

DRIVING MOTORHOMES AND TRAILERS

The following information was extracted from the Directgov website @ www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing

DRIVING MOTORHOMES

Are you thinking of buying or hiring a motorhome (motor caravan) to get to your holiday destination? Or maybe you want to import one from another country. Before you decide you'll need to check the categories on your driving licence and the size of motorhome you are going to drive.

The Maximum Authorised Mass

The Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM), or Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW), of a vehicle is the total weight of a vehicle plus anything it can carry safely. The MAM can be found on a plate fixed to a vehicle and also in the paperwork supplied by the manufacturer of the vehicle or chassis.

Check your driving licence before you drive

You'll need to make sure your driving licence has the right vehicle category for you to drive a motorhome.

Category B

With this category on your driving licence you can drive vehicles with a maximum authorised mass (MAM) of up to 3500 kilograms, with eight passenger seats, and with a trailer no heavier than 750 kilograms.

It's also possible to tow a trailer heavier than 750 kilograms if the MAM of the vehicle and trailer together is no more than 3500 kilograms. The trailer must also be lighter than the vehicle towing it.

Category B+E

To tow a heavier trailer than mentioned above you'll need category B+E.

Category C1

With this category you can drive vehicles with a MAM over 3500 kilograms but less than 7500 kilograms with a trailer no heavier than 750 kilograms.

Category C1+E

To tow a heavier trailer than mentioned above you'll need category C1+E.

Category C

With this category you can drive vehicles with a MAM over 3500 kilograms with a trailer no heavier than 750 kilograms.

Category C+E

To tow a trailer that weighs more than 750 kilograms you'll need category C+E.

The size of the motorhome

A motorhome being registered in the UK cannot be more than 12 metres long and 2.55 metres wide, unless it has an Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) certificate. A vehicle with an IVA can have a maximum width of 2.6 metres. There is no height limit but if the motorhome is over 3 metres tall the height must be on a notice visible to you as the driver.

Measuring the size of a Motorhome

If there is a need for you to measure the vehicle there are some parts that you don't need included in your measurements.

When measuring the length don't include the:

- driving mirrors
- rearward projecting buffers made of rubber or other resilient material

When measuring the width don't include the:

- driving mirrors
- lamps
- reflectors
- distortion in tyres due to loading

TOWING TRAILERS

The licence you need to tow a caravan or trailer

The ability to tow a caravan or trailer will depend on the driving licence you hold. The category entitlement on your driving licence will determine the type of trailer you can tow.

Maximum authorised mass (MAM).

Car licences held before 1 January 1997

All drivers who passed a car test before 1 January 1997 retain their existing entitlement to tow trailers until their licence expires. This means they are generally entitled to drive a vehicle and trailer combination up to 8.25 tonnes MAM. They also have entitlement to drive a minibus with a trailer over 750kgs MAM.

Drivers who hold subcategory C1+E - limited to 8.25 tonnes MAM, may apply for provisional entitlement to the new subcategory C1+E, in order to take and pass the test which will increase their combined vehicle and trailer entitlement to 12 tonnes MAM. It is not necessary to gain subcategory C1 entitlement first but drivers have to meet higher medical standards, and pass both the category C theory test and the subcategory C1+E practical test.

Large goods vehicle and passenger carrying vehicle licences held before 1 January 1997

Since 1 January 1997 all drivers who hold category C or D entitlement have been limited to trailers up to 750kgs MAM; Category C+E or D+E must be held in order to tow trailers in excess of this.

Car driving licence first obtained since 1 January 1997

Drivers who passed a car test on or after 1 January 1997 are required to pass an additional driving test in order to gain entitlement to category B+E and all larger vehicles. In addition to the new driving tests, drivers of vehicles which fall within subcategories C1, C1+E, D1 and D1+E also have to meet higher medical standards.

Upgrading entitlement for trailers

In general, an additional driving test is required for each category or subcategory of entitlement. But there are certain exceptions to this where drivers have already passed one test which involves trailer entitlement for a larger or equivalent sized vehicle.

This means that passing a test for subcategory C1+E or D1+E upgrades category B entitlement to B+E. A test pass for subcategory C1+E upgrades subcategory D1, if held, to D1+E. But a test pass for subcategory D1+E does not upgrade subcategory C1 to C1+E because the trailer size required for a subcategory D1+E test is smaller than that required for a subcategory C1+E test.

Passing a test for category C+E upgrades category B entitlement to B+E and also confers entitlement to

subcategory C1 and C1+E and, if category D or subcategory D1 is held, these are upgraded to category D+E or subcategory D1+E. A test passed for category D+E upgrades category B and subcategory D1 to category B+E and subcategory D1+E respectively. But it does not upgrade category C or subcategory C1 entitlements because the trailer size required for a category D+E test is smaller than that required for a category C+E or subcategory C1+E test.

