The USE & ABUSE of DUAL CONTROLS in Driving Training Vehicles

The definitive treatise on safer driver training
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Most driving instructors take it for granted that their cars must be fitted with dual controls and the parents of new learners also assume that their offspring need the safety of dual controls for all their professional driving lessons. Motor Insurance companies do not like insuring ADI cars unless they are fitted and now finally, in the spring of 2011 legislation is being sought to allow suitable Learner drivers to take training on Motorways; but only with an ADI and in a dual controlled vehicle.

Dual controls are now required as a legal safety fitting in many countries whenever learners are behind the wheel and British He-Man dual controls are fitted to right hand driver training vehicles around the world.

Naturally parents and pupils realise the enormous benefit in using driving school cars for taking their test. Statistically the Driving Standards Agency (DSA), which is responsible for all driving tests in the UK, maintains that the proportion of cars on test fitted with dual controls has always been over 94% in some years they have claimed as many as 98% of tests were taken in dual-controlled driving school cars.

This unqualified, but relatively unsubstantiated statistic is the reason given by successive Departments for Transport Ministers against the compulsory fitting of dual controls to vehicles used on driving tests. Yet the UK is one of very few countries in the European Community where dual controls are not compulsory. This is in spite of the fact that most British driving instructors regularly ask for them and the Trades Unions representing Driving Examiners continue to ask for them too.
It is certainly true that examiners are often required to take avoiding action much earlier in cars not fitted with dual controls, where they can only use their voice to keep the car and the situation safe. Whatever the reason there is a definite impression given to all professional driving instructors that there is a marked difference between the way driving tests are conducted when dual controls are not fitted! If this is so, there are grounds to argue that the true competency of candidates who take their tests in cars not fitted with dual controls cannot be fully tested.

Historically, as confirmed in the original driving examiners’ training Manual (DT.1.) which was the one I studied when I was allowed to observe an Examiners’ Training Course in 1976, they are only allowed to interfere with the vehicle and driver on test, in order to safeguard ‘life and limb’. One statistic which has remained constant throughout the past seventy-six years of driver testing is that driving examiners take action in ten percent of all driving test failures. Two-thirds of these actions are ‘voice’ only; however, and in one-third, (that is, on well over 25,000 occasions every year), physical action is taken to avoid danger to other road users. In view of the general lowering of the pass-rate (currently well below 40%) the number of “tests stopped or abandoned” is increasing.

If half of these examiners’ actions involve taking control of the steering wheel, it means that more than twelve thousand driving tests annually may involve the driving examiner being forced to use the steering wheel to avoid the risk of driving into a crash. In the other half we can assume that the examiner needs to use the dual foot-brake to prevent the car emerging into a dangerous road or traffic situation. It beggars belief that with such numbers involved, examiners cannot rely on dual controls being fitted to all vans and cars on test.

However, each case where the examiner takes action is a terrible indictment of the skills (or otherwise) of a relatively few ADIs. My own view,

REMEMBER

It is worth remembering that Driving Examiners only ever see test candidates who are capable of reaching a reasonable standard, even though more than half are not competent enough to pass the test. However when brand-new drivers first take the wheel no one can ever be sure how they will react to the presence of other road users around them. Although professional driving instructors will argue that they rarely need to use the dual controls once pupils have reached minimum stages of competency, no one can predict when the supervising driver may have to take over in an emergency situation. Dual Controls are essential but a thorough understanding of how and when to use them is vital and can be life-saving.
based on remembering only two occasions in 20 years as a one-car operator, is that the examiner only ever took control in the most unusual of circumstances. Whenever I talk to driving examiners these days, they are as shocked as I am, at the poor standards of driving competence that some ADIs accept as “worth having a try”. And for those candidates who often express a desire to take a first test for “experience” perhaps they should be asked “who bears the brunt of this experience?”.

Something that is often overlooked by instructors is that once the examiner has taken any evasive action, the driving test must usually be concluded at that point as a fail (ETA) Examiners take Action. And the test could or should be abandoned. Because the examiner is not able to act as a supervising driver, the car is not normally covered by insurance from that point on. Your car insurance may spell out “for instructional purposes and for the purposes of a driving test by a DSA Examiner”. If the test is abandoned, who insures the car whilst the candidate continues to drive, whilst legally unsupervised? Naturally of course, the examiner will not be covered by your insurance to drive your car back to the test centre. A response sometimes given by the DSA against this hypothesis is that examiners do not necessarily complete the marking form until the test ends outside the test centre. But this has never been tested in a court case.

However, some ADIs, those who allow their incompetent pupils to take tests are sometimes upset when examiners allow a crash or scrape to occur they blame the examiner for short-falls in their ability to identify the crucial differences between competence and lucky. Each examiner takes action about twice a week or more.

This is a terrible demonstration of the poor standards of driving of a sizeable proportion of people taking driving tests. In view of the fact that the Department for Transport has consistently refused for dual controls to be compulsorily fitted to all cars used for driving tests, then some other punitive action is required. Perhaps those ADIs whose pupils consistently create (ETA) situations during the test should be subjected to more stringent check testing.

Currently the DSA is (again) investigating changes to the ways in which ADIs are recruited, trained and tested, and the standards by which they are graded. This may well depend in the future on the percentage of their test candidates on whom the driving examiner needs to take action. Every driving examiner I have spoken to in the past ten years has admitted that

Each of these 25,000 separate occasions every year, emphasises the need for dual controls to be fitted to all vehicles whenever learner drivers are behind the wheel.
they each have their own personal list of instructors, driving schools and cars, which they know are more likely to bring well below-standard pupils for test. However, the reaction of check testing these below-standard instructors is looking at the problem from the wrong direction.

Any instructor may occasionally bring a pupil on test who suffers from nerves to such an extent they cannot cope. This may happen say once or twice a year however, where instructors consistently bring candidates who need action taken, perhaps some drastic or punitive action is required for those instructors or their driving schools who are regularly guilty of lack of professionalism. I recently carried out a survey amongst forty three ADIs, a mixed bunch of relatively experienced ADIs, all fully qualified but some were franchised using employers cars but more than two-thirds were in their own cars.

Fourteen of the ADIs agreed that on average they used dual controls more than twenty times on their pupils in a 30 hour lesson week. Of those 14 eight agreed that it could be more like fifty times a week (almost ten times a day). Of the remaining ADIs fifteen of them said they used the dual controls less than six times a week fewer than once per day on average. The remaining fourteen about an equal third were agreed that it was not a reliable or valid statistic because it varied according to how long their clients had been taking lessons. However 36 from the total all agreed that pupils who needed to be dual-controlled more than once in any lesson, should be held back in their training going back over lessons which they thought they were capable of doing competently, and yet obviously were not as competent as they thought.

I have not taken this statistical exercise any further because I am aware that quite a lot of ADIs would welcome the opportunity to carry out such an exercise as part of their own C.P.D. or even as part of a degree project.

Most experienced instructors are quite sparing in their use of dual controls. Once they have assessed their pupils’ capabilities and understood their potential patterns of good or bad behaviour, it is much easier to know when their limits are likely to be reached. Most good instructors realise that each time they take over control of the car, it has a negative effect on the pupil’s learning progress. Conversely each time a pupil correctly performs a new skill without any physical aid, the reinforcement factor is very positive indeed. Worse still, however, are the occasions when the pupil is totally unaware that the instructor has made a life-saving action and the instructor fails to inform the pupil.
There are two very serious examples of ‘Misuse’ as shown in the title of this book.

