



An Adria and Volkswagen outfit – legal for category B licence holders

Your driving licence entitlement related to trailers, caravans and driving motorhomes

Most people hold a normal car driving licence and in the past this has not been an issue when Club members have used their vehicle in pursuit of their camping and caravanning activities. Over the years there have been changes in driving licence entitlements as the UK comes into line with European Union directives. Some of these changes in entitlements impact on leisure activities and though they should not stop you camping they may limit the range of leisure vehicles you can use. It is important to understand your driving licence entitlements to ensure you remain legal.

This data sheet looks at licence entitlements for campers, with emphasis on the major differences between a driving licence obtained from a driving test taken before 1 January 1997 and one obtained from a test passed after that date. Entitlements are explained and directly related to types of trailers, caravans and motorhomes you are restricted to and shows how you can increase your entitlements or just ensure you retain them when you reach the age of 70.

Further sections explain the jargon used in licensing terms and other general principles you need to know to remain legal when towing or driving motorhomes, please note, for ease we refer to trailers throughout instead of listing caravans, trailers, trailer tents and folding campers.

DVLA & DVSA

Driving licences are controlled and issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, commonly known as DVLA.

The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) was responsible for carrying out theory and practical driving tests. In 2014 DSA merged with the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) to become a single agency called Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

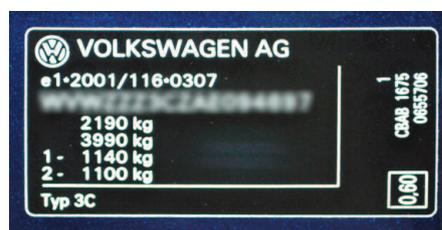
Both DVLA and DVSA provide information online through the GOV.UK website. They often use terms which you need to understand to appreciate the limitations of your licence, hence the jargon panel below.

DVLA Jargon

Terms of weight and mass referred to in DVLA and vehicle manufacturers' documents can be considered as interchangeable

and are referred to in terms of kilogrammes (kg) and tonnes (t), where 1,000kg is equivalent to one tonne. The following are a few terms used by DVLA and some other terms you will come across when considering the practicalities of towing.

Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM) means the maximum total weight that a vehicle or trailer is designed to carry. It is set by the vehicle's manufacturer and includes the vehicle weight and the maximum load it can carry.

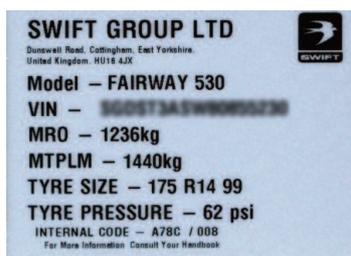


Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) Sticker showing GVM/MAM is 2190kg, next is GTW at 3990kg and the two numbers below refer to individual limits for each axle

Equivalent terms: Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW), Maximum Permissible Weight (MPW), Maximum Gross Weight (MGW), Maximum Technical Permissible Mass (MTPLM) - caravans

Gross trainweight (GTW)

is the maximum weight a vehicle can move on the road as stated by the manufacturer. It includes the vehicle's own maximum loaded weight (MAM) and the weight of a trailer and load. Sometimes referred to as Gross Train Mass (GTM)



Caravan weight sticker/plate showing MTPLM

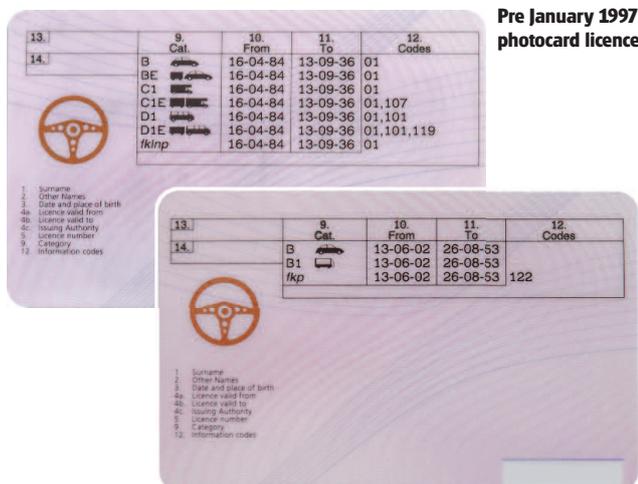
Unladen Weight (ULW) is the weight of the vehicle when it's not carrying any passengers, goods or other items. It includes the body and all parts normally used by the vehicle on the road, but doesn't include the weight of fuel.

