

# THE DRIVING TEST

## REALITY CHECK

There's no point in rushing to get your licence, especially if you don't really need one or won't have the opportunity to use it. Remember, like anything you learn – a sport, a computer program or even a musical instrument – unless you have the opportunity to practise or perform regularly, you get rusty. Make learning to drive your decision and take the plunge at the time that best suits you and your lifestyle. If you bus or train it to work or school every day, why not wait until you actually need your licence and you have the time to learn the skills that will make you a safe driver for life.



## DRIVERS

Now is the time to brush up on the road rules and go through all the basic driving skills again to make sure important actions like checking mirrors, checking your blind spots and travelling at a safe speed and distance from the vehicle in front are second nature to you.

It's also a good idea to find out exactly what will happen when you go for your driving test. Ask the RTA, a professional driving instructor or any newly licensed driver about what to expect. Then, when you're sure you're ready, and your supervising driver agrees, contact the RTA and make a booking to sit your Driving Ability Road Test.

If you pass your driving test, you will need to have your photograph taken and you will leave the motor registry with your Provisional Drivers' Licence. This is the first of two P-plates that allows you to drive solo. Remember though, you are still a new driver with lots to experience and a lot of learning to do. In fact, a good driver never stops learning.



**A COUPLE OF MY FRIENDS HAD DUMB ACCIDENTS WITHIN WEEKS OF GETTING THEIR LICENCES – EMMA**

*They weren't hurt or anything but their cars looked pretty bad. Both of them were driving in heavy rain for the first time and it made me realise I needed more practice before trying to drive on my own. So, I put my driving test off and talked my parents into helping me practice in bad weather. It really helped me a lot.*



# THE DRIVING TEST

A more detailed description of these tasks can be found in the RTA's Road Users' Handbook and a Guide to DART. (refer to the Extra Help section on page 52.)



## DRIVERS

### TEST CHECKLIST

You should pass your Driver Ability Road Test (DART) if you can:

- Show that you know where the controls of the car are and how to use them
- Pull away safely from the kerb
- Move off without rolling back
- Steer a steady course
- Travel at a speed suitable for the conditions and within the speed limit
- Leave a safe gap to vehicles in front of you, and around you, at all times
- Use your mirrors correctly
- Give sufficient warning before turning or diverging
- Do head checks (ie, turn your head to look over your shoulder and check the blind spots)
- Brake smoothly to slow down or stop
- Use the clutch (if fitted) and gears smoothly
- Demonstrate appropriate judgement at intersections
- Stay in the correct lane or position on the road when turning
- Travel within the appropriate lane markings
- Take safe, suitable action in any unexpected situation
- Stop your car smoothly at, or within, one metre of the line at Stop signs or traffic lights
- Satisfactorily complete any of the following low speed manoeuvres – a reverse parallel park, a straight line reverse, an angle park or a three point turn
- Drive without the car drifting across the lane

Going for their Ps can be pretty nerve-racking for you both – but don't panic. If you've provided lots of practice, worked your way through this booklet and your learner has completed their log book, they are well on their way to becoming a safe young driver.

## SUPERVISING

### DRIVERS

- Your learner should consider sitting their driving test when your role is minimal and the learner can cope alone.
- Tell your learner which route you want them to take, but let them make the driving decisions.
- Have your learner work through the activities in the previous Test Checklist and take notes on their performance. After the drive, assess the learner on each activity and identify areas for improvement together. Keep practising until the learner can competently perform each task.

If you or your learner are a little unsure about the driving test it might be a good idea to use a professional driving instructor to prepare your learner for this test. Remember, you will be unable to accompany your learner.

Only encourage your learner to sit their test if you are confident they can handle any driving situation safely.

Ask yourself this: Have they had enough practice so that they would:

- Handle the vehicle competently?
- Scan the road ahead for hazards?
- Drive in a low risk manner?
- Make quick and appropriate decisions?
- Know their speed and the speed of other drivers?