- **Misuse by a novice instructor who likes to play God (what else would you call it?)** by over-ruling the driver needlessly just to show off and ...

- **The more experienced ADI who takes over control but, nevertheless still allows the learner to believe that they were still in charge, and capable of something that they cannot, in fact, carry out safely and competently.**

It is a fact of life that learning to drive and taking driving tests would be much less hazardous, to learner drivers, all other road users, driving instructors and examiners and to the general public, if dual controls were regarded as standard fitting to all learner driver training vehicles, whether used by ADIs or parents.

Given the horrendous cost of insurance premiums charged by vehicle insurance companies, against learner and new drivers, the cost of dual controls can be regarded as an economical benefit in their own right. I wonder how many private cars need to be cosmetically or mechanically repaired privately, because their owners prefer not to tell their insurers about the crunches involved? Just to avoid losing no claim bonuses.

The numbers of ADIs (and PDIs in training) who have never been trained correctly in the use of dual controls is probably greater now than it was when the first edition was published in 2001.

There are more than 30,000 new ADIs who have qualified since the first edition of this book was published. There are more than 3,000 new driving instructors, who qualify every year, and possibly another 20,000 more who will fail to pass the final examinations. Even then these ‘failed’ instructors will have been teaching new learner drivers and, in very many cases, this is done without any previous training in the proper use of dual controls. ‘Trial and (T)error’ would appear to be their favoured method.

Times of recession always lead to increased recruitment to the Instructor Training Industry. In many cases these newly qualified ADIs, unable to earn a living teaching learner drivers, join the ever growing number of those who are taken on to train even more of their newer fellow PDIs. The pass-rate of trainee instructors taking their third exam is so abysmally low that even the DSA is now apparently wanting to change the recruitment rules.

The methods of recruitment, selection and training used by some commercial trainers are totally reprehensible yet their argument is that if someone is willing to invest thousands of pounds for training why should they suggest giving up just because they will never have any chance of passing?
At the time of writing the first version of this book, we were then awaiting changes to ADI recruitment with bated breath. So, when we now say that the DSA is still promising action ten years later, we are just breathing normally. Certainly the experience of proper training in the use of dual controls by newly qualifying instructors is apparently very poor if given at all.

Imagine the scene: a very nervous brand new driver, who is totally petrified at the thought of driving in traffic is accompanied by an even newer trainee instructor in a strange car with an additional set of pedals in front of his seat. Almost certainly any use of the dual controls falls into two opposing categories: some instructors will forget or ignore them until it is too late or they will be used too soon which is not only confusing to the pupil, but possibly dangerous to everyone else on the road. But most of them seem to use the dual controls as if they were just an extension of their own driving. It appears to be far easier to assist a learner driver to move off on a hill, than it is to teach the skill by Explanation, Demonstration and Practice (EDP).

In some cases, hopefully not very often, the new instructor will play with the pedals during the initial lessons, taking great delight in ‘controlling’ the vehicle, if not the traffic situation, from the passenger seat. This does not last for very long, because any pupil so badly treated will want to find a new instructor very soon. And owners of following cars may well issue claims against the L driver’s insurers.

Before we can begin to discuss in detail, the use and abuse of dual controls in a driving school vehicle, it is worthwhile establishing a few fundamental facts, and identifying some considered opinions.

First of all there is an absolute need to establish two basic teaching principles:

“Dual controls are not an aid to teaching; they are a safeguard, only for use when learning needs are overcome by safety considerations”

“Instructors who make excessive use of dual controls, are obviously not suited to the job”

The above quote is an extract from one of the standard instructor training manuals I first produced in 1980 for the British School of Motoring who, at that time contributed to the greatest through-put of new instructors in the country. The demise of BSM from the instructor training industry has been predictable for the past twenty years as they changed ownership with almost indecent haste and regularity most recently being sold to the AA for a nominal one pound. This contrasts directly with the RAC who in the late 1990s, paid in excess of 60 million pounds for the same package. If nothing else is has shown how much money is invested and so often wasted in instructor training ventures.
It can be argued that a large proportion of those massive sums of money which have been paid for the various changes of ownership came from the very high prices paid by ‘wannabe’ driving instructors wasting thousands of pounds of redundancy pay-outs on a career development their trainers know they will never be able to follow.

Meanwhile, it may help to reinforce the need for proper training in the use of dual controls, if I can quote one simple example from many years of experience that has happened regularly to me, and undoubtedly to most other experienced instructors, when they have taken on a new client who had been learning with a different instructor.

The pupil gets in the new school car and claims that they are quite capable of moving off on a hill, or carrying out any of the other manoeuvring exercise, on their own. When asked to demonstrate this ability, they fail miserably and then complain:

“Oh! I can only do it if the instructor helps me with the clutch!”

Sometimes, however, this same message is hidden in the statement:

“Your car is so different; I never ever rolled back in Blank’s car”
Who is at fault for this? The answer must be the previous instructor who did not even try to teach this particular car control properly. You cannot say this to your new client however. Remember that if you criticise another instructor you are really defaming the whole industry. What you need to do is explain that you probably teach in a different way, but that you feel it is essential for them to learn how to control the foot controls so well that they will never require you or anyone else to help them feel the clutch biting point. And from then on you never will.

You might even dare to suggest that as an experienced ADI/Coach you use more modern methods of coaching whilst teaching, that some instructors haven’t yet caught up. As clutch control is a pivotal point (in many ways) when learning to drive you can also demonstrate whilst stationary from the passenger seat exactly how they should use their ankle, rather than the whole of their left leg, to enable the clutch pedal to reach and hold its various positions easily and safely. E.D.P. doesn’t always mean changing seats to demonstrate a skill.

As an example I always used to teach pupils how to identify the clutch movement up to the “holding or biting point” by recognising the different stages. These could be to explain that the length of clutch pedal rise can be imagined as ten stages from zero to four nothing happens, the car doesn’t move from five to ten, the car is moving so everything they have to learn takes places between stages 4.4 and 4.6 and it can be demonstrated like this:

**At 4.4 it is**
*Heard* – as the clutch begins to bite and the engine revs drop slightly more acceleration is needed at this point to hold the car steady on the clutch and accelerator, without moving forward or back.

**At 4.5 it becomes**
*Felt* – as the vibration from the engine is transmitted to the steering wheel, this is the point where you hold your feet absolutely still. As you move off, additional acceleration is usually needed to avoid the danger of stalling.

**Finally at 4.6 it is**
*Seen* – this is when you can see the rev counter begin to drop and the gear lever tries to move sideways. At this point the clutch is too far up and the pupil must move the left foot down just that tiny amount, (back to 4.4) where the car is now held safely at the biting point where the ‘clutch control’ is neither moving the car forward, nor allowing it to roll back. This is a skill which must be learned thoroughly it is this skill which gives the new driver total control over the precise moving off point.
Incidentally I always spent a minute or two at the beginning of each early stage lesson, confirming, recapping and reinforcing, this particular vehicle skill. When my pupils could demonstrate their absolute vehicle-control, my final comment was that I should never need to remind them again, nor ever help them with voice or foot.

“I won’t need to help you with the clutch ever again, WILL I?”

Regrettably in the first two or three lessons understanding this question sometimes only lasted until the end of the lesson. At the commencement of the next lesson you often need to go back to the previous period of prompted practice. Nevertheless you will have established a very firm teaching point.

