

Taxi Assessment Guide (Class B only)

This guide has been produced to assist the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) examiners with their initial assessment of a motor car to determine its suitability as a **Class B (wheelchair accessible) taxi**. It focuses on the vehicle's general construction and accessibility features as they affect passenger access, egress and seating capacity. The guide should be read in conjunction with The Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, The Taxi Accessibility Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Taxi Inspection Manual.

It will be applied to the vehicle at the time of its initial taxi licensing assessment. This guide may also provide customers with advanced knowledge of the DVA's taxi inspection criteria.

The Detail

Vehicle length

All taxis must be a minimum of 3.96m in length. There is no maximum vehicle length other than what is quoted in the Construction and Use Regulations.

Tyre loads

Where quoted, record the axle weights and tyre load indices on the Inspection Report (TL4), having confirmed that the tyres are suitable for the vehicle weights.

Steering wheel

The steering wheel must be on the right hand side of the vehicle when viewed from a forward facing front seat

Intercom and Induction Loop systems

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16)

For vehicles with a partition between the driver and rear passenger compartment, an Intercom and Induction Loop system must be fitted and signage must be displayed to inform passengers of the systems availability

Internal lighting

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16)

Internal lighting must be available to illuminate the wheelchair space, as required

Steps

The maximum distance from the ground to the top tread of the lowest step of every passenger entrance or exit on a vehicle must not be more than 435mm (see 'Accessibility step etc.' below). For the tread area (area on a vehicle that is immediately below a closed door), to be regarded as a suitable step/platform, it **must** be capable of supporting and assisting a passenger to safely alight from the vehicle.

Where the original step/platform of the entrance or exit exceeds 435mm from the ground (measured at the highest point on the vehicle where a passenger's foot would have to cross whilst entering/exiting) an additional fixed step (includes a retractable/folding step) must be provided at each passenger entrance or exit.

A step must not project beyond the body of the vehicle, unless it can be repositioned so as not to extend beyond the body whilst the vehicle is in motion. This requirement does not apply to a vehicle fitted with a step supplied by the vehicle manufacturer as original equipment, provided all other step requirements are met. Electrically operated steps must be capable of being controlled from the driver's seat.

NB: A fixed step is acceptable if it extends beyond the body of the vehicle, but is retained within the width of a folded mirror, provided that mirror has been fitted at the time of the vehicle's manufacture.

- Each step must be a minimum of 95mm in width and have the tread area covered in a slip-resistant material.

It is not necessary for the full 95mm step width to project outwards beyond the sill of the vehicle; it is acceptable for not more than 20mm of the step to be 'inset' from the outer edge of the sill, provided the complete step is sufficient to accommodate a person's heel. However, it is important to note that where the step is used to exit from the 3rd row of the vehicle, the full 95mm step width must project outwards beyond the sill.

- Where a vehicle is fitted with a retractable/folding step, the vehicle must have an automatic warning device fitted to it (buzzer or warning lamp) to warn the driver that the step is deployed.

- There must be a band of colour of between 45-50mm across the front edge of each step, and the band of colour must contrast with the remainder of each step.
- Each step must be soundly and properly constructed and fitted in such a manner that it is unlikely to injure a passenger or other road user.

Accessibility step etc.

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16)

1 In addition to the step requirements mentioned above, all passenger steps must not exceed 435mm in height and an Accessibility Step is required on at least one passenger entrance on the nearside if any passenger step exceeds 380mm.

Where a step is fitted to meet this requirement, it must be:

- A minimum of 400mm in length
- A minimum of 200mm deep (when in use, project at least 200mm outwards beyond the outer sill)
- Covered in slip resistant material
- Displaying a band of contrasting colour, at least 50mm wide, around each of the external edges
- As above, a retractable/folding step must be fitted with an automatic warning device (buzzer or warning lamp) to warn the driver that the step is deployed.

The entrance/exit fitted with this Accessibility step must also be fitted with at least one handhold or hand rail, which is:

- Covered in a slip resistant surface
- Capable of being easily and firmly gripped
- In a colour that contrasts with the surrounding parts of the taxi.

Note: An Accessibility Step is not required where all passenger steps are at a height of 380mm or less.

Handholds and Handrails

Where a passenger steps into a vehicle other than directly from the ground, a handhold or handrail may be provided, where necessary, to assist passengers to safely access or egress the vehicle. All handholds and handrails must be capable of being easily and firmly gripped. Examiners are advised to pay particular attention to the need for handholds, where the minimum step width only, is provided.

Permanent Top (roof)

All vehicles must be fitted with a permanent top (roof) *i.e.* the roof is not capable of being positioned to completely uncover all seats.