Kerbweight as defined in a European Directive and as most commonly used, is the weight of the vehicle as it leaves the factory with oil and water for normal operation and with its fuel tank 90% full. It also includes a nominal 75kg for driver and small amount of luggage. This definition is not generally used by DVLA, but is commonly used by the Club and others when matching car and caravan.

The above defined weights can most usually be found in the vehicle or caravan handbook, but in most cases the GVW and GTW can be found on a plate or sticker fixed to the vehicle and most commonly found under the bonnet or on a door post. If your tow vehicle does not show a GTW then the vehicle is not suitable for towing. Caravans normally indicate the MTPLM figure on a plate situated by the door.

1 January 1997 – the crucial date

A major reduction in driving licence entitlements occurs for those drivers who have passed their car driving test since 1 January 1997. For these drivers the weight of vehicle you can drive and the weight of caravan you are entitled to tow is diminished considerably below the entitlements of drivers with licences gained before 1 January 1997. Further minor changes occurred for drivers taking their test from 19 January 2013.



Post 1 January 1997 photocard licence with limited entitlements

Driving licence entitlements gained from a car driving test passed before 1 January 1997

Your car driving licence will show categories which include: B, BE, C1, C1E(107). Those who last updated their licence before June 1990 should refer to DVLA website for the meaning of earlier categories.

- B with BE category entitles you to drive a vehicle with a MAM up to 3,500kg and tow a normal caravan/trailer within specified dimensional limits.

- C1 with C1E entitles you to drive a vehicle with MAM up to 7,500kg and tow a caravan/trailer where the combined MAM of tow vehicle and trailer does not exceed 8,250kg and the trailer MAM does not exceed the unladen weight of the vehicle.

The category C1E(107) category shown on your licence is not the same as the category C1E shown on the current DVLA list of entitlements. The suffix 107 indicates your entitlement has a combined MAM limited to 8,250kg not 12,000kg as a specific test has not been passed.

For the majority of people these entitlements enable a full range of camping units to be used other than where a large tow vehicle and trailer would push the combined MAM over the 8,250kg limit or if you wish to drive a larger American RV type motorhome with MAM in excess of 7,500kg.

Driving licence gained from a car driving test from 1 January 1997 and before 19 January 2013

Your car driving licence will permit you to drive vehicles in category B, including:

- A vehicle (including a motorhome) with a MAM not exceeding 3,500kg

- The above vehicle towing a trailer not exceeding 750kg.

- The above vehicle towing a trailer in excess of 750kg providing the combined MAM of tow vehicle and trailer does not exceed 3,500kg and the MAM of the trailer does not exceed the unladen weight of the tow vehicle.

With this category B licence you need to select both the tow vehicle and caravan carefully to maximise the weight of caravan you can tow. For example whereas a heavy powerful tow car like a Land Rover Discovery is normally considered ideal for larger caravans because it has a MAM of around 3,200kg, a category B



A Range Rover Discovery towing a heavy caravan like this cannot be towed with a post 1 January 1997 driving licence without taking a further test. With a category B licence a vehicle such as this with a MAM over 2,750kg can only tow a trailer with a MAM of 750kg such as the folding camper.



A folding camper is an ideal choice for large and small vehicles weighing around 750kg (MAM)

licence will limit you to towing a trailer not exceeding 750kg. The secret is to find a car which is heavy enough and powerful enough to be practically competent to tow your caravan while being light enough to keep you within your licence requirements. In many cases a family saloon or estate car such as a VW Passat or Ford Mondeo will provide an excellent balance of towing competence with low enough MAM to provide for a reasonable size of caravan. To tow a caravan with a car with a combined MAM over 3,500kg you need to upgrade your licence. See "Are you Legal" in the section below for examples of what outfits are and are not legal.

Driving licence gained from a car driving test from 19 January 2013

Entitlements are as for the licence gained before this date and after 1 January 1997 except there is no longer a requirement for the trailer MAM not to exceed the unladen weight of the tow car.

Are You Legal?