Most new pupils can learn perfect clutch control in somewhere between one and three lessons. It rarely takes longer than four hours of on-road training. However, note the use of the two-word question at the end of the previous paragraph. The most effective way of teaching anything is to get the pupil to agree with you that which they next need to learn. Once you have gained their agreement, half of your teaching task is complete. Absolute clutch control is the cycling equivalent of riding without training wheels, or needing dad’s hand in your back.

Learning is clearly defined as a ‘change of behaviour’. Teaching is assistance with learning and where learning does not occur complete with understanding, the teaching is neither effective nor efficient. This message is reinforced by the logic that says learner drivers must be able to demonstrate their ability to move off safely and under full control forwards, long before they can learn how to do so in reverse. Possessing the skill to lurch off without sudden jerks is not quite the same as being able to manoeuvre the vehicle competently in a confined space and under total clutch control.
Notice how often the word “competently” occurs in this and all other good training manuals. However, before we get into the higher semantics of the sequences of training, it is more important to look at the overall part that dual controls play in learning to drive and how the use of dual controls should be explained to new drivers.

Dual controls need to be introduced to the pupil immediately after the main hand and foot controls. You explain their purpose and the conditions under which you may be required to use them. But you also explain that dual controls can only enable you to stop the car should an emergency situation arise. You will need to stress to them that you can only carry out actions which they have not done. Remind them too, there are two things that even dual controls cannot do.

These are that when the pupil stamps hard on either brake or the accelerator pedal you cannot over-ride them. You must teach, from the very outset, that should the pupil’s feet freeze hard on the pedals any of them you may be forced to act quickly with your voice only. What you say to them, on the very first lesson is

“If you brake or accelerate too hard at any time I shall say to you:”
“OFF FEET!”
“If ever I say this, please take both of your feet well away from all three pedals and I shall be able to regain control of the car safely”.

Depending on your pupil you may be able to explain the reasons for this, spelling out the dangers of hitting the brakes so hard that you may be hit from behind or that your car may skid. Mention that if they floor the accelerator pedal they might hit something ahead, lose control of the steering, or blow the engine. Pointing out the prospect of four jam jar-sized holes in the bonnet, gives even young men a sense of values. If you make use of the dual clutch whilst the panicking pupil is pressing the accelerator pedal this will suddenly allow the engine to go well into the red on the rev counter.

Or if they are a bit nervous of machinery and cars in particular it might be better to tell them that you will always take over control to avoid risk of damage.

Or if they are a bit nervous of machinery and cars in particular it might be better to tell them that you will always take over control to avoid risk of damage.
What are ‘Dual controls’?
In the accepted sense they usually consist of two duplicated pedals fitted in front of the passenger’s seat so that the accompanying or supervising driver can control the car immediately before any serious or potentially dangerous incident happens. The pedals replicate the footbrake and the clutch. Naturally the dual brake pedal is the one that is most likely to be used or in fact needed. It is a teaching weakness to make use of the clutch to ‘help out the driver’. Unless they know the consequences of all their actions, pupils will not be motivated or even bothered to learn. Worse still they will learn that by allowing the ADI to take control from them, it doesn’t matter what risks they take.

Reverting to the message about dual controls contained in that earlier BSM training manual it continued: …

“I have just used the dual controls because …. We will now pull in… over there… and discuss why it happened before we start again’.

You still need to tell the pupil even when it is patently obvious what you have taken over control. It is part of your own self-discipline, and that way there can never be any doubt whether you are using them or not. If you are in the habit of using duals occasionally to assist a pupil in making some headway in the lessons and you don’t normally say anything, you really must tell them. If the thought of this embarrasses you it is certainly because you are using the dual controls for the wrong reasons.

By making yourself tell your pupils every time you use the dual pedals, you will learn three things about yourself too. Are you helping to make life easier for the pupil? Or to make it easier for yourself? Or are you denying the pupil the opportunity of a serious learning experience. Later we will discuss the value of experiential learning.

“…Dual controls are used when the safety of the car, the occupants or other road users are at risk. And, whenever they are used, the instructor must say to the pupil:
Worse still, are you giving your pupils false confidence that could so easily be shattered when they go out with anyone else, including the examiner? By telling them every time, you might be more willing to avoid taking the easy option and by so doing, allow the pupil to gain some genuine learning practice. Whenever a genuine emergency does arise and, if it is one that the pupil cannot cope with, the instructor is forced to take emergency action, then normally only the brake pedal would be used possibly in conjunction with a firm grasp of the steering wheel. The reasons will be discussed and justified later.

Abuse of dual controls.
Many years ago, when I first became heavily involved in the training and testing of new driving instructors. My guidelines to all the BSM instructor training staff who spent all day every week of the year training new instructors was that whenever they (as ‘pretend pupils’) became aware of the trainee instructor using the dual pedals at any time, they should immediately move their own feet away from them emulating perhaps the worst kind of novice learner. Then the Staff Instructor had to say, “Because I assumed you wanted to take over the driving I thought I should let you get on with it!!”

My Staff Instructor/trainers rarely had to use this ploy more than twice per trainee. Trainee instructors who found themselves in this predicament usually panicked the first time, but they never forgot that particular lesson. And it is probably those instructors who have made most effective use of dual controls ever since.

Instructors who make constant use of their dual pedals to help their pupils will soon find that they meet every range of reaction, from indifference, through resentment to downright hostility. They may even wonder why their pupils leave them for other schools whilst those that stay usually fail their tests, because of something the examiner didn’t do for them whilst they were driving incompetently on the test route.

Remember the term is dual control not duel control. Remember who is paying your wage.

As stated before, but well worth repeating, perhaps the worst abusers of dual controls are those new, relatively untrained, instructors who have never seen them before and suddenly find that, when they sit in the passenger seat, they can take over control at will. The immediate reaction to this impression is that the instructor appears to have gained power over the client, and this can have disastrous psychological effects on the client. One learner drivers may then give up any desire to understand any of the niceties of clutch control, knowing that their instructor will take over if the going gets a bit rough. Others will feel aggrieved that they are not allowed to gain the effective practice they know they need to control the car properly.
On every occasion that you use the controls you must be able to justify it, first of all to your pupil, secondly to any other road user who may become involved, to me when I was your training director to a police officer, or to your insurance company; and possibly to a magistrate or coroner.

My advice to all new instructors who finds themselves in cars fitted with dual controls for the first time, is to drive on their own to a quiet car park well away from any other people, get into the passenger seat and play around for a while using tickover to control speed, and their right hand low on the steering wheel. Once they have had their play, they can put it away until they need to do it for real.

**Teaching in a Dual Controlled car**

The essence of teaching someone a practical skill, especially in a moving motor vehicle, is to ensure that the pupil feels, and believes, that they are in full control of what they are doing at all times. This means that everything they are required to do should be fully understood beforehand. It also means that they have to have confidence that their instructor will not let them get into danger. So the rules of your use of dual controls must be explained effectively before the pupil even begins to take control. In spite of what some non-ADI coaches and trainers may say you cannot coach the use of the pedals to someone who has never used them before. If your trainee instructor or L pupil has ridden a motorbike you may well check to see if their learning has been taken to the final stage of “transfer” however, if they are not both safe and competent, then more formal teaching in the form of EDP is well worth adopting.