Provisional trailer entitlement

Since 1 January 1997 drivers are no longer able to sit a test in a heavy vehicle/trailer combination (eg category C+E or D+E) unless they have first passed a test and obtained a full licence in the corresponding rigid vehicle (eg category C or D).

This means that although drivers may have been driving a vehicle and trailer combination legitimately, under 'L' plates, they are not permitted to sit a trailer test using such a combination until a test has been passed in a rigid vehicle and a full licence obtained for that category.

This information above is not intended to be a definitive statement of law.

Towing trailers or caravans with vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes

Category B: Vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes MAM and with up to eight passenger seats

Category B vehicles may be coupled with a trailer up to 750kgs MAM (allowing a combined weight up to 4.25 tonnes MAM) or a trailer over 750kgs MAM provided the MAM of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle, and the combination does not exceed 3.5 tonnes MAM.

For example: A vehicle with an unladen weight of 1.25 tonnes and a MAM of 2 tonnes coupled with a trailer with a MAM of 1.25 tonnes could be driven by the holder of a category B entitlement. This is because the MAM of the combination does not exceed 3.5 tonnes and also the MAM of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the drawing vehicle. Whereas the same vehicle with an unladen weight of 1.25 tonnes and a MAM of 2 tonnes when coupled with a trailer with a MAM of 1.5 tonnes would fall within category B+E. This is because although the combined weight of the vehicle and trailer is within the 3.5 tonnes MAM limit, the MAM of the trailer is more than the unladen weight of the drawing vehicle.

Vehicle manufacturers normally recommend a maximum weight of trailer appropriate to their vehicle. Details can usually be found in the vehicle's handbook or obtained from car dealerships. The size of the trailer recommended for an average family car with an unladen weight of around 1 tonne would be well within the new category B threshold.

Towing caravans

As for towing caravans, existing general guidance recommends that the laden weight of the caravan does not exceed 85% of the unladen weight of the car. In the majority of cases, caravans and small trailers towed by cars should be within the new category B threshold.

An exemption from the driver licensing trailer limit allows a category B licence holder to tow a broken down vehicle from a position where it would otherwise cause danger or obstruction to other road users.

Category B+E: Vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes MAM towing trailers over 750kgs MAM

Category B+E allows vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes MAM to be combined with trailers in excess of 750kgs MAM. In order

to gain this entitlement new category B licence holders have to pass a further practical test for category B+E. There is no category B+E theory test. For driver licensing purposes there are no vehicle/trailer weight ratio limits for category B+E.

Towing trailers with medium sized vehicles between 3.5 and 7.5 tonnes

Subcategory C1: Medium sized goods vehicles 3.5 - 7.5 tonnes MAM

Subcategory C1 vehicles may be coupled with a trailer up to 750kgs MAM allowing a combination of up to 8.25 tonnes MAM. But unlike category B, the 750kgs MAM trailer weight limit is an absolute limit.

In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to meet higher medical standards and pass both theory and practical tests for subcategory C1.

Subcategory C1+E: Medium sized goods vehicles 3.5 - 7.5 tonnes MAM plus trailer over 750kgs MAM

Subcategory C1+E allows vehicles to be combined with a trailer over 750kgs MAM provided the combination does not exceed 12 tonnes MAM and the laden weight of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle.

In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to pass further tests - subcategory C1 (theory and practical) followed by C1+E practical. There is no subcategory C1+E theory test. It will not be possible to go directly from category B to subcategory C1+E.

Because EC regulations limit drivers aged under 21 years to driving vehicles or combinations which weigh no more than 7.5 tonnes MAM, drivers under the age of 21 are not allowed to drive subcategory C1+E vehicles up to 12 tonnes MAM. But 18 year old drivers are allowed to take a test for subcategory C1+E which will allow trailers in excess of 750kgs MAM to be towed. Entitlement is limited to a combination weight of 7.5 tonnes MAM until the driver reaches 21 years, at which time the balance of 12 tonnes MAM entitlement automatically becomes effective.

Towing a trailer with a passenger carrying vehicle

Subcategory D1: Passenger carrying vehicles 9 - 16 passenger seats

Subcategory D1 vehicles may be coupled with a trailer up to 750kgs MAM. There is no upper weight limit for subcategory D1 vehicles. In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to meet higher medical standards and pass both theory and practical tests for subcategory D1.

Subcategory D1+E: Passenger carrying vehicles 9-16 passenger seats with a trailer above 750kgs MAM

Subcategory D1+E vehicles may be combined with trailers over 750kgs provided the combination does not exceed 12 tonnes MAM and the laden weight of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle. The trailer must not be used for the carriage of passengers. In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to pass further tests - subcategory D1 (theory and practical) followed by D1+E practical. There is no subcategory D1+E theory test. It is not possible to go directly from category B to subcategory D1+E.

