

Changes to the highway Code

Changes to the highway Code started to come into force on the 29 January 2022. The new rules apply to all highway users, the updates affect driver priority, pedestrian and cyclist rights of way, mobile phone use behind the wheel and broader use of fines for poor or dangerous driving.

Some of the main changes are highlighted below but as individual you will be responsible for being familiar and abiding by these changes.

1. Drivers no longer have priority at junctions

Before 29 January 2022 - Drivers had priority at junctions unless the other road user was half-way across the junction.

Now - If you're turning at a junction and there's a cyclist, horse-rider, pedestrian, or scooter, ready or preparing to cross, these more vulnerable road users have right of way.

2. All traffic must stop for pedestrians waiting at crossings

Before 29 January 2022 - Cyclists, drivers and horse riders only had to stop at zebra and parallel crossings if someone was already walking across, with an advisory to slow down on the approach to a zebra crossing, in anticipation of pedestrians.

Now - Cyclists, horse-riders and motorists are legally required **Now** to stop at zebra crossings if people are waiting to cross, not just if they are already crossing.

3. Cyclists can ride wherever they feel most visible

Before 29 January 2022 - Cyclists have only been mandated to ride on the left (ie. not against the flow of traffic) and ensure bike lights are used at night. They are advised to wear visible clothing and a helmet.

Now - Cyclists are required to ride no less than half a metre from the verge or kerb, 'further where it is safer'. Motorists must pass cyclists with at least 1.5 metres space up to 30mph; more distance is required for higher speeds. Cyclists are expected to pull to the left on quieter roads, in slower-moving traffic and at busy junctions, to maximise safer overtaking opportunities.

4. Drivers must wait for a safe gap in the flow of cyclists

Before 29 January 2022 - There was no explicit requirement for drivers to treat cyclists as though they were other vehicles, simply tacit guidance.

Now - Motorists are advised against turning in such a manner as to 'cut across' cyclists' right of way, and explicitly asked to consider cyclists like another motor vehicle.

5. All uses of hand-held mobiles are banned, except in an emergency

Before 29 January 2022 - The use of mobile phones to call and text has been banned since December 2003. However, didn't say anything about doing other things with your mobile though (a loophole).

Now - The 2022 update prohibits any driver from using their handheld device for anything, including taking videos or photos, scrolling through playlists or playing

games—EVEN if the vehicle isn't moving. While mobile phones can be used for hands-free calls, payment at tolls or booths and satellite navigation, they'll need to be securely fixed.

6. Poor driving decisions more punishable

Now - The Highway Code states explicitly how yellow hatched lines, creating a box junction, 'MUST NOT be entered' unless the exit is clear. These and other minor motoring infringements such as entering Advanced Stopping Lines (ASLs), the only authority to deal with these infringements have been the police.

From Spring 2022 - Local authorities will be given more power, enabling them to fine drivers up to £70 for minor traffic offences. This will include, though not be limited to, those sitting in box junctions illegally, drivers failing to give way to oncoming traffic and motorists making a cheeky U-turn in a prohibited area.

7. The 'Dutch Reach' is the recommended method of vehicle exit

Before 29 January 2022 - You can exit your vehicle any way you'd like, taking care to check mirrors and check over your shoulder for any oncoming traffic.

Now - In an attempt to cut the number of cyclists hit by car doors swinging open unexpectedly, the Dutch Reach is advocated. This involves the hand furthest from the door to open it. This prompts a passenger or driver to swivel their bodies and in turn, heads to look over their shoulder and be more mindful of passing cyclists.

For more information, please read [The Highway Code - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-highway-code)