

Risk Management: Competence No.4

Ok, so far in previous videos under Risk Management, I've talked about how the pupil's tasks and the risk is shared between you and them, why it's important that you are aware of your surroundings and how your directions and instructions impact on risk.

This forth competence in Risk Management asks: 'Was any verbal or physical intervention by the trainer timely and appropriate?'

Now, part of the skill of the trainer is to understand when to intervene verbally or physically as the pupil is carrying out their share of the learning task. You need to strike the right balance between under instruction, so not giving the pupil enough help at the right time and over instruction, giving them too much help or jumping in too early.

Intervening too soon or too often when it's not a risk critical situation, will frustrate the pupil because you are not letting them do what was agreed. This may demoralise them, leaving them feeling as if they are not making good enough progress.

This is about how people learn and very often driving instructors disrupt the pupil's thinking and learning by giving partly trained instruction when it's not needed. In lots of situations, the pupil will achieve far more understanding about how to practically apply their skills and assess the risk involved, if they can carry out the task in silence without distraction.

Letting your pupil focus on the task, raises their awareness of what they can and can't do on their own, and builds their ability and responsibility to deal with additional tasks. Constant verbal instruction while the car is moving can lead to a bombardment of the pupil's senses and a task overload.

Clearly the most important 'interventions' are those that manage risk in a moving car. So when it is clear that the pupil has not seen or is not responding to situations in which a risk or hazard arises, then you are required to intervene for safety. If you need to intervene to keep the car safe, then it really doesn't matter if there is a sensory overload.

Ok, consider this scenario. Let's say, you are at the start of the lesson. You have decided a lesson goal with your pupil, and they would like to focus on adequate clearance to parked vehicles on the left.

You have discussed the responsibility for risk and agreed that you will share the risk to ensure the pupil can focus on their goal of safe clearance. They will do this while you manage any other hazards along the route. You have wrapped up the conversation with a brief summary of what was agreed and you have now asked the pupil to drive on when it's safe.

You are now on route travelling along the high street with parked cars on the left. You are following a bus, and much further up the road on the left, there is a bus stop that has pedestrians sat waiting. At this point, the bus is not showing any intention to stop, so at first glance, everything looks safe.

There is no need to mention the bus and bus stop ahead because the pupil's goal is, specifically, adequate clearance to parked cars.

It would not be appropriate to talk about the potential of the bus stopping, if the pupil appears to be dealing with it OK and there is clearly no risk. Unless that is you are dealing with busses pulling up and stopping as part of the goal for the session, or the pupil has clearly said that they want to be alerted to other hazards outside of their goal.

So, let's now imagine that a pedestrian at the bus stop stands and raises their arm to signal to the bus to stop. You must now assess whether you will need to step in and take control in some way.

Generally, there are four possible options to choose from depending on the time you have to respond to a risk-critical situation. In our scenario, the four options would be these, firstly,

Option 1: There is no need to do anything. The pupil has already checked their mirrors and eased off the gas in case the bus indicates and slows to pull in.

Option 2: The bus is now slowing and signalling to pull in and the pupil has made no response. Now it's necessary to say something to verbally manage the risk. A question to the pupil, keeps the responsibility sitting with them for a little longer allowing them to take some action. You could ask: "Do you think you need to slow down for the bus ahead?"

This type of question is called a 'leading question' and has within it an implicit call to action. The call to action is embedded within the question. In this case, that call to action is 'slow down for the bus ahead.'

Option 3: Once you've alerted the pupil with your question. You now decide to wait a little longer to see if the pupil is going to respond. You do not want to interfere too early with their performance goal of adequate clearance. However, it is clear the pupil is not responding, so direct instruction is now necessary, So now you will say, "Slow down for the bus."

Option 4: You decided not to give a verbal instruction, or you must now take physical action as the pupil is not responding, the bus is braking harder, and pulling over towards the bus stop. You are travelling too fast towards the bus for safety, so you use the dual brake.

As we know there are some risk critical situations that will require you to instantly go straight for the brakes. The competence here the examiner is assessing is that you would be expected to point out situations to your pupil in which a risk or hazard might arise. But of primary importance is how you respond in these types of situations.

So, in summary, here are some indications of lack of competence in this area including, ignoring a developing situation, and leaving the pupil to flounder also, taking control of a situation when the pupil is clearly dealing with it appropriately. When you constantly intervene when unnecessary or intervening inappropriately, creating distractions, and undermining the pupil's confidence. And finally, reinforcing through what you say and do, that you are the person who is in sole control of the lesson.

Some indications that all the elements of competence in this area are in place in your training include, not overloading the pupil, and only intervening in a way that actively supports the pupil's learning process and safety during the session.

You also show competence when you allow your pupil some time to deal with situations appropriately, you are sensitive to your pupil's goals and only take control of a situation where the pupil is clearly out of their depth.

Ok, that brings us to the end of this competence in Risk Management. In my next video, I'll be looking at competence No.5 which is: 'Was sufficient feedback given to help the pupil understand any potential safety critical incidents?'

Indications that all the elements of competence are in place could include:

- Finding a safe place to stop and examine the critical incident
- Allowing the pupil time to express any fears or concerns the incident might have caused
- Supporting the pupil to reflect clearly about what happened
- Providing input to clarify aspects of the incident that the pupil does not understand
- Support the pupil to identify strategies for future situations
- Providing input where the pupil does not understand what they should do differently
- Checking that the pupil feels able to put the strategy in place
- Agreeing ways of developing that competence if the pupil feels the need

Indications of lack of competence include:

- Failing to examine the incident
- Taking too long to address issues generated by an incident
- Not allowing the pupil to explore their own understanding
- Telling the pupil what the solution is and not checking their understanding
- Failing to check the pupil's ability to put in place the agreed strategy