TyreSafe

SAFE TYRES SAVE LIVES

POSITION PAPER

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A practical tyre check on the driving test

Goal 1

POSITION AS AT	VERSION	NEXT REVIEW
November 2026	1.0	Annually, and after any change DVSA makes to the show me, tell me questions

Our position

Today a learner can pass the driving test without ever touching a tyre. Tyre checks appear only as spoken "Tell me" questions. TyreSafe and the Driving Instructors Association (DIA) ask DVSA to replace the two tyre "Tell me" questions in the car practical test with one short "Show me" demonstration on a single tyre, with the car parked before the drive. If learners can be asked to do it on test, instructors will teach it, and every new driver will start out knowing how to check their tyres. We are publishing this position to build support for the change among instructors, road safety partners and drivers.

The problem

- **The test asks drivers to describe a tyre check, not do one.** Two of DVSA's 14 "Tell me" questions cover tyres: where to find the recommended pressures and how to check them, and how to check tread depth and condition. The candidate explains out loud and never touches the tyre. (DVSA, Car show me, tell me vehicle safety questions)
- **Many drivers lack the basics.** Only 39% of drivers know the 1.6mm legal minimum tread depth. 19% check their tread monthly and 29% use a gauge. One driver in ten has never checked their tyres. (RAC/Online95, 2024; Anyline/TyreSafe/Opinium, 2024; TyreSafe/Opinium, 2026)
- **Tyre defects are common.** About 2.15 million MOT tests a year fail on tyres, and tyres make up 61% of dangerous defects on cars and light vans. (DVSA)
- **Young drivers are a priority for the Government.** Drivers aged 17–24 are 6% of licence holders but were involved in 24% of fatal and serious collisions in 2024, and KSIs among under-25s are one of the Strategy's Safety Performance Indicators. (Road Safety Strategy, p. 18 and Appendix A)

What we are asking for, and from whom

DVSA: replace "Tell me" questions 2 and 4 with one "Show me" question, asked at the start of the test with the car parked:

> *Show me how you'd check that a tyre on this car is safe to use. Using one tyre, show me how you'd check the tread depth, and then check the tyre pressure against the manufacturer's recommendation.*

A correct demonstration means checking the tread in three places across the central three-quarters of the tyre with a gauge, then finding the recommended pressure on the manufacturer's placard and checking it with a gauge. Marking stays as it is: an incorrect or incomplete demonstration earns one driving fault.

Driving instructors: carry a tread depth and pressure gauge kit, which costs about £10, as standard lesson equipment.

What TyreSafe and the DIA offer: draft guidance for examiners, instructors and candidates for DVSA review; help to fill any gaps in instructors' kits; and work with DVSA to make sure every examiner has a kit.

Why we believe it would work

- **Tests shape teaching.** Instructors teach what the test can ask. Once any candidate may be asked to demonstrate a tyre check, learners will practise it during lessons.
- **It fits the Government's Strategy.** The Safe System says vehicles should be "designed and maintained" to reduce collisions, and the Government has consulted on a minimum learning period that could include a mandated learning syllabus, which a practical check would fit naturally. (Road Safety Strategy, pp. 16 and 18)
- **It is easy to put into practice.** One tyre, done in the existing stationary slot at the start of the test, taking about as long as a bonnet-open question. No change to the route, the running order or the marking. As we understand it, it changes the wording of an existing question rather than any legislation, and we would adapt the proposal to any regulatory constraint DVSA identifies.

How confident we are

HIGH	That the change is practical, cheap and quick to make.
HIGH	That many drivers lack basic tyre-checking knowledge.
MODERATE	That a demonstration on test turns into a lifelong habit. There is no direct study of this. The case rests on the test's well-known influence on what instructors teach, and on its low cost. If the change is made, TyreSafe would support DVSA in tracking how new drivers' checking habits change.

Concerns and our response

Concern	Our response
It will lengthen the test	One tyre, in the existing stationary slot, taking about as long as a current "Tell me" question.
Examiners will need training and equipment	Two simple checks to watch for, with existing marking. TyreSafe and the DIA will help make sure examiners have kits.
It adds cost for instructors	A kit costs about £10, and many instructors already carry one. For the many instructors who are self-employed, it can normally be claimed as a business expense.

Concern	Our response
Tyre pressure monitoring makes manual checks unnecessary	Warning lights do not detect worn tread, cuts, bulges or ageing rubber, and many cars on the road do not have them.
It adds pressure on learners	It replaces two questions with one, keeps the same one-fault marking, and happens with the car parked before the drive. A learner who has practised the check in lessons should find doing it no harder than recalling a spoken answer. TyreSafe and the DIA would be glad to trial it with instructors and learners to test this.
Any change must meet regulatory requirements	Agreed. We would adapt the proposal to whatever the regulations require, and welcome DVSA's view on any constraint.

What we are not asking for

- No change to legislation or the Highway Code.
- No change to how the test is marked or how long it takes.
- No check of every tyre: one tyre is enough to show the skill.
- No particular product or brand of gauge.

How this fits with our other goals

This is the first point in a driver's life where good checking habits can be built. Our positions on advisory reminders (Goal 3) and a defect retraining course (Goal 5) address the same habit later on, and the MOT-based indicator (Goal 6) would show whether the fleet is getting safer as a result.

Review and changes

TyreSafe reviews this position every year, and sooner if DVSA responds or new evidence emerges. If the evidence changes, so will our position, and we will record what changed and why.

Version	Date	Change
1.0	November 2026	First published

Sources

- DVSA, Car show me, tell me vehicle safety questions (last updated 4 December 2017)
- DfT, Road Safety Strategy (7 January 2026), pp. 16, 18 and Appendix A
- DVSA, MOT testing data 2025–26
- RAC/Online95 driver survey (September 2024, 1,775 drivers)
- Anyline/TyreSafe/Opinium driver survey (September 2024, 2,000 drivers)
- TyreSafe/Opinium driver survey (April 2026, 2,000 adults)