Doors

All vehicles must have at least four doors, two of which must be located on each side of the vehicle. Passenger doors must be capable of being readily opened from the inside and outside of the vehicle by one operation of the latch mechanism, and must be capable of being opened independently from each other.

Luggage

When all passenger seats are occupied, the vehicle must have a luggage capacity of 80 litres; the luggage space should be separate from the passenger's compartment and be broadly equivalent to two small-medium sized 'carry-on' suitcases.

For vehicles that have a 3rd row of passenger seats (MPV/ people carrier) the required luggage space may be achieved by folding the 3rd row of seats, provided there is no obvious risk to passenger safety (examiners must continue to include the 3rd row of seats when determining the maximum passenger capacity).

Examiners are advised to use discretion when assessing the luggage space.

N.B. The luggage capacity for most unmodified vehicles may be obtained from manufacturers' sales brochures or through internet searches which may be relied upon for assessment purposes.

Where the luggage compartment is used to accommodate the spare wheel (e.g. an LPG tank has been located in the spare wheel well), a volume of 35 litres may be assumed for the spare wheel. Therefore, the luggage compartment must be assessed capable of carrying the 35 litre spare wheel, plus 80 litres of luggage.

Other acceptable methods of achieving the luggage capacity:

- A roof-rack
- An open boot lid that is capable of providing a safe and secure luggage carrying platform (the number plate must be easily read when the boot lid is used for this purpose)

- Where a partition is fitted between the driver and rear passenger compartment, the front passenger seat can be tipped-up to provide the required luggage space (any luggage carried must be capable of being safely secured).

Wheelchair storage

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16)

A space measuring at least 735mm x 330mm x 805mm must be available to accommodate a folded wheelchair. This space must provide for the wheelchair to be secured safely, and may be located within the passenger compartment, provided there are no obvious risks to passenger safety.

Seating

Seating assessment involves a range of elements that must be considered simultaneously:

1. Cushions
2. Contoured seating
3. Width of seats (including folding seats)
4. Retractable/fold-up armrests
5. Access to the rearmost row of seats (including MPV's)
6. Protrusions in the passenger compartments
7. Leg room
8. Headroom

Examiners are advised to position the seats in compliance with the minimum dimensions recorded at the Annex, prior to assessment, and to note that it is acceptable for the back rest of any seat to be positioned not more than 90 degrees from the horizontal plane.

Cushions

All seats must be properly cushioned and upholstered in cloth, leather or artificial leather. All cushioned seats must provide reasonable comfort for passengers

Contoured seating

The space between two contoured seats may be assessed suitable as a seat when it complies with all of the above requirements, including the requirement for reasonable passenger comfort.

Width of seats (including folding seats)

The width of every allocated passenger seat shall be **at least** 400mm, and

- A continuous seat accommodating 3 passengers must have a minimum dimension of 1200 mm measured across the front edge of the seat cushion. In addition, there must be a minimum dimension of 1300mm measured around 150mm forward of and parallel with the seat back, at a height 600mm above the uncompressed seat cushion (passenger shoulder location); a back rest measuring less than 1300mm may be accepted (see the Annex dimensions for E, F and G).
- The depth of any passenger seat cushion (distance between front edge of seat cushion and the seat back rest) must be assessed on an individual basis as related passenger comfort is interdependent on available leg room.

Retractable/fold-up armrests

When assessing the suitability of a seat backing incorporating an integrated arm rest, examiners must ensure that the seat back provides adequate passenger comfort when the arm rest is in the raised position.

Access to and from the 3rd row of seats, where all vehicle seats are forward facing

There are several elements to the assessment of the 3rd row of forward facing seats, all of which must be considered simultaneously and ultimately considered capable of providing passengers with reasonable access/egress without assistance.

Access and egress must be provided to both side doors only, and can be accepted if achieved by:

- Removal of one outer seat or the centre seat, in the 2nd row of seats to provide a suitable and safe access, or
- Tilting of the seats on the 2nd row to provide safe and reasonable access to the 3rd row of seats; *when exiting from the 3rd row, a passenger must be capable of*

*positioning the seats to afford reasonable access to all side doors in the passenger compartment. The instructions for moving the seats must be clearly marked on the back **and** side of the seats as appropriate (a pictogram providing clear instruction is acceptable).*

When considering seat access the examiner must also consider:

- The size and suitability of the passage-way when the 2nd row seats are displaced
- Hand holds that may be required to assist a person when exiting from the 3rd row of seats
- Suitability of steps

Not more than a double seat may be tilted to provide a suitable passage-way/access to the side door. The examiner shall decide if the type of seats are acceptable; there are two different types of seat systems for consideration, however, **where any of the outer seats in the 2nd row of seats have seatbelt systems that require the belts to be disconnected from the seat to allow the seat to tilt, this seat system is considered unacceptable:**

Note: it is not acceptable to have detachable seatbelts fitted to the outer seats in the second row, where their fitment prevents reasonable access/egress to the 3rd row.

