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Parallel parking tips for drivers test

Parallel parking involves positioning a vehicle parallel to the road and between two parked cars, a task that often causes anxiety for many drivers. This skill requires practice to master, and expert advice and safety tips can be invaluable for those attempting it for the first time. This guide will provide you with parallel parking tips and a step-by-step approach to master this essential driving skill.

Here's a video we made that explains the steps on how to parallel park for beginners:Once you're done with the video above, make sure to try this interactive parallel parking simulator below before hitting the road: click #1 in the image. Many drivers go to great lengths to avoid having to parallel park.

While parallel parking is a little tricky and takes some practice to master, there is no reason to be nervous about this driving skill. Depending on where you live, you may be required to demonstrate your ability to do parallel parking during your driver license examination. Practice your skills before your road test or before you are required to parallel park on a busy roadway. Place two plastic cones or other objects approximately fifteen feet apart to simulate the standard size of this type of parking space. Use the following directions as a guide for practicing parallel parking for the first time.

Note: If you are practicing in a simulated parking space or an empty parking lot, assume that you are maneuvering around two other cars. Here are the easy steps to be successful at parallel parking.

Parallel Parking Steps

Follow these steps to proper parallel parking

- 1Start by aligning your car parallel to the vehicle parked in front of the open space, approximately two to three feet from the side.
- 2Before making any moves, ensure your rearview and side mirrors are properly adjusted. Then, check all mirrors and your blind spots for other vehicles, pedestrians, and obstacles. Ensure no traffic is coming from behind, and you're aware of your surroundings. Once you are certain that there are no other vehicles in your blind spot, shift your car into reverse.
- 3Put your car in reverse and start backing up slowly. Begin steering your wheel to the right.
- 4As your car moves into the empty parallel parking spot, slowly straighten your steering wheel as you continue to move backwards towards the parked car at the other end of the parking space. As you are maneuvering your vehicle, continuously check all mirrors and through your windows and front windshield to ensure you are not in danger of hitting either of the vehicles bordering the parallel parking space.
- 5Once the front of your vehicle has passed the back bumper of the vehicle in the parking spot in front of you, begin to turn your steering wheel to the left.
- 6Continuing to inch backwards in reverse and while beginning to straighten your steering wheel, look into your rear view mirror to see how close your vehicle is to the car in the parallel parking spot behind you.
- 7Once you have your vehicle straight and as close to the curb as possible, you may need to shift into forward to position your car so that there is an equal amount of space in front and behind your vehicle.
- 8Many parallel parking spaces are assigned a parking meter. This is particularly true in major metropolitan areas. Make sure that you remember to feed coins into your parking meter after you parallel park your car.
- 9To exit a parallel park, first put your car into reverse and back towards the car behind you. Back as close as you reasonably can without putting yourself in danger of hitting the other vehicle.
- qNext, turn your steering wheel to the left and shift your car into forward. Check for traffic in the lane you are about to enter. Making sure that you are not too close to the back bumper of the vehicle parked in front of you, slowly drive out of the parallel park.

The ability to perform parallel parking is an extremely useful driving skill. Being confident in your ability to parallel park with ease will save you from having to search for a regular parking space in which to place your vehicle. With a few tries, you should be able to get the feel of parallel parking and impress your driving instructor.

Additional Tips

Parallel Parking with Cones: If you're learning how to parallel park, practicing with cones can be a great start. Set up cones to represent the dimensions of a typical parking space and practice maneuvering between them.

Dimensions and Distance: Understanding the typical dimensions of parallel parking spaces and maintaining a proper distance from other cars is crucial. Most spaces will be about 20 feet long. Parallel Parking Tips for Driver's Test: If you're preparing for a driving test, practice parallel parking as it's often included in the test. Remember to use your mirrors and signal appropriately.

Practicing Parallel Parking: Look for quiet streets or empty parking lots to practice. This will help you get a feel for the size of your car and the space needed to park comfortably.

Teaching Parallel Parking: If you're instructing someone, start with the basics of positioning and steering. Gradually introduce them to busier environments.

FAQ

What is the first thing you must do when parallel parking? The first step is to position your car parallel to the car parked in front of the empty space, maintaining a 2-3 feet distance.

How to set up cones for parallel parking practice? Place cones to mimic the dimensions of a standard parking space, about 20 feet in length, and practice maneuvering between them.

Where can I practice parallel parking? Practice in a quiet street or an empty parking lot to start with, then gradually move to busier areas.

Conclusion

Parallel parking may seem challenging at first, but with practice, it becomes a straightforward task. Remember these tips and steps, and you'll find yourself parallel parking with ease, whether it's for your daily commute, a driver's test, or teaching a new driver.