**When to Introduce your Clients to the Dual Controls**

Teaching the use of the dual controls begins during the basic controls lesson that you will give to every new pupil. After explaining and demonstrating the feet and hand controls, and before you cover any of the ancillary vehicle controls, you need to draw attention to the pedals on your side of the car. Explain that you will use them whenever, and if ever, the situation is likely to get out of the control of your novice driver. You should also tell them very clearly that if you take over the pedals the pupil should keep their feet away until you say it is safe for them to regain effective control again. You add, however, if you have to take control it will not be the fault of the pupil, but yourself; because you have tried to get him or her to do something that is beyond their present level of skill. Or it may be that another road user has done something silly or stupid that they shouldn’t. Avoid playing the blame game.
Remember, (as if your life depends upon it) if you put a learner driver into a situation that you know they cannot cope with, you are committing a cardinal driver training error. Trial and success is the path to positive learning; trial and error is likely to create confusion at best despondency as a secondary action and death at worst.

Nervous and new pupils like to keep their left foot hovering over the clutch pedal. However this is not necessarily good learning practice. We all know the problem; and we can understand the pupil's need for reassurance of knowing where the pedal is. However there is a basic driving principle involved that should be taught and understood from the very beginning of their lessons that will remove this problem completely. Under normal driving conditions the driver will have his right foot on the accelerator pedal. The left foot should be resting to one side of the clutch. Before there can be any need for the clutch to be used, the driver must come off the accelerator pedal. This gives ample time to cover the brake with the right foot and the clutch with the left foot and use them as needed for a smooth and safe stop.

Those instructors who find problems with some of their pupils wanting to keep the clutch covered and even partially pressed need to change their pupil's attitudes rather than any physical action. It is not the fact that they tend to press the pedal unnecessarily which is the learning error. It is the thought that what they are doing will help them when an emergency situation arises. They need to have these erroneous reasons explained and discounted very early in their lessons. First of all ask why they want their foot there? Their concerns (usually 'just in case') can soon be resolved through explanation and understanding. The problem is then overcome. When a pupil has only been taught by one instructor this problem should never arise however when they have had previous lessons or practice with friends or family it might take longer to eradicate the habit. If you find that this private practice becomes a barrier to learning be bold and suggest that their part time spare time supervisor would like a professional assessment of their own driving and, at the same time they might pick up some sensible teaching skills with you.
Steering and Moving Off

Learner drivers can often be divided into two separate categories; those who can steer without thinking about it and those who need to be taught how to hold and turn the wheel correctly to follow a safety line. In these cases the instructor needs to explain that initially the pupil will only be required to steer the car. In my early days as an ADI and also Instructor Trainer, before PC (political correctness) I used to accept as a fact that boys learned how to steer through the use of all their own toy cars from Tonka to Scalelctrics whereas girls didn’t steer because they only ever pushed prams. My own daughter soon scratched that idea for me and now I say that to some people ‘steering’ is self-teaching but to others, the gap between their hands on the steering wheel and what the front tyres do when connecting with the road surface, is a lost world. Nevertheless it is always worthwhile teaching the two aspects of steering which concern driving examiners.

The danger with failing to turn the wheel fully to the left is demonstrated when turning left into a narrow side road, only to find an oncoming vehicle occupying the whole left lane of their road you have turned into. Any possibility of making a ‘goose-neck’ turn can, at best, be a serious driving fault or at worst hitting the oncoming vehicle whilst your front right wheel is still over the centre line. Think about it.

Similarly many new drivers learn, accept and understand the principle of total clutch control at the first attempt and those who don’t may require a lot more dedicated practice in a safe environment. I have heard many good explanations of the purpose and use of the clutch ranging from comparison with the chain on a bicycle to two hands gripping each other. But the essential thing to teach is that if you consider the take up of the clutch pedal in terms of ten steps from step one to four nothing happens except the car remains stationary; and from step six to ten nothing happens, except the car is moving. The only bit that concerns new drivers is the gap between step four and step five; when everything happens. Think about dividing that bit from 4.0 and 4.9 as ten separate steps as well and for them to discover for themselves the critical point at 4.4 when the car is held still on the clutch without brakes at 4.5 when the car is moving slowly forward and at step 4.3 when the car begins to roll backwards.
This is why learning to use the controls correctly, efficiently and effectively is so essential. Whatever clutch plate wear is needed at this stage will always take that long either a lot in a short training practice or little bits at a time over a longer time period. Clutch biting points must be explored learned soon and fully.

Once this concept and practice has been learned, most pupils will learn how to move off safely and under full control on any variety of road conditions. They will also learn how to bring the vehicle to a stop as needed. But before they start their practical lessons on the road the instructor should also explain how you as the Instructor /Coach will take control of the car and also of the situation, should the need ever arise. If it only happens rarely you can excuse the pupil by admitting that you were trying to make them run before they could walk perhaps to boost their confidence; but you and I both know it was really a teaching error on your part. Don’t do it again.

If you have to make use of the dual controls often, then you should re-examine your teaching methods. If your teaching methods are sound, then possibly the choice of traffic conditions may be the problem. Certainly in the inner London and other city areas good traffic routes cannot always be chosen with novice drivers in mind.

If I may digress at this stage I must quote one lesson that affected me more than anything else I learned about teaching new drivers. I had spent more than twenty years running a one man driving school on the south coast where I had access to quiet residential roads country lanes and new estates as my ideal training routes for learner driver practice. As a one car operator I averaged about 100 new pupils a year, at a rate of two each week. When I was offered the job as Head of Training at the British School of Motoring they had over 2,500 instructors who taught more than 250,000 new drivers every year. The difference being that my pupils stayed with me.

In those days the BSM was the only company that recruited and attempted to train new PDIs at the rate of forty or fifty every week. My initial role was to restructure their whole training ethos. This began with retraining their existing twenty-five staff instructors and four managers. As soon as I could I asked my predecessor at the training school, Commander Norman Radford a former Commissioner and Head of Traffic for the Metropolitan Police how new drivers and their instructors coped with having their first lesson at say the Charing Cross branch of BSM at the bottom of the Tottenham Court Road which was as central as you could
get. His response was typical. He stated quite simply that first lesson learners usually went north up Tottenham Court Road until they came to the Post Office Tower, then they ‘hung a sharp left’ (his terminology) around Mornington Crescent and made their way back through the Haymarket and Soho to the back of the office. That took about forty five minutes he explained, which gave the instructor time for a long de-brief (and probably two cigarettes!) before the next pupil was ready. I learned an awful lot about the practical application of dual controls in those four years spent at the BSM’s Chelsea Training School. Most of my teacher-training experience until then had been classroom based although in my role as Training Officer and General Secretary of the ADI National Joint Council I had helped to train all of the early ADI tutors and those who trained the trainers. The notable difference was that during that time I had been training experienced instructors who were highly motivated and who needed to be accepted by their peers.

At the BSM in the late 1970s I was required to re-train 25 staff instructors who had been teaching their own set ways for twenty years or more. BSM’s basic training policy at that time was ‘We are not bothered about you passing ADI exams, but we are very concerned that no damage occurs to the car’. “Just keep the car safe at all times!”

Psychology of learning and teaching is all in the head partly in that of the pupil, but mainly in the head of the instructor. New potential instructors always impressed me by their eagerness to learn. The hardest task at BSM was to get the trainers to think of their clients as individuals and to satisfy their own individual needs. I liked to consider the standard Armed Forces’ acronym K.I.S.S. ‘Keep It Simple, Stupid’ to be the mainstay of those courses.

I was amazed.

I was an innocent young man then fresh up from the sticks.