- Standard seating provided in mass produced vehicles are considered acceptable (provided the seatbelt system complies with the above requirements and all seating and interior dimension requirements are met) and where the tilted seats expose fixtures in the flooring; these should be ignored for assessment purposes.
- Alternative type approved seating; It is impossible to make a blanket judgement on this type of seating, as they can be so varied they can only be assessed on an individual basis. The examiner's decision will be based on a passenger who is not familiar with the vehicle being able to understand the process of how to tilt the seat (the complexity of the tilting mechanism) and the ease in which it tilts (the weight of the seat).

The passage-way to the door aperture must be of an adequate size to allow a person to access the doorway. At the doorway, a **departure area** must be provided to allow a person to stabilize themselves before exiting safely from the vehicle.

If the departure area is not capable of accommodating both of the passenger's feet at the same time, suitable **handholds must be provided** to ensure that a person can stabilize themselves before and during the exiting process.

Where the departure area is in a lowered 'footwell' the datum for the maximum step height measurement of 435mm (for vehicles not licensed during the 12 month period preceding 31/5/16 - 380mm at the 'Accessibility step') shall be taken from the highest edge where a foot would have to cross whilst entering, or departing from, the vehicle.

The 'departure area' is a rectangular space to simulate an area where a passenger could stand with both feet side by side prior to departure from the vehicle; it should be predominantly flat and have a minimum dimension of 300mm x 200mm, the smaller side (200mm dimension) shall be between parallel and 45 degrees from the door aperture and the same side shall be not more than 200mm from the outside edge of the vehicle.

Leg room

The following minimum leg room requirements must be available to ensure reasonable passenger comfort:

- There must be a space of at least 275mm measured between the vehicle floors and the top foremost/centre edge of each uncompressed seat cushion (see the Annex dimension C), this requirement does not apply where the presence of a transmission tunnel reduces the leg room.
- There must be a clear space of at least 630mm measured longitudinally from the lowest central position of each passenger back rest (see the Annex dimension A).
- There must be a clear space of at least 200mm measured longitudinally from the foremost edge of each passenger seat cushion (see the Annex dimension D); this requirement does not apply to any area directly above a transmission tunnel. In addition, the 200mm clear space requirement may be reduced to 150mm, where a centre console (located between the front seats) protrudes into the rear passenger compartment.
- There must be a space of at least 400mm measured between the foremost edges of each opposing passenger seat cushion.
- Where a passenger's legs are required to straddle the transmission tunnel, that tunnel must not exceed 300mm in width.

Headroom

There must be a minimum height of 880mm measured vertically from the lowest central position of each uncompressed passenger seat cushion to the head cloth (see the Annex dimension B)

Wheelchair entrance

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16)

The entrance/exit designated for the wheelchair user must have a minimum unobstructed height of 1235mm a minimum unobstructed width of 750mm. The occupied wheelchair must have unobstructed access to and from the wheelchair space.

Boarding Ramp

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16 – see Note below)

A boarding ramp or lift must be available to assist with the loading of an occupied wheelchair. Where a boarding ramp is fitted and is deployed it shall be:

- Located at the nearside or rear of the vehicle
- Capability of being secured to the vehicle to prevent slipping or tilting when in use
- A minimum of 700mm in width and have a single continuous surface
- Devoid of any sharp edges or protrusions likely to cause a danger
- Sloping at not more than 16° when secured to the vehicle, with the outer edge resting on a block 125mm in height (to simulate a kerb)
- Displaying a band of contrasting colour, at least 50mm wide, around each of the external edges
- Capable of being safely stored and readily available for use

Note: For taxis licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16 – a boarding ramp or lift must be fitted and assessed as unlikely to cause a foreseeable danger; the device must not slip or tilt when in use and must be capable of being safely stowed.

Boarding Lift

(not applicable to a taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16)

Where a boarding lift is fitted it must comply with BS EN1756-2. Examiners are advised to accept that this requirement has been met on M1 type approved Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs), unless the lift is obviously unsafe, or has obvious obstructions preventing access to the wheelchair space.

Occupied Wheelchair Space

Taxi not previously licensed and being licensed for the first time from 31/5/16 - the vehicle must be capable of accommodating either a forward or rearward facing occupied wheelchair, having dimensions of 1200mm in length, 700mm in width and 1350mm in height.