(For more information refer to pages 32-35)

# SO, YOU FINALLY GOT YOUR PS!

## CONGRATULATIONS

### YOU'VE FINALLY GOT YOUR PS.

Getting there is one thing, but making sure you get to your destination and back again safely every time is another!



## DRIVERS

Statistics show that in the first year of driving, P-platers are especially prone to crashing. They have:

- More than three times the risk of having a single vehicle crash, like running off the road, and
- Three times the risk of being involved in a crash in which at least one person is injured or killed.

The figures are pretty daunting but the good news is that you get safer with experience, so take it easy to begin with.

Getting a lot of driving practice as a learner will lower your risk of having a crash. When you do get your Provisional Drivers' Licence, remember you should continue to learn and get experience in low risk situations first, gradually building up to more difficult trips over a few months.

Driving experience is the key to safe driving which continues long after you've got your licence. Stay alert, stick to the rules and keep your licence – and your life.

Remember – whatever your destination, and no matter how close or how far from home it is, getting there (and back again) safely will mean sticking to what you've learnt and what you know is right. You'll have to learn to drive for other drivers who are not as careful as you, and always expect the unexpected.

### CONFIDENCE ALERT

Being confident is important when you're behind the wheel. You have to be sure that you know how to drive and how to cope with any unexpected driving situation – but being too confident can be dangerous.

Many P-plater crashes can be attributed to increased risk taking as a result of over-confidence. Stay alert and be wary of other road users – you can never be sure they'll do the right thing.



Keep control over your passengers. While you're doing the driving, you make the decisions – not them. If your friends don't like the way you drive, or say you drive too slow, try telling them that they'll find walking is even slower but you would be happy to let them out as soon as it is safe to pull over!

“

BECOMING A GOOD DRIVER TAKES MORE THAN JUST A YEAR OR TWO – MIKE

*I thought I was pretty cool when I got my licence – I was one of the first in my group, I did great on the test and even my olds thought I was pretty safe. It turned out I was still pretty forgetful and slow to identify problems. I had two small binges and almost a big one before I admitted I wasn't as good as I thought. You keep on getting better and better for years once you get your licence.*

”

# MORE H.E.L.P. FOR PARENTS AND SUPERVISING DRIVERS

## SUPERVISING DRIVERS

Just as you supported and guided your child through their first major milestone (learning to walk), parents need to take the primary role of helping to prepare their young driver for a lifetime of safe driving.

Getting There has been developed following extensive research – research that has also exposed many myths. The following pages are specially for parents and supervising drivers and we hope the information they contain will help in some way to ease any fear or confusion, provide a starting point and add to what will hopefully be a positive and enjoyable experience for you both.

### MYTH 1 – LEARNING TO DRIVE IS SIMPLE!

The more experience you gain over time, the more simple the driving task can seem. But for the learner, driving involves a complex range of tasks – both physical and mental. Learning to drive is not simple and all beginners make mistakes. Even if your learner is a good student, or is well co-ordinated, don't expect him/her to learn to drive quickly. Have realistic expectations and let your learner know that becoming a good, safe driver takes time and lots of experience.

It's likely that, if you've been driving for a long time, you have become very automated in many driving tasks. Sometimes you can't even remember getting from 'A' to 'B'. But try to remember what it was like before driving became second nature to you.

A simple way of experiencing what your learner is feeling can be done next time you are out driving yourself. For example: As you approach a controlled intersection (ie, an intersection with traffic lights) start listing all the observations, decisions and actions you need to make as a driver. You'll soon find yourself at the intersection (but probably only half-way through your list!) Normally, many of these things would happen automatically, or concurrently, without you needing to think about them. But your learner is years away from such automated processes and only experience will help them gain this ability. Until then, they will be processing all the information around them bit by bit.

So the most important thing you can give your learner is lots of practice, and plenty of practical advice and support along the way.

Keep control over your passengers. While you're doing the driving, you make the decisions – not them. If your friends don't like the way you drive, or say you drive too slow, try telling them that they'll find walking is even slower but you would be happy to let them out as soon as it is safe to pull over!