“How do they manage to drive through all that traffic?”

was my initial question.

His reply opened my eyes to real facts of life.

“They walked through it first didn’t they?

If they can walk in it they can drive in it”
During my own 20 years or so of in-car teaching I gave many thousands of lessons to just about every type of driver. Each of these lessons needed a fresh lesson plan required for each individual pupil and for that fresh lesson. Although this seems to fly in the face of what most ADI Trainers seem to feel, there is no way in which you can really plan in any great detail your lesson until you are sat in the passenger seat alongside them. Obviously you know what you want to teach, but it is equally obvious that until you know what the pupil is capable of learning, your lesson plans are open to discussion or change. This is why ‘coaching’ has come into such prominence over the past thirty years and I like to think I was there at the beginning.

All too often instructors invent problems for their learners that do not exist. Most of the real skills of teaching as a means to assist learning, can be gained by listening and watching. Listen to whatever concerns your pupils have and you will find that once you have taught them about the benefits of dual controls, and the fact that you will never put them into a situation they cannot control, they will accept them. The moment you tell them something is difficult to do or learn, they will believe you and want to make it difficult.

I have always noticed two things about reversing the stupid decision in the early days of the driving test marking sheet to put reversing immediately following the controls, encourages many ADIs to assume that this is when reversing should be taught. The second folly is when learner drivers have completed a reasonably good reversing exercise they are encouraged to feel that they are now ready to take the test. Intelligent ADI /Coaches will know the value of not even thinking about teaching how to reverse the car until your potential test candidate is capable of making the car ‘sit up and beg’ (as in training a new puppy) before you ask them what sort of things will be different when they start to learn how to drive the car backwards. My advice in this came from Socrates in a letter to Plato, where he said that amateurs strive to achieve the ability to do something well professionals must work much harder to ensure they must never perform any action wrongly. Apply this ancient advice and see how well the Greeks thought about learning and teaching. Incidentally it is the Socratic system of learning and education on which genuine one to one teaching is all about. Good ADIs would do well to study Socrates and his methods of teaching and learning. Indeed, in spite of what others may say, learning and teaching are the genuine ‘Oldest Professions’ in the world. The Greeks, Chinese and Romans all have many
written examples of how learning and teaching work together. Plato, one of Socrates pupils once asked him:

‘Why do you always answer a question with another question in reply? Socrates response to that was ‘Do I?’

To illustrate the use of the Socratic teaching method; A series of questions are posed to help a person or group to determine their underlying beliefs and the extent of their knowledge. The Socratic method is a negative method of hypothesis elimination, in that better hypotheses are found by steadily identifying and eliminating those that lead to contradictions. It was designed to force one to examine one’s own beliefs and the validity of such beliefs.

Socrates once said, “The highest form of Human Excellence is to question oneself and others”. All the above can be cut down to: “You cannot teach a pupil until you have first asked questions about his own thinking.”

That final quote is from Professor Peter Russell
With regard to the use of dual controls it is about this time you can explain to them that the sole purpose of dual controls is to safeguard them, you, and all other road users and street furniture. From this day onward they will accept that you will never need to use the dual controls ever again. Make them take responsibility for their own lives and your safety whilst they are in control. It is about this time that you can also reduce your teaching skills to prompts at the most.

You haven’t taught them everything that you know but you have taught them all they need to know to put on a great performance for the driving examiner when on test and to all their family, friends and colleagues once they have passed the test. You must of course continue to sow the seeds of Pass-Plus or whatever you choose to replace the essential aims of teaching beyond the test. You may choose to suggest they have the potential to take an advanced test later or even suggest that one day they could even be nearly as good as you are. Make sure they understand that passing the test is only a beginning and not an end in itself.

A recent He-Man innovation, which gives even more assistance to instructors and examiners, is the fitting of a G.P.S. Head-Up Display speedometer (HUD), as shown. It lies flat on the dashboard and projects your GPS measured speed in mph or kph directly onto the windscreen itself. You can select and change the projected image position to suit your needs. And of course, it also allows you to fit it into a different vehicle as you wish by simple ‘plug and play’ technology.

The HUD is easily fitted and enables both instructors and examiners to continually monitor the car’s speed. Because it makes use of GPS technology to read the car’s speed as it moves along the road it is much more precise than the manufacturers dashboard speedometer can do. It is also quite easy to adjust the Head Up Display Unit to match the car’s speedometer reading.

Once fitted it saves the need for looking down at the dashboard area by showing the speed actually projected onto the windscreen at eye level or wherever you choose. They also contain a (switchable) audio bleep to warn when any pre-set speed limit is reached. Such is the benefit of this unit that both the DSA and the driving examiners own Trades Union encourage its fitting and use by examiners on test.
Professional Use of the Dual Controls
However even before the need for using the dual pedal controls arises, the instructor has other options. The instructor’s ability to take control of the car comes in three distinct and separate stages:

- Your eyes and your voice.
- Then your hands, and only if all else fails.
- The use of your feet on the dual control pedals.

When, and How, should Dual Controls be used for Maximum Effect and Safety?

First of all make use of your “Eyes and Voice”.
This also includes the sixth sense (sometimes called kinaesthesia which represents the physical awareness of the way your client feels about what they are doing) that we all have, which recognises vibrations given off by your clients and the car. It gives you an insight their own feelings towards any situation, either real or imaginary. In a way most ADIs sense this feeling rather as they recognise the onset of skid-potential through the seat of their pants.

You can help your new drivers when they first begin their driving lessons. Good instructors will point out the need for them to look much further ahead than they did when they were pedestrians. Once you can accept the basic principle that any occasion that requires the use of dual controls is your fault, you will put it into proper perspective. Your early use of prompts is one means to avoid the need for using your own little pedals in front of you. Success!
During the later sessions of driving many, relatively new, instructors and some ADI trainers, have recently discovered that ‘coaching’ is a better term to be used than ‘instructing’. They are not alone in this, as many teachers, lecturers and others in education often misuse various terms involved in teaching and learning.

The use of ‘prompts’ by instructors is often misunderstood. Think in terms of putting on a play. The first few occasions of reading the script you don’t need anything else except for the players to concentrate on the words and the parts that each of the participants will play. The director, (you!), will then allow a number of practice sessions, quite often of single items in isolation. Very soon the players begin to get the whole package together. By this time you should allow your ‘players’ to try to put their own interpretation of what the performance should be like.

It is at this stage where prompting takes place. And indeed once instruction has been absorbed, understood and is able to be played back correctly, there is never any need for more instruction in that particular item. But prompts are allowed and just as the ‘person giving the prompt’ in the theatre stays out of sight so your role is to keep out of the action. If you simply prompt by the use of the odd word or phrase given at the precise time before it is needed, then this may prove helpful. But prompts given when the player is already doing that action, or think they are, can easily become destructive if they allow the learner to believe their instructor will always be on hand to prompt. After all why should two of you bother to think about what is happening? You must not take away from the pupil’s thinking and control.
Prompts are not always verbal. Quite often you may only have to point such as to the mirrors or indicators and that is enough. But even these must cease when you pupil gets nearer to driving test standard. Even raising your eyebrows (when your client is looking at you, presumably with the car stationary) can be considered a prompt. Putting your hands together and closing your eyes in silent prayer can be considered one prompt too many. But it might just work on one occasion. Dress rehearsals are like mock driving tests they are only of value if they are allowed to run to a satisfying conclusion. Learning is reinforced when learners make and take their own decisions correctly and receive suitable praise for their success. Breaks for discussion of (minor) driving errors can easily destroy the continuity of the assessment, which is so essential both on stage and before their driving test.

