

TRAILER TEST EXPLAINED

Q My daughter passed her driving test less than 10 years ago, so will have to pass a B+ E test before she can borrow my outfit. What does the test entail and where can she take it, as none of our caravanning friends have a clue.

A This is becoming an increasingly common question. The trailer towing (B+E) test is based on the lorry driving test and lasts approximately one hour. They are conducted only at vocational (bus and lorry) driving test centres which are quite thinly spread. For example, the nearest to Club Offices in West Sussex are at Guildford, Surrey; Purfleet, Essex; and Lancing, West Sussex.

The test includes vehicle safety questions, an off-road reverse manoeuvre, a controlled stop, uncoupling and coupling of the trailer and driving on the road. On the public road test you will NOT be expected to perform an emergency stop, reverse round a corner, reverse park or turn in the road.

You must present yourself for the test with a suitable roadworthy vehicle with a Max Allowable Mass below 3500kg, equipped with a MPH and KPH speedometer and fitted with a seatbelt, integral head



restraint and additional exterior mirrors for the use of the examiner (generally examiners will use mirrors placed on top of the external mirrors). You must provide a braked, unladen trailer of at least one tonne and display L plates. If the towing vehicle was first used after 1 October 2003, further rules apply to the trailer, which must be of the closed

box type, at least as wide and high as the towing vehicle. Failure to meet any of these requirements will involve cancellation of test and forfeiture of the fee, which, when we went to press, was £89 on weekdays, rising to £107 for evenings and weekends.

While The Caravan Club Practical Caravanning Courses train you in coupling and uncoupling of the trailer and the techniques for manoeuvring your caravan, specific tuition is required to pass the test, and the trainers who specialise in this may be able to loan a suitable outfit for the purpose. The Club maintains a list of companies around the country that offer B+E training. If you would like a copy, and further information about the Club's courses, please visit the Club's website – caravanclub.co.uk – and head for the 'Practical Advice' section, or call the Club Events Department on 01342 336808 to have a copy of this information posted to you.

Another useful number is the Driving Instructor's Association, 0845 345 5151, for the number of your nearest trailer test driving instructor, and see dsa.gov.uk for more on the vehicle safety questions and to book a test online.

“While The Caravan Club Practical Caravanning Courses train you in coupling and uncoupling of the trailer and the techniques for manoeuvring your caravan, specific tuition is required to pass the test”

WHAT CAN I TOW/DRIVE?

Q I passed my driving test in 2000 and am now intending to tow a caravan. However, I hear there are towing restrictions for those who passed after a certain date. If so, when were the changes implemented, what are my current driving/towing entitlements with my B licence and how will these be affected if I take the additional test?

A A person who passed their test on or after 1 January 1997 may drive:

a) Towed outfits – driver

restricted to a combined MAM (Maximum Authorised Mass) of 3500kg and the trailer MAM must not exceed the unladen (kerb) weight of the towing vehicle (85% ratio remains strongly recommended). If this MAM is to be exceeded, an E Test pass is required.

b) Rigid motor caravans without trailer – driver restricted to a MAM of 3500kg until obtaining a pass of the LGV (Light

Goods Vehicles) test, after which the driver is qualified to 7500kg MAM.

c) Rigid motor caravan towing trailer – provided the trailer does not exceed 750kg and the combined MAM does not exceed 4250kg, no further test is required for this type of outfit. However, if the trailer MAM exceeds 750kg then a) applies for a vehicle less than 3500kg. Otherwise an LGV test plus an E test is needed.

Jenny Norton, the Club's Information Officer, answers your questions

Please address your questions to:

JENNY NORTON
Information Department
The Caravan Club
East Grinstead House
East Grinstead
West Sussex RH19 1UA

...and quote your membership number