

Why are lights so blinding these days?



Ask the expert: [Alex Robbins](#) Having spent brief periods in the motor trade and renting out cars, Alex decided to try writing about them instead and has done so ever since. Telegraph 01 Jan 2025



Causing undue dazzle or discomfort to other persons using the road with your lights is technically against the law

Dear Alex,

I wish there was some way of persuading drivers not to sit with their foot on the brake pedal when [stopped at traffic lights](#) and so on, blinding drivers behind behind with their brake lights. And how are manufacturers of EVs allowed, legally, to fit [blindingly bright headlights](#) to their vehicles? -CM

Dear CM,

Rule 114 of [the Highway Code](#) states: “In stationary queues of traffic, drivers should apply the parking brake and, once the following traffic has stopped, take their foot off the footbrake to deactivate the vehicle brake lights. This will minimise glare to road users behind until the traffic moves again.”

And the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations’ rule 27 prohibits the use of any light “so as to cause undue dazzle or discomfort to other persons using the road”.

Does this mean it’s against the law to keep your foot on the brake pedal, thus displaying your brake lights, at traffic lights? You could argue it is, but I would question whether you’d be successfully prosecuted for doing so. Either way, I try to avoid it, simply because, like you, [I find it horribly dazzling](#) when I’m behind a stationary car at night with LED brakelights shining directly in my eyes.

But it’s not only manufacturers of electric cars that fit exceedingly bright and potentially dazzling headlights. Almost every new car either has LED headlights as standard, or as an optional extra. None is in contravention of the current lighting regulations; the problem is that the rules themselves are no longer fit for purpose. The beam patterns the regulations describe are reliant on the fact that halogen lights’ brightness falls away with distance. The trouble is that LEDs do so to a far lesser degree - which, of course, is one of the reasons they’ve taken over.

What’s more, LED lights’ colour temperature is more toward the blue end of the spectrum - making them much harder for your eyes to adjust to than the yellower tint of halogen bulbs; indeed, France kept yellow headlights for 40 years after the war because they were deemed to be less dazzling than pure “white” bulbs. You’re not alone in finding these [new headlights to be blinding](#): 89 per cent of drivers believe the problem is getting worse, according to a survey [carried out by the RAC](#). Meanwhile, a report produced by a group of experts earlier this year concluded that modern LED headlights are not fit for purpose.

The report suggested greater controls on brightness, glare, flicker and colour temperature for headlights. The good news is that the Department for Transport commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory to conduct an independent study on the subject earlier this year, which is ongoing. We await the results - and hope that the Government acts on them.

In the meantime, there isn’t much that can be done, though if you’re the owner of a car with LED lights (or even xenon bulbs, which aren’t quite as bright as LEDs but operate at a similar colour temperature), it’s probably considerate to make sure the lights are levelled correctly - and, of course, to use the handbrake at traffic lights.