Taxi licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16 (with the exception of those previously licensed as Belfast Public Hire, which can be assumed as meeting equivalent wheelchair space requirements) – the vehicle must be capable of accommodating either a forward or rearward facing occupied wheelchair, having dimensions of 1200mm in length, 700mm in width and 1200mm in height.

NB: An occupied wheelchair would not utilise the entire wheelchair space, therefore certain protrusions into that space may be acceptable where the examiner is content that the occupied wheelchair can be manoeuvred and secured into the space.

Displacing Seats

The detachment and relocation of a passenger seat/s is **only** accepted for the purpose of providing a wheelchair space. The following conditions must be met:

- Detached seats must be moved to a safe storage location **in the taxi**, where they cannot be used by a seated passenger
- Only **single** type passenger seats (original fitment or bespoke) may be detached and relocated in the taxi e.g. it is not acceptable for a double or triple passenger seat to be detached and relocated.
- Detachable seats (original fitment or bespoke) must be capable of being quickly released, where no tools are required to either detach the seat or secure the seat in its stored location, minimising any unnecessary delay
- Seats that have been moved to provide a wheelchair space **must** be readily secured in the taxi (ratchet straps are recommended), where **no** exits are

blocked from use by other seated passengers in that compartment, and where there is no obvious risk to passenger/driver safety.

Alternative, for rear loading wheelchair only, where it is not practical to relocate the seat/s to a position where all exits in the compartment remain unobstructed, it is acceptable for a detached seat to be located to a position where it is blocking an exit in the compartment, provided the following conditions are met:

- the wheelchair entrance remains unobstructed, and
- the only passenger carried in that compartment is the wheelchair passenger (no passenger seats in that compartment may be used for that journey).
- Seats that have been moved to provide the wheelchair space must be assessed in their licensed seating location and in their stored location during the vehicle's Initial Assessment, to confirm there are no obvious risk to passenger/driver safety.
- Relocated seats must not reduce the mandatory luggage capacity of the taxi

Dedicated Wheelchair Space (space suitable for an occupied wheelchair only)

Where the vehicle has a dedicated wheelchair space (space complies with the dimension requirements referred to above, and is **not** fitted with a passenger seat that may be used in the absence of an occupied wheelchair (e.g. fold down seat) - the examiner must record the number of dedicated wheelchair spaces and the number of passenger seats, separately on the test hall system (e.g. 2 wheelchair passengers, and 6 seated passengers).

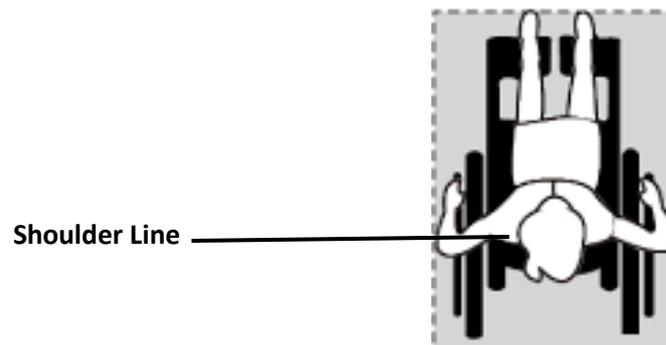
NB: The combined total of wheelchair passengers and seated passengers must not exceed 8. The number of wheelchair passengers and the number of seated passengers will also be recorded separately on the Taxi Licence.

