



Levels Of Instruction

As an instructor, you have to be able to instruct, but also to instruct at the appropriate level for each individual pupil. Instruction in a moving car needs to be very clear and precise in order that you minimise the chances of the pupil getting confused, and so there are two main levels of instruction:

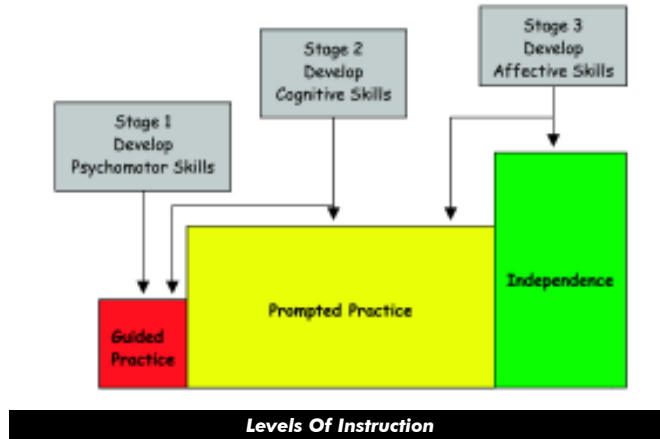
- Guided / Talk Through
- Prompted

As the pupil progresses, the aim is that they become more independent and, therefore, need less and less instruction in order to drive correctly and safely. In general, this means that the amount of instruction should decrease as the pupil becomes more proficient. However, it is not as straightforward as guiding a novice pupil, prompting a partly trained pupil and allowing a trained pupil independence. There can be a mixture of all three taking place in any one lesson.

Each of the levels can be particularly useful for developing different skills within your pupil. Remember the terms psychomotor, cognitive and affective? These would have been studied during studies for the Part I Test, and are three skill areas that you will develop in your pupil throughout their tuition. In order for you to be able to choose the correct level of instruction for your pupil at any given point, you need to understand their connection with these skill areas. For anybody to do anything correctly on their own, they need to be proficient in all three skill areas, and this is no different for pupils when learning to drive. *Psychomotor skills* - physical, the ability to co-ordinate. *Cognitive Skills* - knowledge, understanding, memory. *Affective Skills* - attitudes, values, beliefs.

Appropriate Gear

As mentioned earlier, you will also be looking at the varying levels of instruction in relation to a pupil's different levels of experience and ability. 'Guided



'Practice' involves giving detailed step-by-step instruction. Some PDIs are quite surprised at the amount of detail it is necessary to include in the early stages, and expect the pupil to 'just know how to do it'. Eventually, you will develop your pupil's ability up to test standard so they can perform independently. However, between these two points there are various stages of development and learning. You will encounter pupils who have mastered certain aspects of driving well and need little or no help, but in other areas they require a great deal of support. For example, a pupil may be quite proficient at manoeuvring the vehicle at slow speeds but, at the same time, nervous in heavy or high speed traffic. Your instructions will need to vary depending on what you are trying to achieve and the situation you find yourself in at any given time. As an instructor, you need to be flexible and respond to the needs of your pupils quickly and effectively, and you can do this by using the right amount of support at the right time. The diagram above indicates how variable the instruction you use can be.

Guided Practice

'Full talk through' should be used whenever something new is introduced. This serves to give the pupil confidence, knowing that they can 'depend' on you to help them and reducing their sense of personal responsibility. This level of instruction is also very useful if

an unexpected situation develops while on the road - it means that you, the instructor, can take control of the situation quickly and effectively, increasing safety levels. It is absolutely essential that, if a pupil has 'panicked' or has 'frozen', you can give full support, irrespective of the amount of experience they have. The questioning can wait till later! Good, guided instruction usually leads your pupil on to the next stage fairly quickly.

Prompted Practice

'Q & A' is a way of supporting your pupil by checking their understanding and gaining agreement from them. A good instructor will prompt the pupil by asking relevant open questions that 'lead' the pupil to reveal the depth of their understanding, so you can confidently build on the foundations of knowledge. However, poor use of questions can be very counterproductive. The common problem with novice instructors or PDIs is that the questions are too vague or far too open. For example, asking: 'What can you see ahead?' is a very difficult question to answer easily, especially for a nervous pupil. A specific question, such as: 'How will you position the car to see past the bus?' leads the pupil, but also allows them to give a correct answer and build their confidence (and also draws their attention to the bus and the practical dangers). Clearly the questions need to be posed to reflect the amount of experience

your pupil has in the given situation. The option is always there to take back control by reverting to guided practice if the pupil struggles too much. How do we define 'too much'? As soon as safety is compromised, it is time for an instructor to intervene and assist.

Independence

This will ultimately develop and you do need to give your pupil the opportunity to show you that he or she can cope. They need this to build confidence and their ability to progress their learning. If you need to check the pupil's thought patterns, occasional retrospective questioning can be helpful. 'I noticed you didn't signal as we moved off - why was that?' is a question that allows you to confirm the reasoning behind their decision, whether there is an issue that needs addressing or, in fact, whether praise is in order to build the self-esteem of your pupil.

If, at any point, problems arise, you doubt their understanding or noteworthy mistakes are made, then you should revert back to prompting. If a dangerous situation occurs, you should immediately take control again by using guided practice.

Be Prepared

You will encounter learner drivers with varying levels of ability in different areas, throughout training sessions or lessons. You are also very likely to encounter pupils who are very near test standard or already hold a full licence, but may need coaching in one particular area. You need to be able to adapt your style of teaching to suit each person and be wary of over-instructing in areas where the person may be reasonably competent, so it is essential to have a set of questions prepared in order to ascertain and update your own knowledge of their level of understanding. Remember, a pupil's competence can vary as much as the competence of different pupils. **adi**

Jane Taylor is Head of Training for TIC Direct and has been in the industry for over ten years.