

6. Using the clutch

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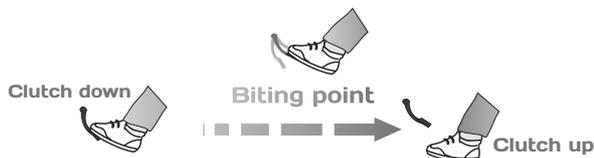
Smooth operation of the clutch is essential for safe and easy driving, but like all things that are worth doing well, clutch control will take a little practise.

Your aim here is to get silky-smooth, unnoticeable gear changes; balance between the clutch and gas pedal is important to achieve this. You might not get it right first time - but that's OK!

One of the best mistakes that you can make, while mastering the clutch, is to use a bit too much gas rather than too little; this might result in a few jumpy starts (if your clutch release is rushed) but will help to prevent the car from stalling!

When you bring up the clutch pedal, start by sliding your heel backwards along the floor; you will find a natural 'pivot-point' where you can hold your heel still and raise the ball of your foot. When the car starts to move, pause for a moment and then lift your foot off the floor (if necessary) to bring the clutch up gently all the way.

Clutch-control is a method of keeping a very slow (Zimmer frame) speed in first and reverse gears; this is necessary for manoeuvring in car parks and for 'creeping out' at blind junctions.



You can achieve clutch-control by holding the gas pedal still and moving the clutch pedal slightly above and below the 'biting-point'. The movement should be no more than about the thickness of a one-pound coin. However, it's OK to press the clutch down further than this, as long as you can find your 'biting-point' easily.

Good clutch control comes naturally after a while, but remember, you will need lots of practise... Occasionally, this might lead to the engine stalling... Remember - that's OK! It's all part of the learning process.

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