Wheelchair anchorages and restraint Systems

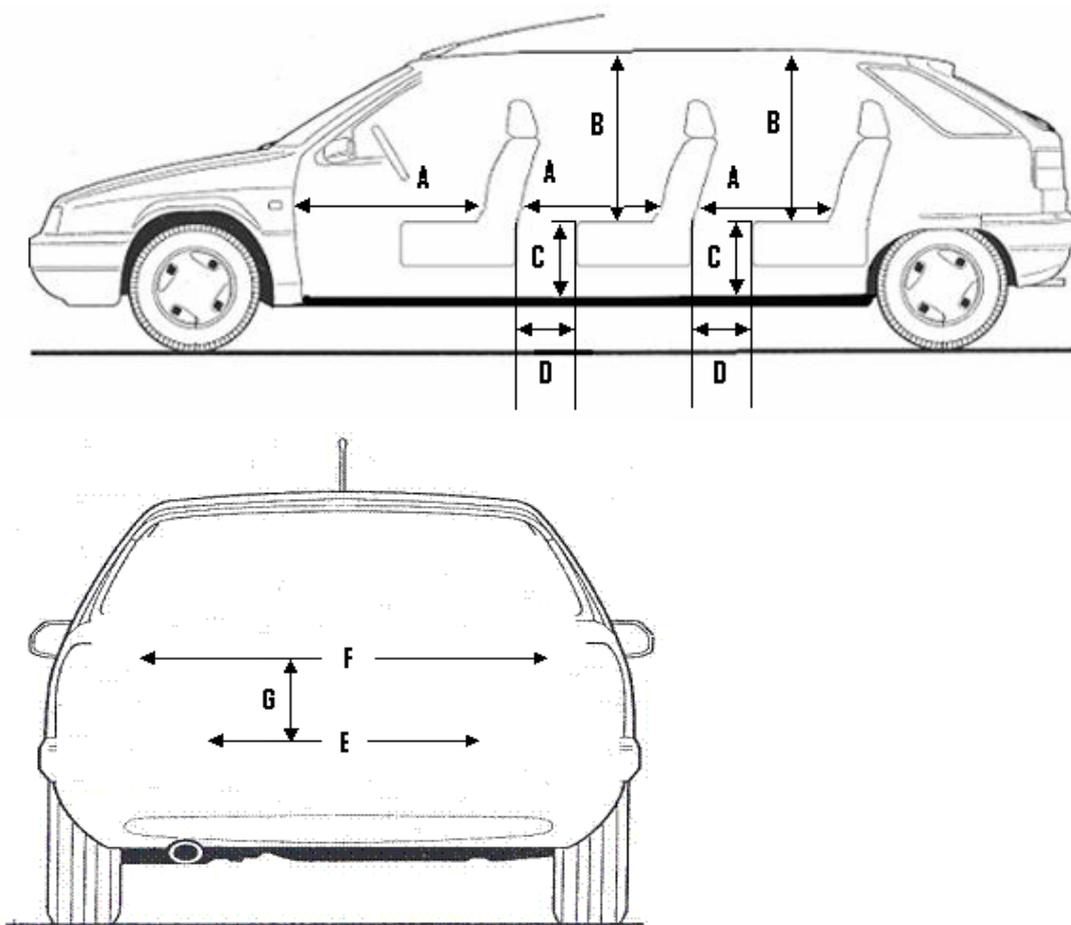
Forward facing wheelchair: with the exception of taxis previously licensed in the 12 months preceding 31/5/16, the system must comply with BS10542. In all cases, have a minimum of 4 wheelchair anchorage points with belts attached that are capable of safely securing the wheelchair in a forward facing position (alternatively, the wheelchair may be secured using a tracking and clamp system, or a docking

station system). The wheelchair occupant restraint system must have 3 anchorage points (2 lower anchorage points having a minimum separation distance of 300mm, and 1 upper anchorage point not less than 1100mm in height, behind the shoulder line of the wheelchair occupant see Note) and a 3 point seatbelt, capable of safely securing the passenger in a forward facing position (it is acceptable for the same anchorage point to be used to secure a wheelchair restraint belt plus an occupant restraint belt). Vehicles not previously licensed and being licensed for the first time from 31/5/16 will be type approved as a WAV, therefore it may be accepted that the BS 10542 requirement has been met, provided all specified anchorages and belts are present and serviceable.

Note: The examiner must check that the upper anchorage point is located at least 1100mm above the vehicle floor, and is towards the rear of the wheelchair space, but not obviously forward of the wheelchair occupant's shoulder line.



Rearward facing wheelchair: As the vehicle must be type approved with an integral partition-based restraint system incorporating the wheelchair and wheelchair occupant restraints, it is accepted that the system, as presented, offers an equivalent level of safety to that of a forward facing wheelchair system. However, this system may have less than 4 wheelchair anchorage points and less than 3 wheelchair occupant anchorage points.



<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>mm</u>
A	Front seat minimum dimension between the seat back cushion and the dash	No minimum requirement
A	Minimum distance between seat back and seat cushion rearward of it	630
B	Minimum headroom	880
C	Minimum height of seat squab; Cushion not compressed	275
D	Minimum distance for leg room	200
E	Minimum width for 3 continuous seats	1200
F	Minimum width for 3 passengers at shoulder height	1300
G	Distance between seat cushion and shoulder height dimensions	600

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Record of Revision

Revision	Date	Description of Change
1	25/07/2018	Clarify that it is not acceptable to have detachable seatbelts fitted to the outer seats in the second row, where their fitment prevents reasonable access/egress to the 3 rd row
2	26/10/18	Clarify that the upper anchorage point is located at least 1100mm above the vehicle floor, and is towards the rear of the wheelchair space, but not forward of the wheelchair occupant's shoulder line.

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