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Objectives: You should be able to identify a safe and legal place to carry out the parallel park. You should be able to park close to and parallel with the kerb by reversing into a space of between one and a half and twice the length of the training vehicle. The manoeuvre should be completed under control, with due regard for the safety of other road users.

Try to avoid blocking driveways, parking too close to a junction or on double yellow lines. There's more, so check the Highway Code.

Initial approach

Apply the MSPSL routine. Remember, if there is a car behind you, slow down gradually so you don't surprise them.

Start position

You should be roughly an open car door away from the parked car and your boot should look level with their boot.

The routine, using focal points

There are many techniques, but this one works well: left, right, right, left - full turns only. Your instructor may change the method slightly to suit their vehicle. Turn left when both car boots are in line or level with your car. Turn right when you see a 45 degree angle in your door mirror, like a slice of pizza. Looking ahead, you should look out for the front of your car bonnet pointing in the 2 o'clock position.

Reverse back for a short time, until the kerb disappears in your left door mirror. Now turn right again.

The front end of the car will begin to swing in. Once it looks parallel, or directly behind the car in front of you, then straighten the wheels (i.e. turn left) to finish. Your instructor may adjust the focal points slightly, depending on the car you are learning in.

Observations

Before you start the manoeuvre, do a 360 observation. When reversing backwards, look over the left shoulder and mainly glance ahead for updates and approaching cars. Remember to look over your right shoulder at least twice; more if necessary. A good time to check your right shoulder is on both occasions when you turn the steering wheel to the right.

Priorities

Remember, you do not have priority. If a vehicle is approaching, you may need to acknowledge it's their priority by stopping so they then feel it's safe to pass you. Always stop for pedestrians walking near or around your car, and only proceed when they have cleared the area.

Tips

No waving: Avoid waving other cars on or pedestrians to cross the road. Although you think it might be helping them, it could be misleading, as someone else may not have seen you waving and an accident could happen. Also, the examiner could mark it as a serious or minor fault, depending on the effect it has on others.

Try stopping before you turn: It will help at the beginning to stop and identify every time you should turn the wheel. If you are accurate, the the routine will work virtually every time.

Don't go up the kerb: Take a shunt if you think you're going to bump the kerb. A shunt is when you put the car into 1st gear and move forwards, to give you space to reverse backwards again and correct your position. Always look all around you before you move forwards and try to avoid going all the way back to the start position. It is OK to take a shunt on your driving test.

Still struggling? Watch our instructor Rob give a demonstration

Rob goes through his technique and guide on how to perfect the parallel park on your driving test.

Step By Step Guide to Parallel Park

On your driving test, the DVSA driving examiner will get you to stop behind a parked car and then say the following: 'I would like you to drive up and next to the car in front. I would then like you to perform the parallel park manoeuvre, reversing in behind the parked car, finishing reasonably close to the kerb. Try to finish within 2 car lengths of the car in front.'

What to do: Prepare the car and then look all around you, starting from the left shoulder and finishing over the right shoulder. In total, you should complete 6 checks, also known as the 360 degree observation. You should only pull out if nobody is coming up and down the road. Once you have moved out, just check your interior mirror early before pulling up next to the parked car. If there is someone behind you, then apply a signal and stop gently and smoothly next to the parked car. If there is nobody around, no signal is required.

Use the handbrake if necessary (if on a hill), put the gear lever into reverse and then cancel your signal if it is on. Your reverse light is on now, so vehicles behind should understand you are about to reverse. Prepare the car again, with your clutch at the biting point so you don't roll in the wrong direction when you release the handbrake. Also consider if you have your clutch too high, as you may go flying back too fast.

Assuming you have prepared the car, look all around you, starting from right to left. If safe, release the handbrake.

The moment the car moves back, turn the steering wheel one full turn left (when the boot of your car is in line or just after you have passed the back end of their car). Avoid dry steering too. If you need to slow down slightly, just dip the clutch. Keep looking over your left shoulder.

Glance in your left door mirror but don't stare. When you see an angle that looks like a slice of pizza, then you need to glance over your right shoulder quickly and turn the steering wheel one full turn right. If you need to stop to look briefly, this is not a problem. Observations are imperative. In fact, the examiners would prefer full observations and a not-so-pretty manoeuvre compared to a perfect parallel park and poor observations.

Keep reversing back slowly, looking all around you, especially over your left shoulder. Imagine there is a school right near you and the kids have just finished school - it's like an ant's nest at times. Even if it's quiet, you need to observe as if that school has just finished.