#### MYTH 2 – THE EXPERTS SHOULD DO IT. I WILL ONLY PASS ON MY BAD HABITS.

Professional driving instruction can add value to the driving sessions with your learner. If you are unsure of the learning to drive process at any stage, book your learner a lesson or two with a driving instructor. Many supervising drivers find professional help useful to teach the basic car control techniques in Stage One, and towards the end of the learner's practice sessions, as a way to brush up skills and ensure the learner is prepared for their test.

Some parents worry that they will teach their young driver bad habits or driving short cuts that will put them at risk. Sure, driving short cuts are not a good idea for any driver! But experts suggest that the experience a learner gains from the opportunity to practice far outweighs the risk of passing on what may be a few lazy habits. Besides, it's no good worrying about teaching them your bad habits at this stage. If you have developed any bad habits over time (as many of us do) your young driver will have been observing your behaviour (and others) for a long time before they even get behind the wheel.

# MORE H.E.L.P. FOR PARENTS AND SUPERVISING DRIVERS



I WASTED VALUABLE TIME IN THE BEGINNING – PAUL

*I found myself thinking up all kinds of reasons to avoid taking him out. It took me a while to realise it was my experience he needed – and all I was giving him were excuses.*



Of course, depending on how bad your ‘bad habits’ are, it’s not too late to become a positive influence on their driving. So, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I always drive according to the conditions?
- Do I check my blind spots and use my mirrors to gauge the activity around my vehicle?
- Do I anticipate the actions of other drivers?
- Do I avoid getting upset and blaming others rather than accepting that my actions may have contributed to an incident? (eg, I should have paid more attention, I should have indicated sooner, etc.)
- Do I maintain a safe driving space to the car in front of me?
- Do I always obey road signs and signals?
- Do I scan well ahead looking for the unexpected actions of other road users?
- Do I tell passengers to be quiet if they are interfering with my driving?
- Do I only drive when I’m in a fit state, with my mind on the driving task (not distracted by other thoughts – work, family, etc)?
- Do I plan my drives and allow myself realistic travel time to avoid speeding?
- Am I prepared to leave the car at home if there’s a chance that I would have to drive when tired or after drinking, etc?
- Am I courteous and patient of other’s bad choices (not aggressive)?



### MYTH 3 – DRIVER EDUCATION SHOULD BE TAUGHT AT SCHOOL.

There are already a lot of general road safety issues covered within the school curriculum, starting with infant students and continuing through to senior high school. However, with an increasingly crowded curriculum, and numerous youth health related issues all competing for space (particularly in high schools) it is difficult for schools to dedicate much time to a single issue, no matter how important it may be.

Learning is best achieved through a variety of ways. That is why NRMA Road Safety experts recommend, wherever possible, that a learner driver receive a combination of general road safety awareness (at school and at home), followed by professional instruction, with the majority of driver ‘education’ being provided by the parent or supervising driver.

### MYTH 4 – MY INSURANCE WON’T COVER ANY DAMAGE TO MY CAR.

Feedback from many supervising drivers, and often parents, has shown that the cost of insuring a car for the learner driver has discouraged them from spending time with the learner, particularly in more complex or risky traffic situations.

It’s worthwhile checking your insurance company’s policies regarding under-25-year-old drivers. Some companies have seen the benefit of adjusting policies so that parents will provide their learner with more on-road practice in all conditions.

In fact, crash statistics show that learner drivers under supervision rarely have crashes.

# WHERE DO I START?

## NEED TO FIND TIME?

Why not write a list of jobs around the house that the learner driver can do in return for a practice drive. For example, unpacking the dishwasher, washing the car, vacuuming the floor, or mowing the lawns. This not only helps you, it also sends the message to the learner that driving is not a right but a privilege that comes with responsibilities.