For drivers with category B licences gained after 1 January 1997 including after 19 January 2013

- A car with an unladen weight of 1,300kg and a MAM of 2,100kg coupled with a trailer with a MAM of 1300kg complies with the licence requirements because:
- The MAM of the combination (2,100 + 1,300) is 3,400kg and so does not exceed the maximum limit of 3,500kg and the MAM of the trailer (1,300kg) does not exceed the unladen weight of the towing vehicle (the latter meeting the requirement of the pre 19 January 2013 licence).
- The same car when coupled with a trailer with a MAM of 1,350kg will still have a combined MAM (2,100 + 1,350 = 3,450kg) not exceeding the 3,500kg limit, but now the trailer MAM exceeds the unladen weight of the car. For licences gained before 19 January 2013, this combination will require drivers to have a BE entitlement on their licence to be legal. A driver with a licence gained on or after 19 January 2013 may legally tow this outfit as the requirement for trailer MAM not to exceed the unladen weight of the car does not apply.
- If in the last example the car is substituted with the estate version you may find the unladen weight increases to say 1,380kg and the MAM increases to 2,190kg. The trailer MAM no longer exceeds the unladen weight of the car, but the combined MAM (2,190 + 1,350) is now 3,540kg. This combination will require drivers to have a BE licence entitlement to be legal regardless of the car licence being gained before or after 19 January 2013.

For more information see our towing and motorhome flow charts and information at the end of this document to aid understanding of driving licence entitlements.

Upgrading your licence entitlements

Should you wish to drive a larger motorhome or tow an outfit beyond your current entitlement limitations you can upgrade your entitlements by taking an additional test or tests.

For some entitlement upgrades you are required to apply for a provisional licence in order to practice on the road and take the appropriate test. In some cases there is also a need to pass other tests for intermediated entitlements before seeking a higher category.

Upgrading for licences held before 1 January 1997

For those wishing to use outfits over the 8,250kg combined MAM limit you can apply for provisional entitlement to sub category C1 + E in order to take further tests to increase your combined vehicle and trailer entitlement to a maximum of 12,000 tonnes (tow vehicle up to 7,500kg MAM). You have to meet higher medical standards and pass both the category C theory test and the sub category C1 + E practical test.

To drive a larger vehicle with MAM over 7,500kg with or without a trailer up to 750kg you need to take a category C test.



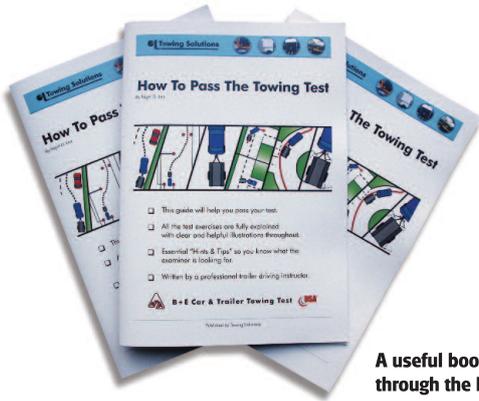
A large American style motorhome with MAM in excess of 7.5t requires a category C licence

Upgrading for licences gained since 1 January 1997

A category B licence gained after 1 January 1997 comes with a provisional entitlement for BE, so you are ready to embark on a BE test. Passing this test for BE entitlement allows you to tow caravans with a category B vehicle (not exceeding 3,500kg) where the combined MAM exceeds 3,500kg.

However, you should note that this test is fairly onerous and it is generally accepted that some professional tuition is advantageous to increase your chances of passing. A list of BE trainers is given on the Club website. For further information about the test refer to How to Pass the Towing Test, published by Towing Solutions.

It should be noted that the BE test and other upgrade tests do require a particular specification of trailer or unit in terms of weight and or size to be used during the test. Refer to GOV.UK website for the latest requirements.



A useful booklet to guide you through the BE towing test

Motorhomers who wish to drive vehicles with a MAM over 3,500kg may apply for provisional entitlement to C1 category and a successful test will give entitlement to drive vehicles up to 7,500kg, with or without a trailer weighing no more than 750kg. Passing a further test to gain entitlement to C1E category will enable heavier trailers to be towed where the combined MAM of motorhome and trailer does not exceed 12,000kg.



Two motorhomes of similar size, but one has a MAM of 3,500kg requiring only a category B licence and the other a MAM of 3,850kg requiring a C1 licence

While category B driving licences gained after 19 January 2013 are similar to licences gained before this date and after 1 January 1997 there are some minor differences with the upgrades gained after 19 January 2013 which include renewal frequency. An example is a BE entitlement gained on or after 19 January 2013 now places a limit of 3,500kg MAM on the trailer permitted to be towed.

