

The cockpit drill



Before you start a journey you need to make five basic safety checks. They are listed below:

1. **Check the doors are shut.**
2. **Check you can depress the pedals easily.** Adjust your seat on its tracks so that with the clutch pushed fully down there is only a slight bend in your leg.
3. **Check you can use the steering wheel easily.** With your hands on the wheel at ten to two, there should only be a slight bend in your arms. If necessary, adjust the angle of the back of the seat. Also, check the top of the headrest is in line with the top of your head.
4. **Put on your seatbelt,** ensuring it is not twisted. Check your passengers are strapped in too.
5. **Adjust your mirrors.** The rear view mirror should have as much of the rear window framed in it as possible. It is more important to be able to see the top of the window than the bottom. The side mirrors should be set so the horizon is halfway up the mirror. A slither of the side of the car needs to be in view too.



An easy way to remember the cockpit drill is **DSSSM**. The letters stand for Doors, Seat, Steering-reach, Seatbelt and Mirrors.

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DSSSM

DOORS: Some cars have a warning light on the dashboard that tells you when a door is open but it is best practice to check for yourself anyway. It would be very dangerous if a door swung open while you were driving.



SEAT: There should be a handle under the seat which allows you to slide it along its runners. Some cars have height adjustable seats too. If you are too close to or too far from the pedals they will be hard to control.

STEERING-REACH: If you sit too close to the steering wheel your arms will be restricted and this will affect your steering. To correct the rake of your seat, hold your right hand at the top of the wheel and lower the back of the seat until you have a straight arm. Then hold the wheel normally and there should be only a slight bend in your arms. Remember to adjust the headrest too - whiplash injuries account for 80 per cent of the total cost of personal injury claims made to insurance companies each year.



SEATBELT: You, all passengers and all heavy objects should be strapped in. If you crash, passengers who are not wearing a seatbelt could hit you with enough force to kill you. In recent years about a third of those killed in road accidents were unbelted. If you are caught without a seatbelt you can expect a £100 fine, although the max. penalty is £500.

MIRRORS: You should adjust your mirrors so you get the best possible view behind without having to move your head much to look at them. Remember the rear mirror is made of flat glass, which gives you an accurate view of what is behind, whereas the side mirrors are made of convex glass, which gives you a wider field of view but makes everything look smaller and further away than it really is.