Whatever else you choose to do in your prompts you must never revert to giving full instruction. If you do then you are admitting that you were wrong when you agreed that this particular lesson had already been learned. You were wrong but you can ‘right the wrong’ by not committing the same mistake twice. If you continually have to revisit your earlier lessons then perhaps you ought to have someone look more closely at your teaching methods. If your pupils agree that they have learned a particular skill then you must allow them to consolidate it themselves.

Quite often it is better for instructors to quote timings rather than distances: such as ‘look at least five seconds ahead’. Or, more practically, ‘tell me what colour those traffic lights are now and what colour follows?’ These instructions are to confirm the pupil is looking further than they are normally used to. When it is obvious they are not, then additional guidance is needed.

When instructors are aware that their clients are not looking far enough ahead this simple use of expanding the learner driver’s eye control may be all that is needed to cope with the changing situation ahead.

You can also use prompts hopefully fewer and fewer as the lessons progress as a measure of their improvement.

‘Today I only had to prompt you twice about using your mirrors. That is a great improvement let us see if we can manage it without any prompts at all by your next driving assessment’ is your comment.
However where the pupils are unable to recognise for themselves what to do immediately, it becomes very important for the instructor to get the pupil to act on what they have seen. Encouraging the pupils to look further ahead can still do this and then pupils can decide on what potential for change exists and still have time to react correctly. Nevertheless when this fails it may be necessary for the instructor to take additional practical action. Initially the instructor needs to get the pupil to do something simply by making better use of the voice. Quite often this is simply done, as all professional instructors become aware of the benefits of using different tones of voice for different types of command.

Initially there is the ‘conversational’ tone that is used to give comfort, satisfaction and reinforcement to the client. Depending upon the pupil’s needs you can keep this up during the lesson, or just bring it in when you feel it may help relieve the build up of stress. However never natter on just because you want to. You must remember that any time you speak you are likely to distract the pupil from seeing and learning. Incidentally if you have a pupil who really needs this continual voice over, you can emphasise the need for them to do something for themselves by stopping talking even in mid sentence as a signal that they must stop listening and cope with what is about to happen.

Next there is the ‘directional’ tone of voice, which is flatter and less personal than the conversational one. This is often used when simulating the directions given by an examiner and is used to prepare test candidates for the long silences and short, sharp monotones used on test. The only response required from the pupil is an acknowledgement of what they are to do. The pupil only needs to give a brief word of confirmation or, better still, by doing what has been asked can do this.

Then there is the more involved, possibly even excitable, ‘instructional’ voice that is used to encourage the pupil to use their brains as well as their muscles and to praise them when they are on a winning roll. It is the tone of voice you use to get them to realise the car will do what they want it to do, if they approach it correctly. This is usually a dialogue with the pupil responding in like kind. This voice must be used sparingly, but if it carries enthusiasm in its inflections the pupil will join in and almost enjoy the learning. Remember too, the importance of using questions to find out what your client knows rather than relying on telling them what to do.

Finally there is the direct and definite ‘action control’ use of the voice. The one that does not need the pupil to do anything else except to react and to do exactly as they are told but NOW! It cannot be confused with any other form of communication. It is the sort
of voice that mothers use so well when they realise that little Albert is about to put his nose between the cat’s teeth. There is no need for sentence construction, nor praise or criticism. Equally so the words you use must always be positive.

You don’t say “Please don’t hit the lamp post!” you do say “Steer to the right… More that’s it.” or something similar.

Avoid saying ‘Stop accelerating’. (Incidentally all experienced instructors soon learn they should never use the word ‘STOP!’ as the first word of any sentence!). If you want them to brake, choose your words carefully. Do you want them to gently brake or gently brake to a stop? Or do you want them to brake firmly keeping their feet hard on the pedal until the car is stopped? Another danger to avoid is asking for pupils to brake firmly when their right foot is almost welded to the accelerator pedal. What you need to say is:

‘Take your foot of the accelerator (or gas if you prefer this word) then brake firmly to a stop. On every other occasion when you tell someone to brake, you need to put the qualifying adverb “Gently” or whatever is your choice before the word brake. Otherwise it may be too late.

Everyone knows the story about saying to a young boy or girl: “Never think of a circus elephant, sitting on an upturned bucket, holding a pink umbrella in its trunk and twirling it around”. Guess what image that child will never get out of their mind!
USE YOUR HANDS

Therefore all your voice instruction, whether giving directions, explanations, advice, comments or safety control, must always be positive your teaching methods need to be pro-active, rather than re-active. They need to be thought out carefully, words selected and determined correctly and practised continually.

Each of these changes of voice and tone should be explained to every pupil, even to those with previous experience, at the very beginning of their lessons with you. You will never know what their previous instructor has taught them, and it may well be that no one has even mentioned how they will use their voice to them before. The simple act of doing this may well make these pupils who have had previous training, realise the difference between an average sort of instructor and someone who thinks through their pupils’ problems and changes them to challenges that even they can overcome.

There are a few other warnings attached to the use of the words you use (and those you never should) in the car. One of the worst possible phrases is to say: Apart from the danger of thinking of a hand-brake, there is the additional and very real danger of the pupil who will put one foot over the clutch pedal to cover it, whilst the other foot is plonked firmly onto the brake pedal with all their force. Just as you asked them to, they have covered the clutch with one foot and braked with the other.

Another phrase well worth avoiding at times of pupil’s stress is that of Top Gear - Stop here? They will of course.

You may need to use your Hands.
If using your voice is not enough, or too late, then you may need to take some form of physical action. In its simplest form it may be that you will have to use the indicator switch for a pupil whom you suspect will not be able to do it without losing control of their steering. When you do use them, always accompany the physical action with a simple reason.

For example: The indicator cancelled when you moved the wheel back followed by a piece of secondary information or guidelines if you can. You need to listen to the click, or watch when you turn the wheel back as it may cancel. Can I leave it for you to do it next time? Depending upon the answer they give, your next lesson stage is determined for you.

Similarly, and often predictably, you may have to make slight adjustments

‘Cover the clutch and brake!’
Or even
‘Right off you go, turn left!’

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to the steering wheel to ensure the car follows a safety line. This may be done to maintain a good safe door’s width from stationary traffic on your left or to move out wider still for a wobbly cyclist. In this case, although it is obvious that you have moved the wheel, you still need to say that you have done so, the reason why you did so, and the fact that you have now given control of the car and especially the steering back to the pupil once more. If you have to do this action more than once in any particular set of circumstances, then you also need to get the pupil to pull into the left fairly soon at a safe spot whilst you explain their problem and give them your solution.

Remember that taking over the steering is the one act of dual control that can involve you in direct conflict with the client. One of the problems associated with taking over the steering is the danger of it developing into a ‘duel’ instead of dual. Some US driving schools, those that use large cars with wide front seats, often make use of two steering wheels, linked by something looking like a bicycle chain. I don’t know of any British driving schools that use a dualled-steering wheel, nor have I ever have found the need for one. Although I do remember a colleague who operated dual-controlled training on Vespa mopeds, with additional dualled steering arms from the passenger seat behind the driver. He fell off frequently.

