

Motorways

Many other Rules apply to motorway driving, either wholly or in part: Rules 45, 57, 83-126, 130-134, 139, 144, 146-151, 160, 161, 219, 221-222, 225, 226-237, 274-278, 280 and 281-290.

General

253

Prohibited vehicles. Motorways **MUST NOT** be used by pedestrians, holders of provisional motorcycle or car licences, riders of motorcycles under 50cc, cyclists, horse riders, certain slow-moving vehicles and those carrying oversized loads (except by special permission), agricultural vehicles, and powered wheelchairs/powering mobility scooters (see Rules 34–46 incl.).

Laws RO Art 16 & sch 1 & MTR reg 2

254

Traffic on motorways usually travels faster than on other roads, so you have less time to react. It is especially important to use your mirrors earlier and look much further ahead than you would on other roads.

Motorway signals

255

Motorway signals (see page 102) are used to warn you of a danger ahead. For example, there may be an incident, fog, a spillage, or road workers on the carriageway which you may not immediately be able to see.

256

Signals situated on the central reservation apply to all lanes. On very busy stretches, signals may be overhead with a separate signal for each lane.

257

Amber flashing lights. These warn of a hazard ahead. The signal may show a temporary maximum speed limit, lanes that are closed or a message such as 'Fog'. Adjust your speed and look out for the danger until you pass a signal which is not flashing or one that gives the 'All clear' and you are sure it is safe to increase your speed.

258

Red flashing lights. If red lights on the overhead signals flash above your lane and a red 'X' is showing, you **MUST NOT** go beyond the signal in that lane. If red lights flash on a signal in the central reservation or at the side of the road, you **MUST NOT** go beyond the signal in any lane.

Laws RTO 1995 Art 50 & TSR regs 8 & 33(3)

Driving on the motorway

259

Joining the motorway. When you join the motorway you will normally approach it from a road on the left (a slip-road) or from an adjoining motorway. You should

- give priority to traffic already on the motorway
- check the traffic on the motorway and match your speed to fit safely into the traffic flow in the left-hand lane
- not cross solid white lines that separate lanes or use the hard shoulder
- stay on the slip-road if it continues as an extra lane on the motorway
- remain in the left-hand lane long enough to adjust to the speed of traffic before considering overtaking.

On the motorway

260

When you can see well ahead and the road conditions are good, you should

- drive at a steady cruising speed which you and your vehicle can handle safely and is within the speed limit (see table on page 40)
- keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front and increase the gap on wet or icy roads, or in fog (see Rules 126 and 235).

261

You **MUST NOT** exceed 70 mph (112 km/h), or the maximum speed limit permitted for your vehicle (see page 40). If a lower speed limit is in force, either permanently or temporarily, at roadworks for example, you **MUST NOT** exceed the lower limit. On some motorways, mandatory motorway signals (which display the speed within a red ring) are used to vary the speed limit to improve traffic flow. You **MUST NOT** exceed this speed limit.

Laws RO Art 20, RTRO Art 39 & MV(SL)R

262

The monotony of driving on a motorway can make you feel sleepy. To minimise the risk, follow the advice in Rule 91.

263

You **MUST NOT** reverse, cross the central reservation, or drive against the traffic flow. If you have missed your exit, or have taken the wrong route, carry on to the next exit.

Law MTR regs 4, 7 & 10

Lane discipline

264

You should always drive in the left-hand lane when the road ahead is clear. If you are overtaking a number of slower moving vehicles, you should return to the left-hand lane as soon as you are safely past. Slow-moving or speed-restricted vehicles should always remain in the left-hand lane of the carriageway unless overtaking. You **MUST NOT** drive on the hard shoulder except in an emergency or if directed to do so by the police or signs.

Law MTR regs 3 & 8

265

The right-hand lane of a motorway with three or more lanes should not be used if you are driving

- any vehicle drawing a trailer
- a goods vehicle with a maximum laden weight exceeding 3.5 tonnes but not exceeding 7.5 tonnes, which is required to be fitted with a speed limiter
- a goods vehicle with a maximum laden weight exceeding 7.5 tonnes

- a passenger vehicle with a maximum laden weight exceeding 7.5 tonnes constructed or adapted to carry more than eight seated passengers in addition to the driver
- a passenger vehicle with a maximum laden weight not exceeding 7.5 tonnes which is constructed or adapted to carry more than eight seated passengers in addition to the driver, which is required to be fitted with a speed limiter.

266

Approaching a junction. Look well ahead for signals or signs. Direction signs may be placed over the road. If you need to change lanes, do so in good time. At some junctions a lane may lead directly off the motorway. Only get in that lane if you wish to go in the direction indicated on the overhead signs.

Overtaking

267

Do not overtake unless you are sure it is safe and legal to do so. Overtake only on the right. You should

- check your mirrors
- take time to judge the speeds correctly
- make sure the lane you will be joining is sufficiently clear ahead and behind
- take a quick sideways glance into the blind spot area to verify the position of a vehicle that may have disappeared from your view in the mirror
- remember that traffic may be coming up behind you very quickly. Check all mirrors carefully. Look out for motorcyclists. When it is safe to do so, signal in plenty of time, then move out
- ensure you do not cut in on the vehicle you have overtaken
- be especially careful at night and in poor visibility when it is harder to judge speed and distance.

268

Do not overtake on the left or move to a lane on your left to overtake. In congested conditions, where adjacent lanes of traffic are moving at similar speeds, traffic in left-hand lanes may sometimes be moving faster than traffic to the right. In these conditions you may keep up with the traffic in your lane even if this means passing traffic in the lane to your right. Do not weave in and out of lanes to overtake.

269

Hard shoulder. You **MUST NOT** use the hard shoulder for overtaking. In areas where an Active Traffic Management (ATM) scheme is in force, the hard shoulder may be used as a running lane. You will know when you can use this because a speed limit sign will be shown above all open lanes, including the hard shoulder. A red cross or blank sign above the hard shoulder means that you **MUST NOT** drive on the hard shoulder except in an emergency or breakdown. Emergency refuge areas have also been built into these areas for use in cases of emergency or breakdown.

Hard shoulder bus lanes. On some stretches of motorway, hard shoulders are used as bus lanes during specified times of the day. The operation of these bus lanes is controlled using variable message signing. In the event of an emergency or incident the bus lane reverts to being a hard shoulder. You **MUST NOT** use the bus lane for any purpose other than an emergency or breakdown.

Law MTR regs 3 & 8



Rule 269
Overhead gantry showing red cross over hard shoulder

Stopping

270

You **MUST NOT** stop on the carriageway, hard shoulder, slip road, central reservation or verge except in an emergency, or when told to do so by the police, an emergency sign or by flashing red light signals. Do not stop on the hard shoulder to either make or receive mobile phone calls.

Law MTR regs 5, 8 & 10

271

You **MUST NOT** pick up or set down anyone, or walk on a motorway, except in an emergency.

Laws RO Art 20 & MTR reg 13

Leaving the motorway

272

Unless signs indicate that a lane leads directly off the motorway, you will normally leave the motorway by a slip-road on your left. You should

- watch out for the signs letting you know you are getting near your exit
- move into the left-hand lane well before reaching your exit
- signal left in good time and reduce your speed on the slip road as necessary.

273

On leaving the motorway or using a link road between motorways, your speed may be higher than you realise – 50 mph (80 km/h) may feel like 30 mph (48 km/h). Check your speedometer and adjust your speed accordingly. Some slip roads and link roads have sharp bends, so you will need to slow down.



What signals would you expect from this person?

Turn to rule 105 and see page 105