Downplating

If a vehicle is unlikely to be used at its potential maximum weight, it may be "downplated" whereby a lower weight is shown on the plate or sticker attached to the vehicle than originally posted by the manufacturer. The process is most often undertaken by motorhome owners to reduce the MAM figure to 3,500kg to enable the vehicle to be driven on a category B driving licence. This procedure needs to be registered through DVLA and should only be undertaken if the owner is absolutely



Motorhome showing multiple VIN plates with differing MAM

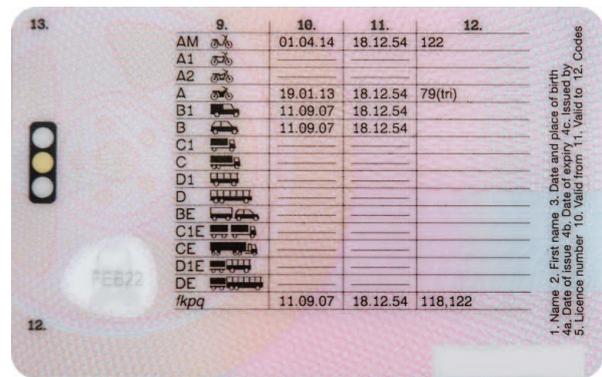
sure the loaded weight of the motorhome can be kept within the new limit in normal use. Use of a specialist company is normally recommended to facilitate this procedure. Exceeding the new MAM figure will constitute an offence of overloading, potentially resulting in a fine of several hundred pounds and possibly invalidating your insurance.

Similarly, motorhomes are often up rated from the base vehicle manufacturer's original figure and it is important to consider the later convertor's uprated plated weight when matching a vehicle to driving licence entitlements.

Renewing your driving licence

Car driving licences gained before 1 January 1997 are normally valid with all the entitlements including C1, C1E, D1 and D1E, until the age of 70 when they need to be renewed. However, all photocard licences have to be renewed every ten years to update the photograph.

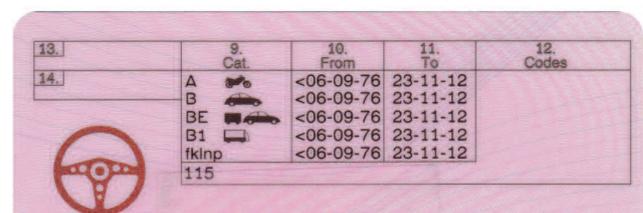
Irrespective of previous renewals all drivers have to renew their driving licence when they reach the age of 70. Also if you change your personal details (address or name) you will need to inform DVLA which will issue a new photocard licence.



In February 2014 a new style photocard driving licence was issued by DVLA which contains additional security features and a new design

When it comes to renewal of licences there are two distinct groups of licence, car and motorbike licences (including category B and BE) known as Group 1 licences and lorry and bus licences (including categories C1, C1E, D1 and D1E) which are referred to as Group 2 licences. The difference between the two groups is the frequency of renewal and the higher medical standards required for Group 2 licences.

For pre 1 January 1997 licence holders, the increased frequency of renewal and higher medical standards for Group 2 licences do not come into effect until the age of 70. But for those with post 1 January 1997 licences, Group 2 licences have need to be renewed at the age of 45. From this point the Group 2 licence categories need to be renewed every five years until the age of 65 when you need to renew this element of your licence every year.



Pre 1 January 1997 licence held by driver over the age of 70 and Group 2 licence entitlements not retained

Renewal of Group 2 licences entails the submission of application form D2 and form D4 which has to be completed by a doctor and possibly an optician to check for the higher medical standards required for Group 2 licences.

Renewal at the age of 70 and after

■ Drivers who took their test before 1 January 1997

This renewal can be crucial to your future camping as your licence includes Group 2 categories, C1 and C1E.

If you renew online or by using just the renewal form D46P that is sent with your DVLA reminder to renew 90 days before your 70th birthday you will only be able to renew your category B and BE licence (Group 1 licence categories) and not your Group 2 licence categories.

Categories B and BE will be retained automatically, which will be sufficient for most caravanners who wish to tow with a normal car not exceeding 3,500kg MAM and tow any caravan within the car's towing limit.

However, if you wish to drive a motorhome with a MAM over 3,500kg but not exceeding 7,500kg you will also need to retain your C1 category and also the C1E category to tow a trailer exceeding 750kg with such a vehicle up to a combined MAM of 8,250kg.

