY**

These days, cars contain loads of electronics that should generally be left to a trained professional. For the everyday motorist however, basic electronics such as lighting, fuses and the battery can be easy to fix or replace.

To help you avoid breakdowns, here's a crash course in replacing a car battery.



### **HOW TO REPLACE A CAR BATTERY:**

**1. Locate the Battery** - They're normally located under the bonnet, but in some cars they are in the boot or under a seat.

**2. Remove the Negative Clamp (black), Then the Positive (red)** - Mix these up, and you risk damaging the battery.

**3. Remove Frame or Casing** - The battery is held in place with clamps, bars and screws. Unscrew all casings in order to remove the battery.

**4. To Fit a New Battery, Reverse the Steps Listed Above** - And you're done.





## SAVING PENNIES AT THE PUMP

Whether your car takes petrol or diesel, topping up the tank is without doubt the most costly overhead for British motorists. If you're conscious of the cost of fuel, here are a few pointers that could help you save a few quid on the price you pay at the pump.



**Service Regularly** – Keeping your car in top condition can help reduce fuel use.



**Get Rid of Excess Weight** – The more you carry, the more it costs. Rid your car of the spare shoes, laptop and assorted junk, and you stand to save a fair bit of fuel.



**Drive Carefully** – Not only will driving carefully help keep you safe, it'll curb your fuel usage too.



**Roll With It** – Stop altogether and your car will use more fuel to get going again. Judge stopping distances and allow your car to roll rather than come to a complete stop. Avoid hard acceleration and braking – drive smoothly.





**Turn Off Air Con** – Most air con systems are run off the engine. Turning these off will save fuel.




**Slow it down** – Did you know driving at 80mph uses up to 25% more fuel than 70mph, according to the AA? Something to remember for the next time you consider speeding. The average car will be most fuel efficient at around 55mph.



 **Change Up Early** - Instead of over-revving the engine between gear changes, shift early to save fuel. Modern cars are fitted with a shift-up indicator, which makes eco-friendly gear changes a breeze.

 **Plan Your Route, Leave Early and Don't Get Lost** - Get lost and you risk wasting fuel finding your way again, especially in heavy traffic. Plan your route based on the mileage, and take a sat nav if you lack a good sense of direction.

 **Most Importantly, Remember to Put the Right Fuel In** - Put diesel in your petrol car or vice versa, and not only will you find yourself in a right old pickle, you'll be the laughing stock of your mates.

"We need food! Your car prefers petrol! Here are three tips to keep fuel bills a bit lower.

1. Don't keep the engine running unnecessarily.
2. Drive at an appropriate speed keeping to the speed limits.
3. Combine easy acceleration with timely gear changes. Don't labour in the wrong gear and slow down in good time." - [YoungCarDriver.com](http://YoungCarDriver.com)

## REGULAR CHECKS AND BASIC SERVICING

Whether you're an engine enthusiast or clueless when it comes to cars, you've got to keep to your motor roadworthy. Doing weekly checks and carrying out basic servicing are good habits to get into.

To help you get to grips with DIY car servicing, here's a guide on what to check and when to check it.



## 1-2 WEEKS



### Tyres

Tyres are the only bit of your car that touches the road, and problems with them can be dangerous, expensive or illegal. That's why tyre experts recommend checking pressure and wear every one to two weeks.



**TOP TIP:** Get into the habit of checking tyres every other time you top up your fuel tank. Pressure gauges are cheap and easy to use - the correct pressures for your tyres can normally be found on the inside of the fuel filler cap, but check your car manual.

### Lights and Indicators



Whether you drive in the dark or not, working car lights are essential and part of the MOT. Remember to check all of your lights - including indicators, brake lights, headlights, taillights, sidelights, reversing lights and fog lights - on a fortnightly basis.



**TOP TIP:** A shiny surface can help you check rear lights without getting out of the car. If replacing faulty lamps does not fix the problem, check your fuses!

### Wipers



A gunged up, worn out wiper will not only leave a streaky, greasy film on the windscreen, it could scratch the glass if the rubber is worn low. Check the condition of wiper blades every week, especially in the winter months.




