

How to use a sat-nav safely

A sat-nav can help you plan your route and drive to your destination easily - however if used incorrectly it could become a distraction and increase the risk of an accident. This guide can help you enjoy the benefits of a sat-nav whilst staying safe.

MOUNTING IN THE CAR - If you are using a removable sat-nav system (not built into the car) then mounting it in the best place is important. The Highway Code states that your windscreen must be kept clean and free from obstructions to vision, so don't mount your sat-nav directly in your line of sight. Good places are usually in the bottom right corner of the windscreen or near the dashboard air vents, but avoid mounting it too low down so you have to look away from the road to see the screen.

PROGRAMMING YOUR DESTINATION - When planning your destination ensure you are careful to select the correct place. This sounds obvious, but there are many places with the same name so it's easy to make a mistake. If you can't find the correct street name, then try navigating to the postcode instead as it should get you to the general area. When the sat-nav confirms the route, double-check that it looks the correct direction and distance - you don't want to make your journey any longer than it has to be.

DIFFERENT ROUTING OPTIONS - If your sat-nav offers a choice of routing options, it's usually best to select 'quickest', as this will use faster roads where available. Generally avoid using the 'shortest' option, as this will often use unmade roads and narrow lanes and could take much longer in time to drive.

MAKE SURE YOU CAN HEAR THE VOICE DIRECTIONS - Ensure you can hear your sat-nav's voice instructions clearly, so you don't have to look away from the road any more than necessary. There should be a volume adjustment in the menu, so turn it up nice and loud!

OBEY TRAFFIC SIGNS AND USE YOUR COMMON SENSE - Don't follow your sat nav's instructions blindly and ignore what you can see in front of you. If there's an important sign, obey it - ignoring a new speed limit or No Entry sign will be an offence and could even cause an accident. If the route suggests an unsuitable road (especially if you are in a larger vehicle) then avoid it and drive another way.

STOP YOUR CAR BEFORE ADJUSTING YOUR SAT-NAV - Taking your eyes off the road to adjust your sat-nav is distracting and might even cause an accident. If you need to plan a new destination or adjust your route then stop somewhere safe first.

HOW TO RE-PLAN YOUR ROUTE TO AVOID A PROBLEM - If you hear of a problem (e.g. an accident or delay) on your route ahead, then adjust your sat-nav to avoid the area. You can usually select to avoid the next few miles (if the problem is near) or avoid a particular road (if the problem is further away). If you can't adjust your sat-nav easily just drive away from the suggested route and let the unit re-route you automatically.

LIVE TRAFFIC SERVICES - Some sat-nav units have the ability to receive live traffic updates, and will offer to re-route you automatically if they discover a delay on your route. Some units are more accurate than others, so experiment with the settings until you are happy to trust the updates.

STORE YOUR SAT-NAV OUT OF SIGHT WHEN IT'S NOT IN USE - If you leave your sat-nav on display when you leave your car then it will be a potential target for thieves. Hide the unit out of sight, and

don't forget the power cable and mount. Remember to wipe the glass to remove any marks left by the suction cup, as this will be a clue that there may be a unit hidden in the car.

KEEP YOUR MAPS UPDATED - Roads are often changed, so it's important to keep your device updated so that it doesn't try to take you the wrong way. Trying to drive into a No Entry street, or the wrong way on a One-Way street could be embarrassing or even dangerous. Most sat-nav units can be easily updated on your computer to the latest map version, so you can take advantage of any new roads that have been built.

HAVE A BACKUP - What would you do if your sat-nav failed whilst on a journey? Many phones have a navigation app built-in, although most rely on 3G coverage so won't work everywhere - why not keep a road atlas in the boot just in case?

Drive safely, don't get distracted