To retain these additional (Group 2) category rights it is necessary to apply by post or through the Post Office and higher medical standards apply. For this situation additional forms D2 and D4 have to be submitted to DVLA. Form D4 the medical examination report has to be completed by a doctor.



DVLA forms required to renew at 70 for pre 1 January 1997 licence holder wishing to retain their existing entitlement (sometimes known as "grandfather rights")

Thereafter, your licence has to be renewed every three years and for Group 2 entitlements this means a D4 form has to accompany each renewal.

■ Drivers with post 1 January 1997 licences

This renewal for drivers who haven't increased their licence categories beyond Group 1 is straightforward and can be undertaken online or by using form D46P which is sent to you with your DVLA reminder to renew 90 days before your 70th birthday. If you have

taken an additional test to gain BE then this can also be renewed in a similar manner without any additional medical checks.

If you have gained any Group 2 category licences (C1, C, D etc) for medium and large vehicles then these renewals will have been triggered at an earlier age and by the age of 70 these categories will require annual renewals as distinct from the three yearly renewals prevailing for pre 1 January 1997 licence holders.

General tips for renewal of licences

■ When renewing by post or at the Post Office retain a copy of your current licence showing your present entitlements as it has been known for certain entitlements to be inadvertently deleted by DVLA.

■ When category B and BE licences are renewed it is with self-certification of medical competence. You have a duty to inform DVLA of any medical condition which may affect your driving and DVLA may issue your licence for lesser periods than normal. Full details of specific medical conditions and requirements are published by DVLA on GOV.UK website.

■ If renewing a driving licence on-line be sure to use the official GOV.UK site. There are several other websites which offer a check and send service, however, you can end up paying as much as three times the normal price for your driving licence.

Some other restraints for safe and legal towing and motorhoming

■ Driving licence requirements are not the only legislation you need to comply with. In particular you need to ensure you are driving and towing within the vehicle manufacturer's specification.

■ There are regulations governing the dimensions of motor vehicles and trailers and these vary with the type of vehicle, hence your driving licence in restricting the class of vehicle you can drive may also affect the size of the trailer you can tow. In particular take care that non-European sourced outfits are UK legal.

■ Ensure you do not exceed your vehicle's MAM nor individual axle weight limits – motorhomers need to take great care they don't overload their vehicle especially when carrying motorbikes or other heavy loads at the rear.

■ Fifth-wheel owners must ensure their pick-up vehicle is adequate to take the fifth-wheel load on the back. In some cases the rear axle needs to be uprated and the vehicle replated.

■ Vehicle towing limits should not be exceeded and remember vehicles will have a towing limit for unbraked trailers (which many small camping trailers are) and another limit for braked trailers.

■ There are miscellaneous other matters to take into account to remain legal such as the use of towing mirrors, breakaway cables and towing brackets. The Club's data sheet Safe for the Road-Safe on the Road covers these other legal matters and much more.

Even though you are legal to tow from the perspective of your driving licence and vehicle requirements, the Club's recommendations may well suggest an adjustment to your prospective towing outfit on the grounds of safety, particularly

when towing for the first time. The data sheet Matching Car and Caravan provides much useful information to ensure a good match.

■ The Club's website has an online matching service for members known as Towsafe which can be accessed via the member log-in page at myccc.co.uk/towingmatch. Alternatively contact the Club's Technical Team by email or telephone for advice.

■ It is also worth considering taking a Club manoeuvring course. They are held throughout the country and will provide you with a good grounding in towing safely and legally. Further information is available at myccc.co.uk/courses or call the Club on 0845 1307412.

The Club's data sheet



Further information

Camping and Caravanning Club website – see the technical pages of the help and advice section: www.myccc.co.uk/technicalhelp/

Club Technical helpline for members: 02476 475282 or email techtalk@campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