## START SIMPLE

- Begin with short trips in quiet streets and in normal conditions. Avoid moving onto more advanced or more complex situations and driving conditions until both of you are ready. If you are combining professional instruction with your practice sessions, it is a good idea to keep pace with the driving experiences introduced by the instructor.
- The early stages of driving are very difficult and encouraging your learner to concentrate on the car and the road is vital. Minimise unnecessary conversation during the lesson, saving detailed discussion for an after-drive review.
- Discourage other distractions such as passengers or the radio, especially in Stages One and Two (Refer to Stage One/Starting Out on page 8.). As of 1st July 2007 the use of mobile phones is prohibited; learner, P1 drivers and provisional riders must not use any function of a mobile phone while driving or riding. This includes phones in the hands-free mode or with the loudspeaker operating, or sending SMS (text) messages.

## SET A FEW RULES

- Just as there are rules of the road, there should also be some rules that spell out the partnership between you and

your learner. Guidelines should clearly set out each other's expectations so the chance of conflict is minimised. It's worth writing them down, particularly if there will be more than one person acting as a supervising driver.

- Avoid having more than one licensed adult in the car giving instructions while the learner is driving. This can be distracting, confusing and stressful for all of you.
- Don't forget to practice what you preach and set a good example when you are driving. Children notice what parents do and being a good role model by always wearing your seat belt, staying under 0.05, sticking to the legal speed limits and taking responsibility for your actions will have a positive influence on your learner.
- Emotion is a dangerous passenger in a car. If you or your learner become upset or stressed, stop, or even postpone the driving session. (See the information on coping with stress on page 37.)

## HAVE A PLAN

- Whether you are the primary teacher, or you are providing practice between professional lessons, consider the ability of your learner driver and plan your sessions accordingly.

- Discuss the route you will take before getting started. By following a plan, and having a clear picture of the route and its challenges beforehand, you will save time and make the most out of the on-road experience together.
- Extend your trips beyond the local area and even include destinations that the young driver will be visiting once they are licensed and on their own.
- Lots of experience and the ability to cope with the unexpected are vital for safe driving performance throughout life, but don't make the learner drive in situations that they are not ready for.

#### TALK ABOUT IT

- Before starting out, talk about any possible situations you might encounter and how they might be handled.
- While in the car, keep your language simple and your voice calm.
- Beware of the word 'right'. This word can be confusing, especially when directions are being given. When you are referring to something on the 'right' (a street, a turn, etc.) say "right". When you mean 'OK' or 'yes', say "OK", "yes", "correct" etc. Incorporating hand signals can be helpful to a learner driver and reinforce your meaning.
- Positive reinforcement statements like "The way you looked

ahead was good. Next time try..." Wherever possible, criticism should be left until you get home.

- Spend a little bit of time at the end of the practice session discussing any areas of concern. This information will help you when planning your next practice session.
- Encourage the learner driver to talk over any concerns or situations they have openly and without fear of reproach. It is important that you both understand the learning does not stop once they pass their driving test. In a way, it is only the beginning of a whole new learning experience. It's better that they have someone to discuss things with.

#### TIME IT RIGHT

- Plan for about 30 minutes of practice per session in the beginning. If the road and traffic conditions are appropriate to your learner's development, let them drive to and from the practice area. As the learner becomes more competent, increase the duration of each session (but watch carefully for signs of fatigue or distress).
- New drivers in Stage One will need a lot more time to react than drivers in Stage Three. When giving instructions make sure you allow plenty of time.

#### DON'T RUSH

- Everyone learns at a different rate. Some learners may need help from professional instructors and others won't. Discuss the possibilities with your learner.

# WHERE DO I START?

## HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN THEY ARE READY FOR THEIR FIRST TEST?

Your learner will probably be ready for the licence test when you have become a passenger and not an active supervisor, but don't confuse their ability to pick up the basic car control skills quickly with being a safe and competent driver. It takes a minimum of three years to become competent – and even then, drivers are continually challenged.

- Your role should gradually decrease as the learner's skills increase. During Stage One the learner will rely on you to show them basic car control techniques. In Stage Two you will need to direct your learner to scan the road ahead and watch out for hazards. Once the learner has mastered the road conditions listed in Stage Three, you should very gradually allow them to make the driving decisions. Remember, Stage Three should make up the majority of practice time behind the wheel.

