



Driving Miss Daisy.....

By Ian Kingston

We often get asked questions about towing horse trailers and driving horseboxes. Questions such as 'Does my license allow me to tow?', 'How much can I tow?', 'Do I need to take another test?', 'Can I drive a horsebox with a car license?'

As with everything, there is no simple answer and the more you look into it the more complicated it gets. The rule, as always, is if you are in any doubt ASK. Contact the DVLA for licence entitlements and consult the vehicle manufacturer's handbook for safe maximum towing or loading weights. Be wary of taking advice from friends as the law may have changed since they passed their test.

In an attempt to answer most of your questions here is a basic overview of the law as it relates to trailers and horseboxes that can be used for transporting horses. I have therefore not covered categories A or D (A being motorcycles and D being Passenger Carrying Vehicles)

The quickest and easiest way to check if you are entitled to drive any vehicle is to check your driving license. The following table shows a basic outline of the details. The last 2 columns show the entitlement that should be on your license depending on when the test was passed.

Category	Description	Minimum Age	Test passed after 1.1.97	Test passed before 1.1.97
B	Car (Not exceeding 3500Kg)	17	YES	YES
B+E	As B plus trailer	17	NO*	YES
C1	Medium sized vehicle (3500Kg to 7500Kg)	18	NO*	YES
C1+E	As C1 but with trailer but a combined weight of not more than 12000Kg and the loaded weight of the trailer must not exceed the unloaded weight of the towing vehicle	21	NO*	YES**
C	Large Vehicle (Over 3500Kg)	21	NO*	NO*
C+E	As C plus trailer	21	NO*	NO*

*Unless additional test passed

** If you passed category B before 1.1.97 this is limited to a combined weight (Car and trailer) not exceeding 8250 Kg



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As you can see, everything changed as from 1st January 1997 when the law was tightened up requiring additional tests for trailers and larger vehicles. Stricter medical requirements for larger vehicles were also introduced.

The two pictures below show the huge difference the changes make. The practical test passed was pretty much the same but the top picture is a license passed after 1997 and bottom one was passed before. You can see the categories as listed in the table above. (The second picture shows category A, motorcycle. This requires an additional test and is not automatic for car tests taken before 1997.)

13.	9. Cat.	10. From	11. To	12. Codes
14.	B	08-05-02	09-01-54	
	B1	08-05-02	09-01-54	
	fkp	08-05-02	09-01-54	122

13.	9. Cat.	10. From	11. To	12. Codes
14.	A	15-08-97	26-11-34	
	B	21-05-86	26-11-34	
	BE	21-05-86	26-11-34	
	B1	15-08-97	26-11-34	
	C1	21-05-86	26-11-34	
	C1E	21-05-86	26-11-34	107
	D1	21-05-86	26-11-34	101
	D1E	21-05-86	26-11-34	101,119
	fklnp	21-05-86	26-11-34	
	115			

1. Surname
2. Other Names
3. Date and place of birth
4a. Licence valid from
4b. Licence valid to
4c. Issuing Authority
5. Licence number
9. Category
12. Information codes

NB: The licences above are for example only and regardless of the date you passed your test you should refer to your own license.

Looking specifically at issues relating to horses the easiest answer is for trailers....

If you passed your car test **after January 1st 1997** then **YES** you will need to take an additional test in order to tow a horse trailer. If you passed your car test before this date then **NO** you do not (Within the limit stated above).

Horseboxes are a little more complex as they come in many shapes and sizes....

If you passed your car test **after January 1st 1997** then **YES** you will need to take an additional test in order to drive a horsebox unless it falls within category B, not exceeding 3500Kg. This is the weight when fully loaded including your horses.

Whether or not you can drive a horsebox on a license issued before 1997 or which category of test you need to pass will depend on the weight of the horsebox, including its load. As a rule of thumb you can drive a vehicle up to 7500Kg.



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I always see horseboxes advertised as 'Non HGV'. This can be a little misleading. HGV as a category no longer exists but is still widely used to describe a 'lorry'. This is now the categories C1 & C with or without the '+E' for a trailer (Now referred to as LGV or Large® Goods Vehicle). What this statement means is that the vehicle MAM is below 7500Kg so can be driven with a full license issued before 1st January 1997.

MAM (Maximum Authorized Mass), also called Gross Weight or GVM (Gross Vehicle Weight), is the total weight of the vehicle and the MAXIMUM load it can carry.

You are always restricted by the MAM for your licence regardless of whether or not you ever reach it. What this means it that if your vehicle's unladen weight is 5000Kg and you carry a 750Kg horse then even though you are well below 7500Kg you are not allowed to drive the vehicle if the MAM is over 7500Kg.

There is a way round this with something called 'Down-Plating' where you can officially have the MAM of a vehicle lowered but that is another matter.... Just be careful, if you drive a vehicle that has been down-plated you may not be entitled to drive the identical vehicle if that one has not been down-plated!

There are, as always, the usual exceptions to the rule. Some lighter trailers, which will include most caravans, can be towed without passing a trailer test. This is based on the weight of the trailer and the towing vehicle. One thing you can pretty much guarantee though, is that if you want to tow a trailer carrying a horse you will need trailer entitlement as it will not fall into the exceptions.

We have stuck to horseboxes and horse trailers here but further details for all types of trailers can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/motoring.

Whatever you drive or tow you should not exceed the manufacturer's maximum safe load or towing weight and always follow their guidelines for safe loading. Although not law, it is recommended that you do not tow more than 85% of the unloaded weight of the towing vehicle. Also bear in mind that the maximums set by the manufacturer's are for stable secured loads which certainly does not include horses.

If you are entitled to tow or drive a trailer/horsebox without passing a further test we would certainly recommend that you take some professional lessons before doing so. Also, get plenty of driving practice before putting horses in it.

I hope this has helped and not just complicated things even more.

Good luck and safe driving.