DVLA and DVSA via their website – see driving – driving licences GOV.UK

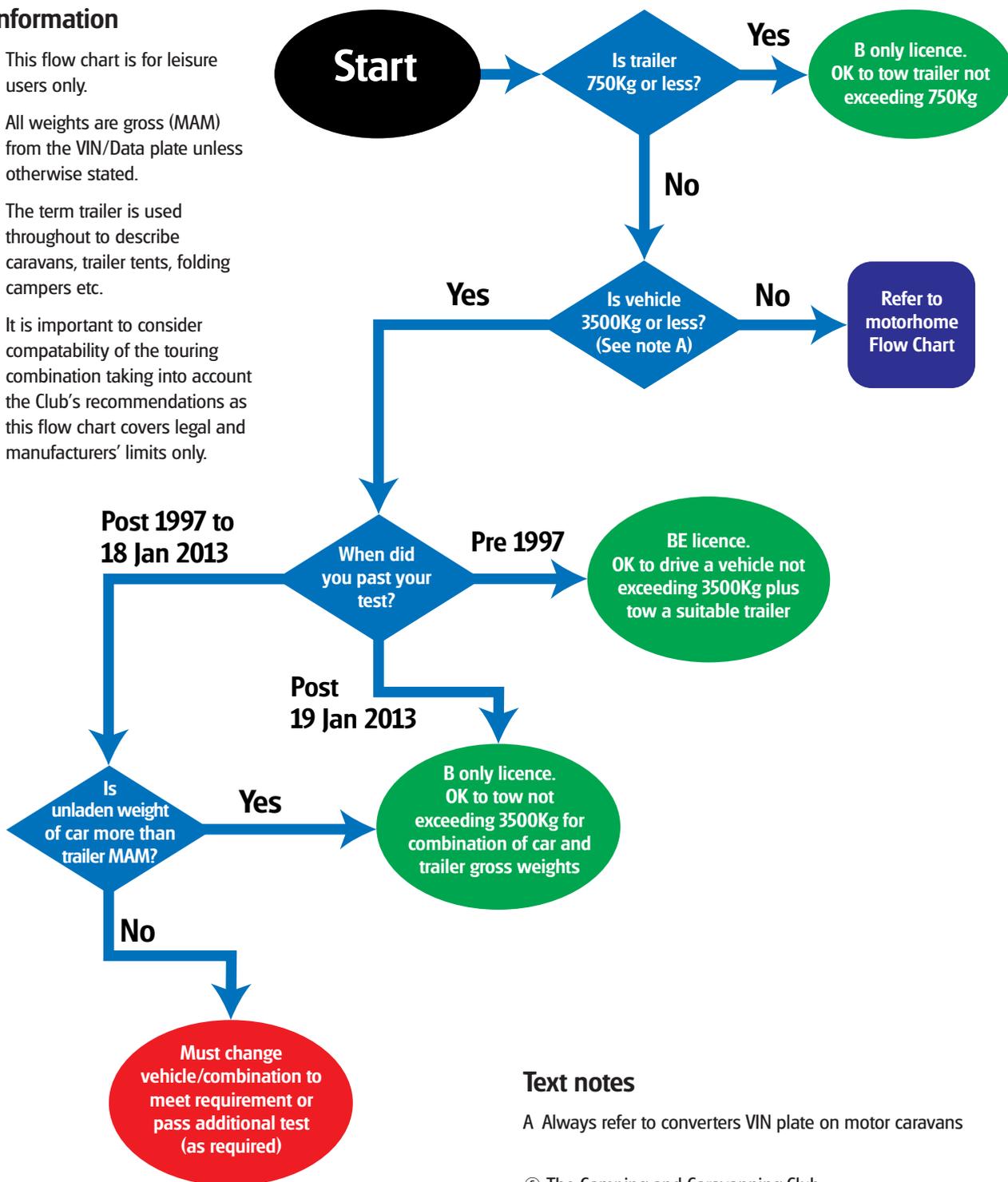
How to Pass the Towing Test by Nigel Lea, published by Towing Solutions (available via amazon.co.uk)

The Club wishes to thank Barry Norris for his contribution to this data sheet.

What can I tow with my driving licence?

Information

- 1 This flow chart is for leisure users only.
- 2 All weights are gross (MAM) from the VIN/Data plate unless otherwise stated.
- 3 The term trailer is used throughout to describe caravans, trailer tents, folding campers etc.
- 4 It is important to consider compatibility of the touring combination taking into account the Club's recommendations as this flow chart covers legal and manufacturers' limits only.