Shortly, you will need to turn one full turn to the right again. The best time to turn right is when you see the kerb just drop underneath the front part of your door handle. It will vary slightly depending on the type of car you are driving, but this will work 9 times out of 10 on most hatchback vehicles. You must turn the wheel quickly in order for this technique to work, but be careful of oversteering and try to avoid dry steering.

The car should begin to swing into the space. Keep the vehicle speed very slow and stop if there are any vehicles approaching still, as it isn't your priority. You will need to keep looking in all directions so you don't miss anything.

Once the vehicle looks parallel with the kerb, you will need to quickly straighten your wheels to the left. You may want to reverse back slightly more, just to make sure the vehicle continues in a straight line parallel with the kerb.

Keep looking behind you when you are reversing. In real life, there could be another car behind you or pedestrians walking behind or around your car.

How do I Parallel Park?

was last modified: April 12th, 2024 by drive

Johnsons Only pay for the cover you need until you've passed your test. Get learner driver insurance so you can practice outside of your lessons. Despite being one of the most dreaded driving maneuvers, parallel parking can be surprisingly easy - when you know how it works. There is no denying that parallel parking is harder than both angle parking and perpendicular parking, though like all things, it can be mastered with practice. Don't be one of those drivers who would sooner waste an hour searching for a space than attempt to parallel park. Use the guidance outlined here and you can be a parallel parking pro!

Most state driving handbooks do not explain parallel parking in detail, so we have broken down the maneuver into an easy-to-follow, step-by-step guide. Parallel parking step-by-step

Keep in mind that the instructions provided here are generally applicable. You may need to adjust reference points based on the size of your vehicle, how it handles and the specific parallel parking situation. ALWAYS practice parallel parking in an empty parking lot before attempting it on the road between real vehicles. Cones or flags can be set up 25 feet apart to show where other cars would sit. When you can parallel park in an empty lot without hitting these markers, you are ready to try it for real.

- 1Look for an appropriate space. Make sure you choose a space that your vehicle can fit in. Keep in mind that you will need extra maneuvering room when first attempting to parallel park. Check that there are no "NO PARKING" signs which would make parking in your chosen spot illegal.
- 2Signal your intention to turn. Use your right signal light or a right-turn hand signal to tell other drivers you have claimed this parking space.
- 3Stop when your car is lined-up with the vehicle beyond your space. Your driving handbook may recommend leaving two feet of space, though this is usually too large a gap when parking on the right. Try to stop as close to the other vehicle as possible.
- 4Shift your car into "reverse" and look for traffic. When checking for traffic you must use your mirrors AND turn your head to check the vehicle's blind spots. Leave your signal light on to let other drivers know not to pull up close behind you. It may sometimes be necessary to wave a motorist past if they do not realize you intend to turn.
- 5Reverse cautiously. Only begin to back up once you are certain it is safe to do so.
- 6Steer sharply to the right when your rear wheels clear the rear bumper of the adjacent vehicle. Turn the steering wheel completely to the right and hold it in that position while continuing to reverse.
- 7Continue until your motorist is at a 45-degree angle in relation to the curb. You should be in the correct position when your front wheels are lined up with the rear of the vehicle in front. The right side-view mirror can also be used as a reference point, when it is in-line with the bumper of the vehicle in front. In extremely tight parking spots, drivers can check their position with the headlights of the vehicle behind. You should be roughly at the right angle when you can see both headlights in your left side-view mirror. Note that this will not work if the vehicle behind you is too far away.
- 8Straighten your wheels and reverse in a straight line. Stop when your right side-view mirror is in line with the left corner of the car in front.
- 9Steer sharply to the left. Continue reversing into the parking space but stop before you collide with the vehicle behind you.
- 10Shift the car into "drive", straighten up and pull forward. Center the vehicle in the parking space. Make sure you do not hit the curb and that no part of your vehicle is sticking out into the traffic lane. Try to leave an equal amount of space between your vehicle and the vehicles to the front and rear. You are bound to feel pretty excited having successfully parallel parked for the first time!

If you are leaving your vehicle, be sure not to neglect proper protocol. Make sure the parking brake is active and exit the vehicle with care. Parallel parking tips

Our parallel parking tips can help you get to grips with parallel parking in the shortest possible time, while ensuring the experience stress-free. Start at the beginning. Do not attempt to learn parallel parking until you are comfortable with car reference points, backing up in general, angle parking and 90-degree parking. Without these skills, you will be in over your head. Take your time. You may feel rushed when parallel parking next to real cars for the first time, but it is important to take things slowly. Moving slowly will let you utilize your reference points more effectively and stop without damaging other vehicles, if you maneuver incorrectly. Ask for help, if you need it. If you know a licensed driver who is confident with parallel parking, ask them to accompany you while you are learning. Practice regularly. This is the best advice you will receive. You will learn much faster attempting to parallel park than reading guides and watching videos. You will make mistakes - but this is all part of the process! Each time you go wrong will take you one step closer to doing it right. How to pull out from parallel parking

Thankfully, pulling out of a parallel parking spot is much easier than getting in to start with. Though, it can still be a challenge. Follow these guidelines to drive out of a parallel parking spot.

