

Hand Controls

1 Gear Lever

The gear lever enables us to change from one gear to another and is used in conjunction with the clutch pedal. Most modern cars have five forward gears, some cars may have four or six. The position of the gears are usually shown on the top of the gear lever and are clearly numbered 1 - 5. In addition to your forward gears there is also a reverse gear, this is identified with the letter R. The two layouts shown below are the more popular in five-speed gearboxes. The red spot shows the neutral position where the lever automatically springs to when no gear is selected, between 3rd and 4th. The red line shows the travel of neutral which is useful to check you are not in gear before starting the engine. Reverse gear is often protected by a 'gate' which is opened by either pushing down on the lever or pulling up a ring underneath the lever head. You must avoid looking down at the lever when changing gear - your eyes should be on the road ahead.

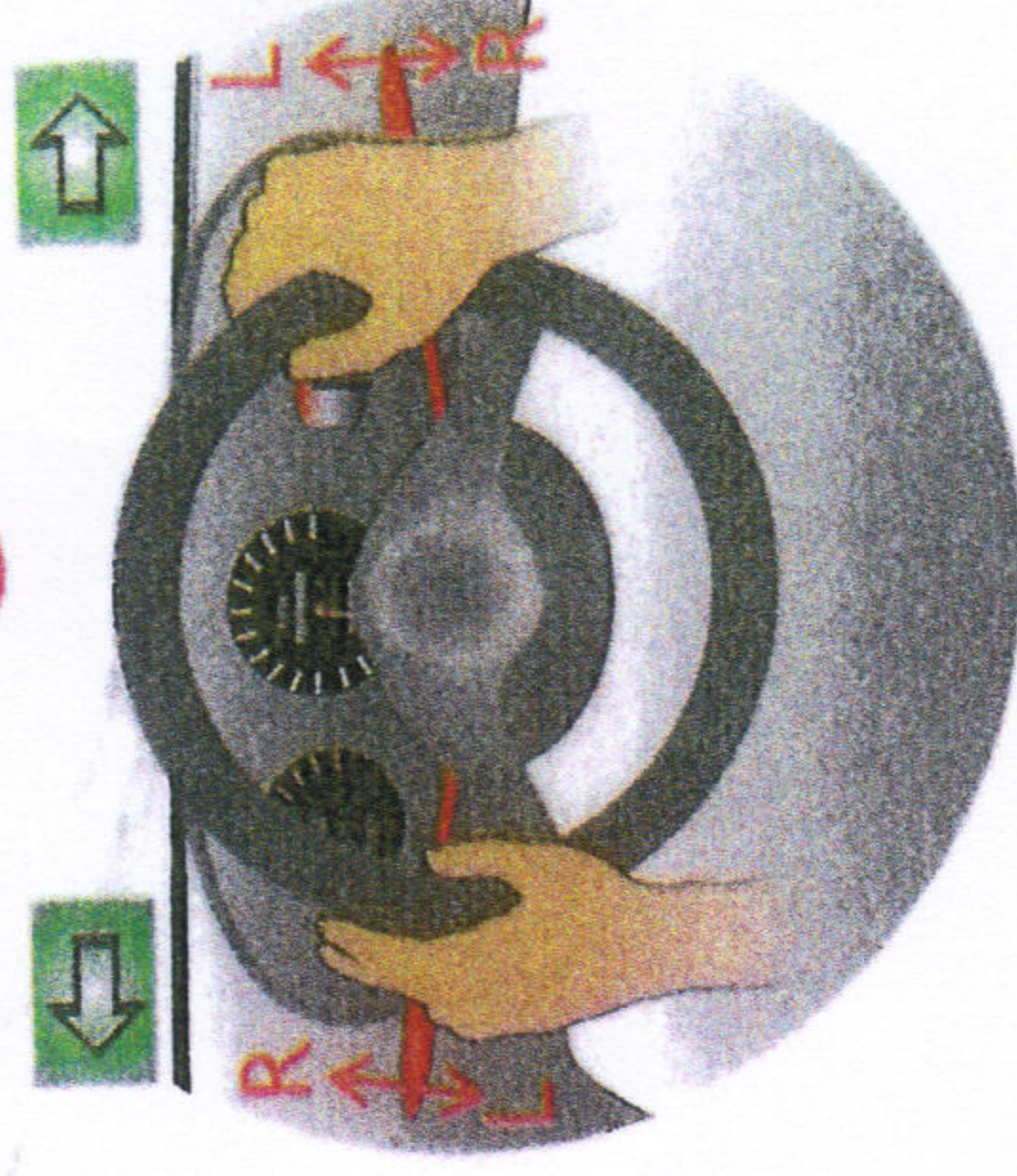
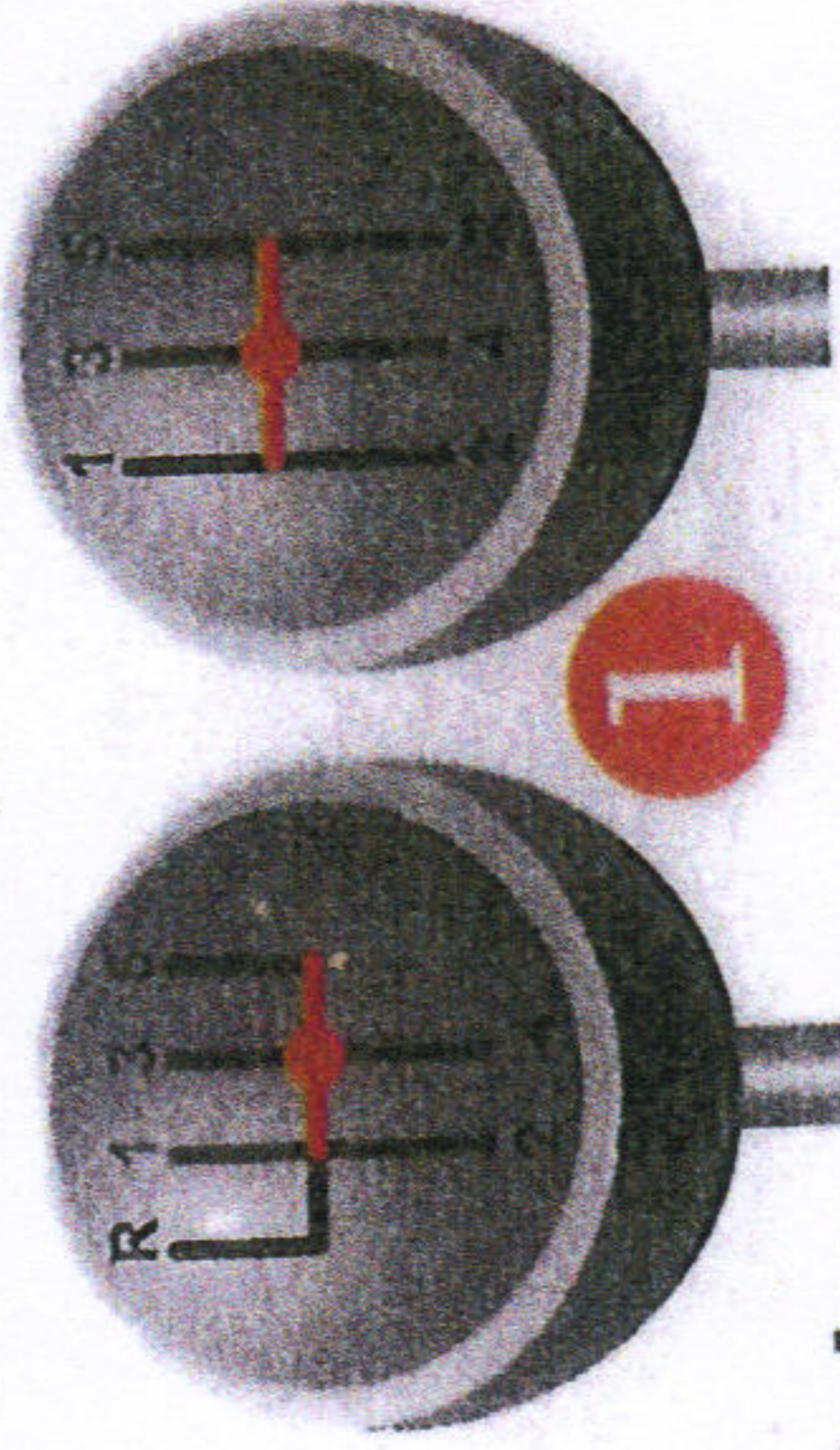
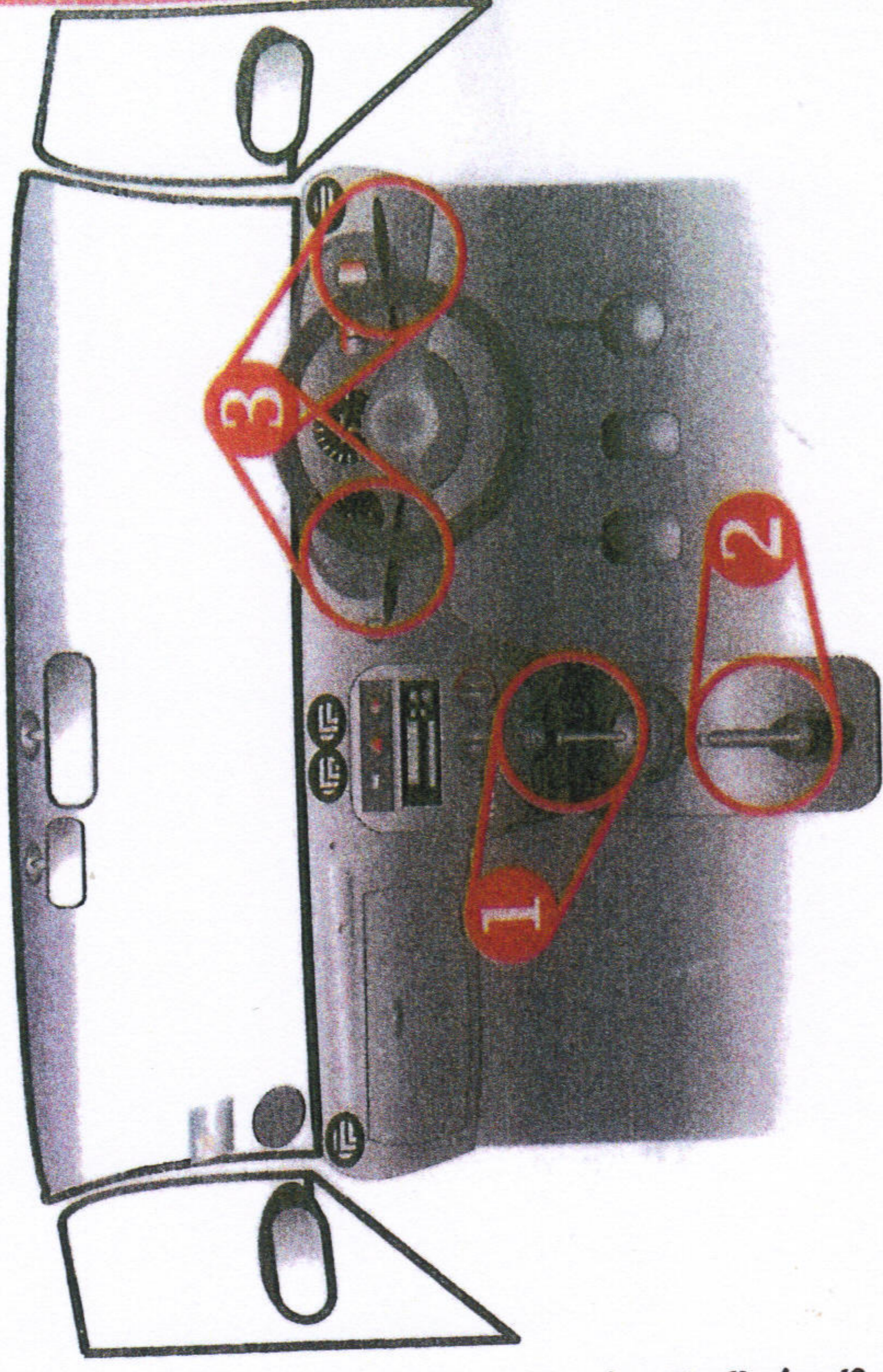
2 Hand/Parking Brake

The handbrake is used to hold the car still once it has stopped. The handbrake should not be used when the car is moving, except in an emergency such as brake failure. In most cars the handbrake operates on the rear wheels only. If applied when the car is moving it could lock the rear wheels and induce a skid. To apply, you should press and hold the button on the end of the lever (this prevents wear to the ratchet system) and pull the lever all the way up. Then release the button and the lever will stay in the 'on' position. To release, lift the lever slightly, press and hold the button and ease the lever down, all the way, to the 'off' position. You should always check the handbrake is 'on' before starting the engine

3 Indicator Switch

The indicator switch is usually a stalk which is on the left or right side of the steering column. It allows you to give directional indicators to show other road users your intention to change direction. Most indicators are self-cancelling but always check after a manoeuvre. You can do this by looking for the repeater warning light.

When using the indicator switch try to use your fingertips keeping your hand in contact with the steering wheel. This will help you to maintain full control of the vehicle.



Quick Quiz

Strive2Drive
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1. Why is it important that the gear lever is in neutral and the handbrake is 'on' before starting the engine?
2. When turning right, which way would you flick the indicator switch if the switch was on the left?
3. True or false? The handbrake should only be applied if you are parking your car.
4. What two ways are there of checking that your indicator has cancelled?