Text notes

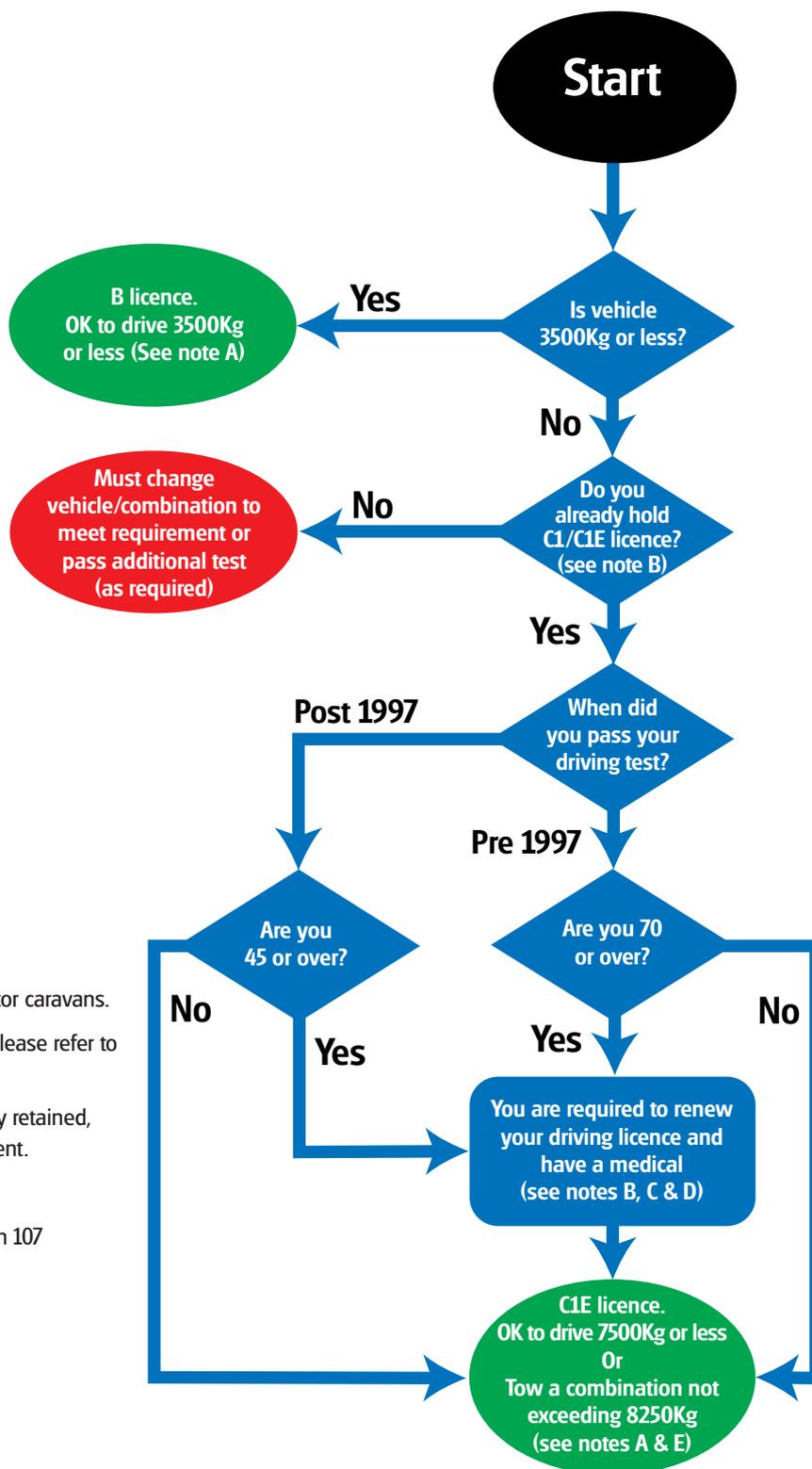
A Always refer to converters VIN plate on motor caravans

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What motorhome can I drive with my driving licence?

Information

- 1 This flow chart is for leisure users only.
- 2 All weights are Gross (MAM) from the VIN/Data plate unless otherwise stated.
- 3 Driving licence requirements are minimum to drive the particular vehicle.
- 4 It is important to consider compatatibilty of the touring combination taking into account the Club's recommendations and manufacturers' limits as this flow chart covers legal limits only.



Text notes

- A Always refer to converter's plate on motor caravans.
- B Post 1997 additional restrictions apply, please refer to Driving Licence Data Sheet (40).
- C Only categories B & BE are automatically retained, you will need to renew C1/C1E entitlement.
- D Assumes no medical restrictions.
- E Assumes licence has standard restriction 107 (if unrestricted 12,000kg).

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