There are two essential items to remember first of all when you give your initial introduction to the vehicle controls lesson you need to cover your use of all the dual controls. Explain that if you take over the steering control from your pupil you will normally ask him to lift his own hands away from the wheel until you say put them back secondly whenever you need to touch the wheel you must make sure you avoid any physical contact with the pupil’s arms or hands. This avoidance is easily accomplished if you remember to place your hand above theirs if the intention is to pull the wheel down, and below the pupil’s hand if you want to move the wheel clockwise. There is never any need, nor excuse, for making physical contact with a pupil. Indeed there is a very real and serious potential danger to it.

Some instructors prefer to use their left hand across their own body at the top of the wheel when they want to pull the wheel down, and their right hand underneath when they need to push it upwards. However this does require you to be sitting at an angle when you take over and you may not always be in this position. You need to decide which suits you, and the circumstances at the time, best. I always found it useful to have my own right hand resting on or near my right knee, so that it was always in the right place when it became needed.
Hand intervention may also be needed when a wrong gear is about to be selected or the indicators cancel halfway through a bend, or when you don’t want your pupil to remove their concentration or hands from the steering. In the case of taking charge of the gear lever, the same rules about avoiding physical contact. You need to do this by holding the shaft of the lever, rather than the top.

Once again it is necessary to remind you that every time you use the dual controls by taking charge of the vehicle of any sort you are admitting (if only to yourself) that you have misjudged a situation and have asked your pupil to do more than they are capable of doing. If you want to excuse yourself by suggesting that an unexpected situation arose that requires your action ask yourself why you didn’t anticipate it sooner.

As an example, imagine you are driving along a relatively quiet stretch of road, and you have just given your client some directions about a traffic situation ahead such as a set of traffic lights or junction some hundred yards or metres away.

As you begin to draw level with a road on your left you notice a vehicle in that road approaching too fast and it worries you that the driver might try to emerge in front of you. You have to decide what the risk potential is. This is not a sudden decision indeed the word ‘suddenly’ is one that often appears incorrectly in insurance crash reports. If you take verbal action soon enough you should not need to take over the control of the steering wheel to avoid the car coming out too far, or to brake if it does emerge in front of you.
Nothing happens that suddenly if you are aware of what is happening now and you can make estimates of what is likely to happen in the next five to ten seconds or might happen or could only happen in the most remote of circumstances. You have to assess all of these possibilities and, only then, can you make an intelligent and safe decision. Almost invariably traffic crashes occur because one or more of the road users involved have been distracted or are not aware of the risk potential in the five or so seconds leading up to the incident.

The only possible excuse you can offer to yourself if you have to take action at this stage is if that the other vehicle’s brakes have failed, the driver is drunk, or he is a doctor or police officer responding to an urgent call. Even then, were there any warning signs or sounds to warn you?

In every other case you should have alerted your pupil to the potential risk even before you could see anything. One of the weaknesses shown by many instructors (especially those with lower gradings) is that they forget to teach the need for full and proper observations before all turnings, junctions, crossroads and roundabouts. You never have right of way but if you are lucky other road users may accord you proper priority when the law supports you. ADIs need to treat every other road user as a source of danger, and every other situation as one that needs your total concentration, will save you and your pupil from many anxious moments. And if you teach your own observation skills to your clients they will prove good safe drivers too.

One final warning about the use of hands in my term as training director at BSM, my staff instructors thoroughly enjoyed one added note that I asked them to teach to all our trainees: all learner drivers should understand that if ever their instructor puts a hand on their knee or any other part of their body, it means the instructor wants you to carry out an emergency stop exercise immediately.

Now there is a lesson to learn.

Finally and only in the last resort should you make use of the foot pedals.

(There is one additional piece of advice that is needed now. If you do have to use the dual pedals the only one that you should normally use is the brake pedal.)
The pedals on the instructors’ side duplicate the actions of the clutch and brake. Ideally instructors should sit in the car in such a position that they can move their feet to cover the pedals at the drop of a hat or to be more precise at the prospect of any need. The movement should not be sudden, nor should it be so slow that the timing is lost. I always found the most comfortable way for me to use them was to have my ankles lightly crossed so that my right foot was a few inches above the brake pedal but not actually touching it. When a potential emergency arose all I had to do was straighten my left leg and my right foot immediately fell into place.

Naturally this means you do not normally press down both pedals. After all, why should you need to use the clutch if you are braking? Only use the brake, and only use it to slow the car, or to stop it, when there is risk potential attached, or if you need to override the pupil’s actions.

More to the point, if you were to de-clutch whilst your pupil was still pressing hard on the accelerator you might finish up with those four ‘jam jar sized’ holes in your bonnet as the pistons try to get into orbit. Seriously, you must avoid the danger of harsh acceleration, so your use of the dual foot brake must be accompanied, if necessary, by the words ‘Off gas’ or whatever terminology you have set out in advance. I cannot stress enough the need to establish your teaching vocabulary from the outset and to stick to it consistently. Rote learning is still one of the better ways to learn repetitive actions. The real skill lies in establishing your vocabulary at the very first lesson, being certain that your pupil will understand you.

The connotations of using the word “Stop” in any other situation except the ‘stopping as in an emergency’ exercise are frightening. “Pull in to the left” was the phrase always used in the examiner’s script; and once this has been explained to pupils in their first lessons it should be an adequate way of getting them to pull in at the kerbside gently and with total regard for other road users.
Stopping in a genuine emergency

Naturally there may be occasions when the instructor is faced with a real emergency stop situation that does require an instantaneous response. It will be too late to tell the pupil to brake, or it may be that they have been asked to take action but they have not obeyed. In either situation there is only one thing to do. The instructor must always be fully aware of the situation behind and will not need to make any additional use of the mirrors. Instead the dual footbrake pedal should be applied firmly and progressively. Do not put the clutch down. If you do it will create the potential for front wheel lock up and with it skid potential.

At the same time the instructor may have to say probably quite loudly in the circumstances “Take your feet off the pedals!” or, simpler still, “Off Feet!”.

Whether the pupil should be asked to take their hands away from the steering wheel will depend on the action required.

Once the situation has been resolved instructors need to remain fully in control of the situation until they are convinced that the pupil is capable and willing to carry on. Naturally as soon as it is safe a full debrief of the causes and effects of the action must be discussed with the pupil and agreed, not only what, but also why; and how to avoid it happening again.

Where the pupil has been severely frightened it may be necessary to curtail the lesson and for the instructor to drive the vehicle back to base. Nevertheless a de-brief will always be necessary. There is a logical argument to be made that the instructor is inevitably at fault should an emergency situation arise.

Although all instructors should be able to control the vehicle at any time from the left seat, every time they make use of the dual pedals is an acceptance that they were at fault in some way. They have overestimated either their pupil’s capabilities or the road and traffic situation they are heading into.

In order to make most effective use of the dual pedals the instructor’s right foot should always be near to the brake pedal and their right hand near the steering wheel at all times. This way you do not need to make any initial movements that could cause a distraction to the pupil when the potential for taking action arises.

The instructor’s left foot can be kept well away from the clutch pedal at all times. Whatever situation arises that needs use of the clutch pedal by the instructor there must always be sufficient time to move your foot into position. Naturally you should always make sure your that your pupil’s left foot is not underneath his own pedal on the rare occasions when you use the dual clutch.
All of the foregoing applies to the general use of instruction with reference to all kinds of dual controls. However when we are looking at the mechanical principles of dual controls, we need to note that they come in a variety of types and their different methods of operation all demand close care and attention.