### UNDERSTANDING THE 'TRICKY BITS'

- When it comes to becoming a safe driver there are some common driving activities that learners have difficulty with. If you are aware of these, you can make sure you incorporate opportunities to practice them in your driving sessions together. The most common tricky bits, according to recent surveys of learners and their parents are:
  - Scanning intersections for turning vehicles, pedestrians and other hazards
  - Judging the position of the vehicle on the road
  - Judging speed (both theirs and the speed of other vehicles)

- Maintaining a safe distance
- Higher speed driving
- Driving in rain and fog
- Changing lanes
- Merging onto freeways
- City driving
- Heavy traffic
- Roundabouts

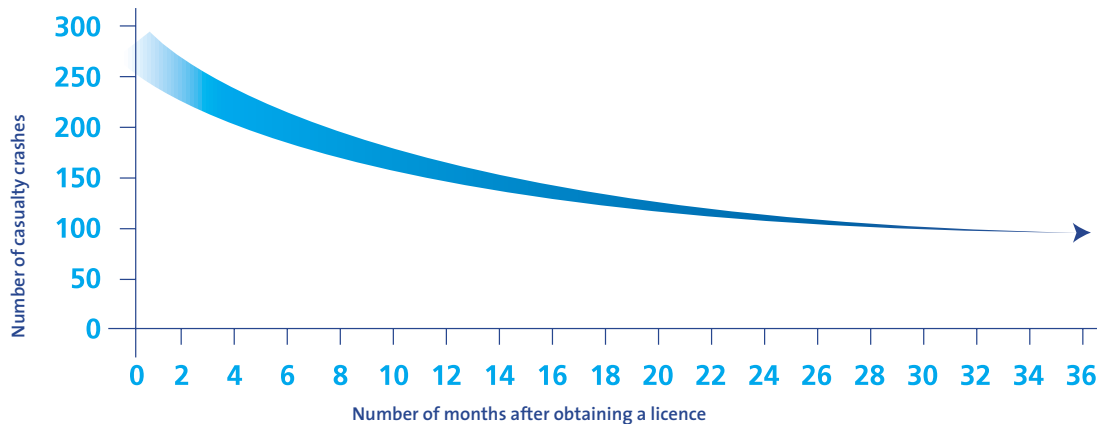
Many learners also have difficulty grasping the following important concepts. Talking about these will help:

- Identifying and anticipating hazards and the unexpected actions of other road users
- The danger of driving when tired

- The danger of driving when emotional, upset or stressed
- The danger of driving distractions, such as passengers, radio noise or looking at maps in traffic
- The danger of speeding and the need for adjusting the speed to suit the conditions (rain, glare, night, gravel)
- The danger of over-confidence
- The danger of following too closely
- The danger of moving into small gaps in traffic

#### REALITY CHECK

Number of casualty crashes after licensing. This graph shows that the likelihood of being involved in a casualty crash almost halves once a newly licensed driver has six to eight months driving experience. It also shows that they continue to improve for years after getting their licence.



# CRASH ALERT

Newly licensed drivers tend to have more crashes than other drivers. The individual scenarios may differ but the most common types of P-plater crashes are:

- running into the back of another vehicle;
- running into pedestrians;
- vehicles turning across the P-plater's path, for example at intersections;
- where another driver does something unexpected.
- single vehicle crashes; and

## TYPE OF CRASH

### REAR END

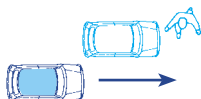


## SOME TIPS TO HELP AVOID THESE CRASHES INCLUDE:

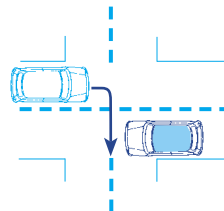
### TIPS

- Increase following distances.
- Reduce speed.
- Travel at speeds suitable for traffic conditions.
- Beware of distractions both inside and outside the vehicle.
- Scan well ahead, not just the immediate area around the vehicle.
- Reduce speed.
- Slow down near shopping centres, schools and other busy pedestrian areas.
- Scan for pedestrians, especially between parked cars.