Category D: Passenger carrying vehicle with more than eight seats

Category D vehicles may be combined with a trailer up to 750kgs MAM. The directive does not impose an upper weight limit for category D vehicles and national limits apply. In order to gain this entitlement category B licence

holders have to pass theory and practical tests for category D. (It is not necessary to gain subcategory D1 entitlement first).

Category D+E: Passenger carrying vehicle with more than eight seats with trailer over 750kgs MAM

Category D+E vehicles may be combined with a trailer over 750kgs MAM. The directive does not impose an upper weight limit for category D+E and national limits apply. In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to pass further tests - category D (theory and practical) followed by D+E practical. There is no category D+E theory test. (It is not necessary to gain subcategory D1 or D1+E entitlement first).

Towing trailers with large goods vehicles above 3.5 tonnes

Category C: Large goods vehicles above 3.5 tonnes MAM

Category C vehicles may be combined with trailers up to 750kgs MAM. The directive does not impose an upper weight limit threshold for category C vehicles and the national limits will apply. In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to pass theory and practical tests for category C. (It is not necessary to gain subcategory C1 entitlement first.)

Category C+E: Large goods vehicles above 3.5 tonnes MAM towing trailer over 750kgs MAM

Category C+E vehicles may be combined with a trailer over 750kgs MAM. The directive does not impose an upper weight limit for category C+E and national limits apply. In order to gain this entitlement category B licence holders have to pass further tests - category C (theory and practical) followed by C+E practical. There is no category C+E theory test. (It is not necessary to gain subcategory C1 or C1+E entitlement first).

VEHICLE LICENSING

VOSA (Vehicle & Operators Services Agency)

Vehicle Category M1 - Passenger Vehicles

There are two levels of compliance to the IVA Approval process – M1 Basic and M1 Normal.

M1 Basic

The Basic IVA requirement, which is based around a visual inspection of the vehicle to assess its design and construction characteristics against the key EC technical areas. In most cases a visual inspection will be carried out and documentary evidence of compliance is not normally required, except for certain areas such as Gaseous Fuel tanks.

A vehicle subject to The Basic IVA Requirements is either:

- (a) a left hand drive vehicle
- (b) a personally imported vehicle
- (c) an amateur built vehicle
- (d) a vehicle manufactured in very low volume
- (e) a vehicle manufactured using parts of a registered vehicle
- (f) a rebuilt vehicle
- (g) a motor caravan as defined below**
- (h) an ambulance as defined
- (i) a hearse as defined in Annex
- (j) an armoured vehicle

M1 Normal

All other M1 vehicles are subject to The Normal IVA Requirements. This level of inspection requires documentary evidence to prove compliance with EC Directives for up to 12 key areas as listed in the Normal IVA General requirements section. Compliance with

alternative standards is acceptable where specified.

Definition of a Motor Caravan

A special purpose M1 category vehicle (vehicle having 8 or less passenger seats) which meets the "reasonableness test" and is constructed to include living accommodation which contains at least the following equipment.

- seats and table,
- sleeping accommodation which may be converted from the seats,
- cooking facilities, and
- storage facilities.

This equipment shall be rigidly fixed to the living compartment. The interpretation applied to this definition is as follows

Seats and a Table

- Are required to be an integral part of the living accommodation area, and mounted independently of other items.
- The table must be capable of being mounted directly to the vehicle floor and/or side wall.
- The table mounting arrangement must be secured as a permanent feature, (bolted, riveted, screwed or welded), although the table may be detachable.
- Permanently secured seating must be available for use at the table.
- The seats must be secured directly to the vehicle floor and/or side wall.
- The seats must be secured as a permanent feature, (bolted riveted, screwed or welded).

Sleeping Accommodation

- Must be an integral part of the living accommodation area.
- Either beds or a bed converted from seats (to form a mattress base)
- Secured as a permanent feature, with base structures bolted, riveted, screwed or welded to the vehicle floor and/or side wall, (unless the sleeping accommodation is provided as a provision over the driver's cab compartment.

Cooking Facilities

- That are an integral part of the vehicle living accommodation and is mounted independently of other items.
- That are secured to the vehicle floor and/or side wall.
- Secured as a permanent feature, (bolted, riveted, screwed, or welded).
- The cooking facility must consist of a minimum of a two ring cooking facility or a microwave in either case having a fuel/power source.
- If the cooking facility is fueled by gas having a remote fuel supply, the fuel supply pipe must be permanently secured to the vehicle structure.
- If the cooking facility is fueled by gas having a remote fuel supply, the fuel reservoir must be secured in a storage cupboard or the reservoir secured to the vehicle structure.

Storage Facilities

- Storage facilities must be provided by a cupboard or locker.
- The facility must be an integral part of the vehicle living accommodation, i.e. mounted independently of other items, unless incorporated below seat/sleeping accommodation or the cooking facility.
- The storage facility must be a permanent feature, (bolted, riveted, screwed or welded).
- The storage facility must be secured directly to the vehicle floor and/or side wall, unless a storage provision is provided over the driver's cab compartment.