Most new instructors choose their dual controls in the same way that they choose the weather. Whatever arrives they accept. Nevertheless it is well worth looking at the different types of control to identify those you currently use and to see what other options exist. It may even prompt you to start making decisions about what you want, what you need and what you desire.

There are various options regarding to the operation of the pedals themselves. When I first began teaching, dual controls were usually cable operated. Cars had an immense amount of space underneath the dashboard and the pedals normally went through ‘holes’ in the floorpan. The obvious way to connect the cables was by drilling holes in the pedals and then the floorpan so that the cables could pull the driver’s pedals downwards when the dual controlled pedals were operated. Dual controls were often transferable from one car to another but the new vehicle’s floor and pedals had to be drilled to take the cable. After a few years’ use occasional problems could arise if the inner cables began to fray. The inner core was usually a motorbike brake or clutch cable style cable made up of a dozen or more strands.

One or more strands of the inner cable might eventually break and could cause the operation to become sticky through friction with the outer casing. With the advent of suspended pedals from the 1950s onwards, it became possible to make rod-operated pedals that clamped around the driver’s pedals so that the instructor’s pedals paralleled the operation absolutely. However rod operated dual controls always need a reasonably clear gap between the two foot-wells. And cable operated pedals are much more efficient and effective probably due to the use of silicon liners to the cables’
The vehicle to which they are to be fitted usually determines the actual choice of which type of dual control is best for your needs. These days the gaps between the driver and passenger’s foot-wells are so tight that cables are the only kind that can be fitted. Today’s cable brakes use completely different types of inner and outer cables, so there is no metal-to-metal contact and no danger of any individual strands breaking or sticking. He-Man cable controls these days, are smoother and much more easily used than twenty or thirty years ago. And, of course, they are more flexible in the way they can be routed through between the two foot-wells.

The greatest benefits of cable-operated controls are that they are flexible in fitting they are smoother and they are more precise to operate. However, as with a rod dual control system, with today’s modern vehicle design, the cable control system must be designed specifically for the vehicle it is intended to be used for. For example a set of Ford Focus dual controls is safe and suitable only for a Ford Focus. The mounting of dual control bracketry and linkages is critical because of the safety factors engineered into modern vehicles. These include collapsible pedal assembly and steering columns, air bag sensors, electronic control units and double skinned-bulkheads which absorb the energy from the impact a car may suffer in a crash situation.

Rod controls, which have been used for the past thirty or so years, are not as practical or as popular as they once were. This is because it becomes more and more difficult to fit them effectively.

The gaps between foot-wells of modern cars are much tighter and transmission or gearbox humps, and the route needed for the fitment of the rods is more difficult to clear. However with other passengers, instructors needed to be a little bit more tactful. They had to demonstrate when they get in what happens to the pedals and how the passenger had to avoid having their feet anywhere near the pedals.
Statistical survey of one hundred driving instructors - on dual controls.

At a Driving Instructors Association’s Annual Training Conference I carried out a spontaneous survey of delegates’ views of the dual controls on their L driver tuition vehicles. There were 105 people in the audience but three of them were guests and not working ADI’s. The survey therefore enabled a true 100% sampling to take place. Naturally I made no claim that this represented the views of the industry as a whole, only those ADIs who believed in continuing professional development and were willing to attend national training conferences. Nevertheless, it was a possible representation of some of the more professional instructors currently working in the L driver market.

The following questions were put and these answers were given.

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<th>Question</th>
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| How many of those present had dual controls fitted in their vehicles?   | **Answer:** 99% did, 1% did not  
( *this one person only taught disabled drivers in their own vehicles* ). |
| What makes of dual controls were fitted?                                | **Answer:** 93% He-Man, 2% other companies. 4% did not know.             |
| What proportion used rod controls: and which cable controls?            | **Answer:** 35% used rod controls, 65% used cable controls.             |
| Should dual controls be compulsory fitted and available for us on all vehicles used on driving tests? | **Answer:** 92% yes, 2% no, 6% not bothered.                             |
The following comments were made by individual members of the audience on the merits or otherwise of dual controls generally.

**Difficulties with passengers when the car is not used for teaching purposes.**

**Rod controls often interfere with bodywork when being fitted.**

**A change of vehicle, even to a new version of a previous model, can often mean buying a new set of controls.**

**What are the benefits and pitfalls of using cable controls compared with rods?**

The questions put to me at the end of the spontaneous survey carried out at the DIA Annual CPD Training Conference prompted me to write this treatise on the Use and Abuse of dual controls.

There is no question that the use of dual controls has prevented an enormous number of road traffic crashes, and undoubtedly many, many deaths and serious injuries avoided over the past seventy years of driving tests in Great Britain. The proper use of them has made the passage from novice to competent learner driver much easier and safer. Over the years professionally fitted dual controls have played an enormous, but often unsung, part in road safety.

Although some instructors have occasionally abused this safety role, it has only ever been an indication of their own inadequacies as instructors. With application and understanding there is no reason why anyone should not be able to bring the benefits of dual controlled driver training to all new and learner drivers.

**Recommendations**

Dual controls are an essential part of the professional working life of the driving instructor. Statistics show that virtually every driving school vehicle, used by learner drivers, in the United Kingdom is fitted with dual controls. Almost certainly they are required as an essential fitment by their insurers. And every driving instructor can tell of occasions when they are convinced that the proper use of dual controls has prevented road traffic crashes, and saved pupils, instructors and other road users from injury or worse.

Anecdotal evidence, press and newspaper stories, crash statistics and insurance companies reports, all show that a large number of vehicle crashes, often single vehicle incidents, causing sad loss of life or serious injury, are caused every year by improper supervision of drivers in vehicles used in basic learner driver lessons.
This view is supported by the commonly noted fact that although parents and other private supervisors will try to teach normal road procedures and correct principles of manoeuvring exercises used on the driving test, they are usually very reluctant to allow their charges to practise reverse parking between vehicles. This would seem to be too close for comfort for many of the supervising drivers.

Over the past years driving examiners have agreed that they always prefer to conduct driving tests in vehicles fitted with dual controls. Although some private entry vehicles used for test may be driven by candidates who have considerable practical experience in driving, many others are not and driving examiners cannot anticipate which category each new test candidate comes under until the test is under way. The availability of dual controls, both to instructors and examiners, means that they can concentrate on the real task they have in hand in the first case to train their pupils in all suitable road and traffic conditions and secondly to assess their abilities and competence in these same conditions.

Where dual controls are not fitted this must be an inhibiting factor. Instructors are loath to teach in traffic, if they know that they cannot take control should the occasion arise. Driving examiners are under the same pressures to avoid properly testing their private entry candidates in the extreme road and traffic conditions as those who take their tests in dual controlled vehicles. This cannot be satisfactory, morally ethical, or good for road safety.

If dual controls to a recommended specification, were fitted to all cars used for driving tests, there would be a positive benefit to the conduct of driving tests.

If dual controls again to a recommended minimum specification, were fitted to all vehicles used for basic driver training, there would be considerable savings of lives and personal injuries and much less vehicle and property damage.

Dual controls save lives, prevent injury, reduce damage to vehicles and provide a safe environment for the teaching and testing of new drivers.

Dual controls, properly used, offer a safe and secure environment for the teaching of all new drivers.

There is no doubt that the compulsory fitting of efficient and effective dual controlled brake and clutch pedals to all vehicles used for driver training and testing would be a great improvement to road safety.
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