### PEDESTRIANS



### INTERSECTIONS



- Slow down before entering intersections and look out for turning vehicles.
- Make eye contact with other drivers.
- Don't change lanes near intersections.
- Don't assume another driver will give way.
- Travel at speeds suitable for traffic conditions.

### SINGLE VEHICLE CRASHES



- Slow right down on unfamiliar roads and areas.
- Observe advisory signs (usually black symbols on a yellow background) that alert drivers to dangers or hazards.

Also vitally important for the new young driver when it comes to avoiding crashes is to understand that other road users do not always give way or act legally. Never assume other drivers will do the right thing.

In most cases, crashes like these will be avoided if your learner understands the importance of not following too closely, speed control and scanning intersections for hazards.

## SUPERVISING DRIVERS

### ONE FINAL WARNING

Although it may seem like stating the obvious, the importance of driving safely at all times – for the rest of your learner’s life – can’t be overstated. And neither can the impact of drink driving, speeding, using mobile phones, fatigue and not wearing seat belts. All five are potential killers.

We’ve included some information in the back of this booklet so you can make sure your learner understands the dangers and the importance of always driving within the law.

The RTA requires that your learner holds their licence for at least 12 months and does a minimum of 120 hours of supervised driving (including 20 hours of night driving) before they sit the driving test. But remember, more practice means more experience, and the more experience the more competent they’ll be as a driver. Road safety experts recommend that your learner does as much practice beyond the 120-hour minimum as possible.

**There are no shortcuts to learning how to drive safely. It takes time, practice and a mature attitude. It also takes experience – experience that cannot be gained with just a few lessons, or a one-day driving course. ‘Experience’ means the accumulation of different driving situations over a long period of time. The Learner Drivers’ Licence is valid for three years. There should be no rush or pressure to become licensed. So, don’t let your learner driver jump ahead too quickly or inflate the amount of driving experience that has been achieved. There is no benefit to either one of you in the end, especially if the time ever came for that experience to be drawn on by the new driver.**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Graduated licensing systems have been shown to have real potential to make a difference so use all the materials available to help you and your young driver through this important milestone. Using this publication as a guide, and using the RTA Learner Drivers' Log Book to record driving experiences, will not only make your role as supervising driver clearer, it will also help to make your young driver a safer driver.

## HOW DO I CHOOSE A DRIVING INSTRUCTOR?

Together you and your learner might choose to engage a driving school at different times throughout the learner period to improve certain driving skills. For example, using a driving school for the first couple of lessons is a good idea.

In fact, it is best to see the learning-to-drive process as a three-way partnership between the learner, the supervisor and the professional driving instructor. As parents, you and the driving instructor can share the responsibility for making the young driver as competent and as safe as possible before they sit their driving test. So, choosing the right driving instructor is important.

The driving school industry has a national body called the Australian Driver Trainers Association (ADTA). Its charter is to help raise the standards within the driver training industry to ensure full and thorough training is provided to all new and existing drivers.

It is a good idea to ask if the school is an ADTA member, or if they have attended a Beyond Test Routes workshop. More importantly, both you and the learner need to feel comfortable with the style of instruction and communication offered, and confident in the instructor's ability.

## HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK:

- Is the driving school a member of ADTA?
- What course guidelines do they have? Do they have structured lesson plans?
- Do they have any supporting education materials to give the student?
- Do they offer a system of reporting progress to parents?



- Can they provide guidance to parents?
- Is the training one-to-one (not three in the car)?
- Can they provide an instructor sensitive to the needs of the learner? (Some young people may be nervous, lack confidence or prefer a choice of male or female instructor.)
- Is there a choice of vehicle? (Size, type, auto or manual.)
- How flexible are they? (Will they change their pick up and drop off points to suit work, school or home, and what happens if you need to cancel or reschedule a lesson?)
- What happens in the event of a crash? Who's liable? (Do they have public liability and professional indemnity insurance and comprehensive insurance?)
- How much are the lessons and what is the duration of each lesson?

