

Stay safe: mobile phones while driving

By safely disposing of your liquid waste, you are helping to protect the natural environment. But it's important to protect yourself and others too.

Did you know you are 4 times more likely to be in a crash if you use a mobile device whilst driving¹?

Using a mobile phone, whether handheld or hands-free, or touching your sat nav while driving is dangerous. A split-second lapse in concentration can result in serious injury and even death to yourself and other road users.

Around one fifth² of drivers admit to checking texts, email or social media while driving, despite the heightened risk of looking away from the road, even for a few seconds.

Driving while using mobile devices can lead to:

- Slower reactions to hazards
- Reduced awareness of what's happening on the road
- Failure to see road signs
- Inability to maintain steady speeds
- Feeling more stressed and frustrated.

It is no excuse to say you were simply following the map on your handheld device and that's why you've picked it up.

The police have the power to stop you if they believe you have been distracted by using a mobile device while driving, even if it's fully hands-free.

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1 <https://www.think.gov.uk/themes/mobile-phones/>

2 RAC Report on Motoring 2019

The law

Handheld

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving – including using your phone for checking texts and emails, taking photos or following a map.

You can only use a hand-held phone when:

- You are safely parked
- You need to call 999 or 112 in an emergency and it's unsafe or impractical to stop.

Hands-free

The law states you are allowed to use a phone if it is fully hands-free but you're not allowed to pick it up and use it to communicate.

Although not yet illegal, research shows that the risk of distraction using a hands-free phone is just as significant.

If the police find that your hands-free device has affected your ability to drive you can still be prosecuted for 'failing to have proper control of your vehicle'.

Sat navs

If you use your mobile as a sat nav, you need to ensure it is securely fixed to the windscreen or dashboard. It must not block your view of the road or traffic and you must not hold or interact with it.

Your route must also be programmed before the journey. If you need to input new directions, you should only do so when parked in a safe place, with the vehicle engine switch off.

For both handheld and hands-free devices, the law still applies if you are:

- Stopped at traffic lights
- Queuing in traffic
- Supervising a learner driver.

Penalties

If you are involved in an accident and your telephone records show that you were using your mobile at the time of the incident, even via voice activation, you can face serious legal action.

Currently the penalties are:

- 6 points and a £200 fine if you use a handheld device when driving. You could also lose your licence if you have been driving for less than 2 years
- 3 points if you don't have full view of the road and traffic ahead or if you're not in proper control of the vehicle
- Taken to court where you can be banned from driving and get a maximum of £1,000 (or £2,500 if you're driving a lorry).

For your own safety and for the safety of others, we recommend that you switch off your mobile phone and preset your sat nav and before starting your journey.