**TOP TIP:** Aftermarket wiper blades may work just as well as wipers bought from the manufacturer, and often work out much cheaper.



## Screen Wash

Remember: Driving with a dirty windscreen is illegal, so make sure your screen wash is always well topped up. We'd recommend checking your wash level every week, or more often when it's bad weather.




 **TOP TIP:** Purchase a quality screen wash. It may cost more, but it'll keep the screen cleaner for longer. Choose the screenwash to suit the weather. To prevent it freezing in winter, use a good quality screenwash with freeze protection.

## MONTHLY

### Oil

Engines rely on oil – it keeps them lubricated and reduces the risk of damage. If your oil level drops below the minimum, your engine won't thank you for it. Depending on your mileage, we'd recommend checking your oil level at least once a month. If you notice a drop in oil, take it to the garage for a once over.




 **TOP TIP:** Park on a flat surface when checking your car's oil level. If you are constantly having to top up, check for leaks or take it to a garage.

### Coolant

Overheating is a problem faced by many motorists, and it can mean bad news for your engine. To safeguard against overheating issues, check your coolant level once a month and top it up if it dips below the full line.



 **TOP TIP:** Coolant is the bright liquid in the transparent reservoir clearly visible in the engine bay. Don't use water as this will lead to overheating and damage.



## Brakes

Brakes are the most important part of your car, so it's important to check them regularly. Pay attention when you're driving and notice any change in how your brakes feel or perform.



**TOP TIP:** If your car veers to one side while braking, this could be a sign of an underlying brake issue. Our advice? Get it to a garage pronto.



## Power Steering

Power steering has been a godsend for modern motorists. In days gone by, even the smallest of cars felt like a tank to park. To ensure your steering remains light, check your power steering fluid level once a month.



**TOP TIP:** To check your power steering fluid, pop the bonnet and find the power steering reservoir (the manual will help you with this). If it's translucent, you should be able to check the fluid level without removing the cap. If not, you'll need to use the dipstick attached to the cap in much the same way as you'd check the engine oil. Sometimes heavy steering or a noisy power steering system can be solved simply by topping up the fluid.





# UNSPOKEN RULES OF THE ROAD

There are a few unspoken rules of the road that they don't teach you in Driving School. We're not talking serious rules, more bits of driving etiquette that'll keep you and your passengers happy as you drive from A to B:

## ↳ Shotgun Etiquette

The rules of 'Shotgun' are simple; if you're transporting two or more of your mates, the person who says "SHOTGUN!" first gets the front seat. As the driver, it's your responsibility to enforce proper shotgun procedure; otherwise you could have a mutiny on your hands.

## ↳ Remember: With 'Shotgun' Comes Great Responsibility

If your passengers launch into an argument over who gets the front seat, remind them of the responsibilities 'Shotgun' entails. Passengers who take the front seat are in charge of navigation, toll payments, gate opening and supplying the driver with adequate food and drink – and are under no circumstances allowed to fall asleep.

## ↳ Fuel Contributions

Trips to the seaside don't come cheap, so it's only fair everyone chips in when it comes to topping up the tank, including any and all passengers. If you're the driver, don't be afraid to ask for a bit of petrol money; nine times out of ten, your mates will be all too happy to contribute to the cause.



## ↘ **The Driver Must Always Choose the Tunes**

Your car, your music – it's a good rule to live by. If your front-seat passenger fancies themselves as a DJ, make sure they're only choosing tunes from your music collection. If they protest, threaten them with Classic FM for the remainder of the journey.

## ↘ **Driving Criticism Will Not Be Tolerated**

As a new driver, you'll make mistakes during your first few months behind the wheel. Passengers travelling with you should respect that, and not criticise your parallel parking attempts. The only people that can get away with this are parents – especially if you're driving their car.



### *Our Contributors*

*Thanks to our car-savvy friends for sharing their first time driving tips...*

*YoungCarDriver.com provides expert driving advice and information for both learners and new drivers alike. From what you should know before you take a test to how to finance a car when you do.*

*The Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) provide you with your provisional and full driving licence and maintain all information on car registration and taxation. They also keep you up to date on all changes to driving laws and driving related news.*



 **Holts**<sup>®</sup> 