#### HOW DO I MAKE DRIVING SESSIONS LESS STRESSFUL?

When it comes to helping your learner get plenty of driving practice, stress can be an all too common passenger. And once on board, it can be difficult to budge. By acknowledging its presence and taking some positive 'anti-stress' action you can actually minimise your discomfort and your learner's.

There's nothing wrong with a little bit of stress. In fact, stress is a natural reaction to unusual or challenging situations – like being in a car with an inexperienced driver!

In small doses stress actually helps you become more alert, aware and careful.

But in large amounts, stress can be destructive, interfering with your ability to work with your learner.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Try not to focus on negative thoughts like costly repair bills and injury to yourself and others. Learner drivers rarely have crashes.

Keep reminding yourself that you are making a big difference to your learner's ultimate driving safety by providing plenty of opportunities to practice.

A lot of stress can be contagious too, rubbing off on your learner and resulting in both of you feeling uncomfortable and dreading your driving sessions together.

Unfortunately many supervising drivers unintentionally make the situation worse by having negative attitudes or thoughts about their new role.

As a supervising driver, you can't really change the situation – but you can change the way you feel about it by changing your negative thoughts into thoughts that accept the situation and predict success.

For example, the more realistic and tolerant you are, the more comfortable and less stressed you will become. And as you relax into the situation, it's likely that your learner will too.

## POSITIVE STEPS TO STRESS-FREE SUCCESS

You can take some positive, practical steps to minimise the stress of being a supervising driver. The following hints might help:

- Allow yourself time to get used to your new role. Just as learners need to get used to driving, you need to get used to being their passenger. It's a natural reaction to feel a bit stressed at first.
- Don't take the learner driving at times of the day when other things are worrying you. Try to schedule driving sessions for times when you are stress-free.
- Always plan driving practice activities to match the ability and comfort of the learner.

- Discuss the way you feel about being a supervising driver with your learner. If you feel uncomfortable, stressed or anxious let them know why. You might be able to come up with a way around the problem together.
- Talk to a professional driving instructor, or even go driving with the instructor and your learner, to see how they handle difficult situations.
- If things do get stressful, be prepared to stop the car in a safe spot to allow both of you time to calm down before continuing.

#### WHAT ARE BLIND SPOTS AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO A LEARNER DRIVER?

Blind spots can occur because of the design of your vehicle (eg, the pillars that frame the windows) and the position of your rear view and side mirrors. To ensure your learner driver understands blind spots, ask them to sit in the driver's seat and position their seat and mirrors in preparation for driving. As you walk around the stationary car, instruct your learner to call out "STOP" whenever they lose sight of you in their mirrors. Explain to your learner the importance of checking over their shoulder.

At first your learner driver might have a problem maintaining a steady course while doing shoulder checks. So you will need to practice this. By adjusting mirrors and developing the ability to scan the whole driving scene (ahead, beside, behind) blind spots can be minimised. Knowing about blind spots will also help the new driver understand the importance of keeping out of other drivers' blind spots.

“

I DIDN'T EXPECT TO ENJOY BEING IN  
THE PASSENGER SEAT – PAM

*I admit it took me a few goes, but I actually started to enjoy our drives and the time we spent talking about it afterwards. It was nice spending time together. I'm even looking forward to my daughter getting her Ls!*

”

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TO JUDGE THREE SECONDS WHILE DRIVING, TRY THIS:

1. Watch for when the rear of the car in front of you passes a sign, pole or some other easily seen point up ahead.
2. Count the seconds it takes to reach the same spot – “one – thousand – one, one – thousand – two, one – thousand – three”.
3. You are following too closely if you pass the mark before you count “one – thousand – three”.

## WHAT IS THE THREE-SECOND RULE?

It is a three second crash avoidance space (C.A.S.).

Low risk drivers like to keep a safety cushion around their vehicles. It is the best way to prepare for what other drivers might do. A three-second C.A.S between you and the car in front will usually be enough space to stop the car or take some other action.