- 1Make sure your wheels are straight. Slowly reverse toward the vehicle behind you while looking in your mirrors and over your right shoulder. Take care not to back up too far.
- 2Turn your head and use your mirrors to check all around the vehicle for approaching motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.
- 3Signal your intention to move into the traffic lane, using your rear-view mirror to keep an eye out for hazards.
- 4Turn your head to look over your left shoulder, steer left and begin to drive forward when it is safe. Look toward the front of your vehicle to make sure you can clear the car ahead of you.
- 5Check again for hazards by turning to look over your left shoulder. Drive forward and align yourself in the traffic lane when it is safe. Find out with our free quiz!

TAKE A FREE TEST

Click a star to add your vote

4.6 out of 5 stars based on 11 votes. Only pay for the cover you need until you've passed your test. Get learner driver insurance so you can practice outside of your lessons. The parallel parking or reverse parking manoeuvre as it's also known has a reputation for being one of the most difficult test manoeuvres and as a result, fails a great many driving tests. It's important to use a structured technique and to practice this technique until a level of proficiency is reached so that each and every parallel park is accomplished successfully. It doesn't have to be completed in one complete manoeuvre however as many think. It is acceptable to move forward and make adjustments during the manoeuvre, providing this is done safely with constant all-round observation. A structured technique is applied by use of reference points. There are several techniques that can be used for the parallel park, which ever technique used, using reference points aids learner drivers accomplish this manoeuvre. These reference points are to be used alongside the main parallel parking / reverse parking tutorial which provides a complete in-depth guide on how to parallel park. Once you have studied this page along with the tutorial page, take the parallel parking quiz to test your knowledge. Using the reference points

Many reference points taught whilst learning to drive can be vehicle specific, essentially using a particular point on the car to line up with the road or pavement. As a result, reference point markers may need to be altered slightly depending on your vehicle.

Parallel parking reference point A

Parallel parking reference point A

Pulling alongside the car you wish to park behind, try and keep around 1 metre distance from door to door. Drive past the car you intend on parking behind slightly. Reference point A shows the front of this car lined up with the centre of your passenger side front window. This reference point doesn't have to be exact, although it provides a guide on where to stop. Parallel parking reference point B

Parallel parking reference point B

As you begin to reverse back, reference point B will line the back of the cars up. There are a few ways to establish this. If the cars are the same length and facing the same direction, you may line the door mirrors up. Alternatively, the front (or back depending on which direction the car is facing) up with the centre of the rear left window. This must be completely the end of the vehicle lined up, such as their bumper. Sit up straight as you can as is may be a little difficult to see the end of their car. With plenty of practice, you will estimate this accurately.

Parallel parking reference point C

Parallel parking reference point C

Reversing now, you will turn the wheel one complete turn to the left. Keep this part of the manoeuvre extremely slow as it's important not to over-shoot this reference point. As you reverse, you will see a triangle form in the left door mirror between the kerb and the side of your car as can be seen in the 'A' part of the diagram. As you reverse, the triangle will get smaller. Keep reversing until the triangle nearly disappears. When you can only see a tiny triangle such as in the 'B' part of the diagram, stop the car. Parallel parking reference point D

Parallel parking reference point D

At this point now, the rear wheel will be very close to the kerb so you just want the front of the car to swing round to the left parallel to the kerb. Steer full right lock just as you begin moving slowly backwards. Steer immediately and as quickly as possible as you may risk the rear wheel hitting the kerb. The final reference point is to use the left door mirror and wait for the kerb and the side of the car to become parallel with each other as shown in the diagram. Just as you see they are nearly parallel, steer one turn to the left to straighten the wheels and stop the car.

Parallel / reverse parking tips

Along with using reference points for the parallel parking manoeuvre, here are some key tips to help you succeed. Keep the car extremely slow

Constantly check reference points. If you miss a reference point or over-shoot one, drive forward again if necessary to re-establish the reference point. Constantly look all around for approaching vehicles or pedestrians and stop if necessary. If this isn't done you will fail the manoeuvre and the entire driving test. If the manoeuvre did not finish correctly or you hit the kerb, ask if you can try again

Guides and tutorials related to parallel parking