Obviously, the greater the distance, the greater your chances of being able to take action without negative consequences. To judge the minimum safe distance use the technique outlined in the blue box.

A three-second C.A.S, good speed control, lane positioning and communication, all help to minimize any risk of a collision. But, what if someone cuts in?

Firstly, don't get aggressive – they are obviously not a safe or considerate driver. If someone does slip in front of you, back off a bit. It won't really make your trip any slower or longer, just safer. In fact, you'll be surprised how little people do cut in – try it yourself!

## WHAT IS A HAZARD?

Hazards can include a person, vehicle or animal on or near the road, and changes to the road conditions. Some examples of potential hazards include:

- Pedestrians walking from between parked cars
- Vehicles turning across a line of traffic
- A driver opening the door of a parked car

- A change from a sealed to a gravel road crests or bends in the road.

In fact, hazards are everywhere. Some pose a very real risk and require that a driver take immediate action. Other hazards may be dealt with by knowing they are there and driving in a manner that will allow you to pass the hazard with minimal risk.

Scanning your environment is part of learning what hazards are. Scanning is also critical to knowing what other road users around you are up to. We may not know what they are about to do, but at least being aware they are there is a start.

A good scanning technique will cover checking in front, to the sides and behind the vehicle. New drivers may be poor at detecting hazards because they scan the road differently. They scan a narrower field of view, closer to the car and have yet to learn how to use their peripheral vision effectively. In the beginning, a new driver's head movement is very exaggerated (they move their head more than just moving their eyes).

Seeing a hazard, or a risk, is not enough. A driver then needs to be able to respond appropriately. This knowledge can only be gained through experience. So practice, practice and more practice is the key.

As a guide, encourage your learner to practice looking at least 8-12 seconds in front. (You can estimate this in much the same way you estimated the three-second gap.)

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For new drivers, it is the lack of experience and maturity that are the major contributing factors to crashes, making P-plate drivers in their first year of solo driving the group most at risk. As drivers generally develop basic vehicle handling skills very quickly, their perceived success early in the learning stage can also lead to over-confidence – a young driver's worst enemy. Undertaking an advanced driver training course of this nature may add to this over-confidence, which in turn may result in the inexperienced driver making driving choices they may once have considered too risky.

## WHAT ABOUT POST LICENCE DRIVER TRAINING COURSES?

Post licence driver training courses (often referred to as 'advanced' or 'defensive') are sometimes seen by concerned parents as the next step for the newly licensed driver. It might be because they need additional help, or because a driving course is viewed as 'the ideal birthday gift'.

## THERE ARE GENERALLY TWO TYPES OF COURSES:

- Driver training/defensive driving – the teaching of car control skills.
- Driver education – which teaches car control skills as well as putting an emphasis on the underlying values, attitudes and processes a driver needs.

Because these courses generally involve driving around a closed circuit track, they get a reputation for being fun and exciting. However, to date there is actually very little evidence that proves they help make safer drivers. For experienced drivers, particularly those who drive for a living or have specific needs (such as off-road 4WD experience) these courses may be of some benefit. In these instances, it's important to look closely at what is to be achieved, and understand that no driving course can substitute for an intelligent, responsible and careful approach to driving.

Based on existing international and Australian research, it's unlikely that attending a short course alone will actually decrease the odds of being in a crash. One of the reasons for this is that skills – any skills – that are not used or not practised regularly, are often forgotten. There is also some suggestion that advanced driver training courses may have the opposite result, leading to an increased confidence, which can in turn lead to increased risk taking.

If you decide further driver training is what you want, we advise you look for a course that has an emphasis on classroom based discussion and low risk driving behaviours and attitudes, with less behind-the-wheel car control skills. One way to determine this is to ask the question: “How much time is spent in the classroom and how much is behind the wheel?”

Even after having completed such a course, it is important to remember that simply acquiring this knowledge and skill does not automatically lead to a change in behaviour. A driver has to be motivated to adopt a less risky style of driving. (At the same time, a short course alone will not undo past learning which has become firmly established through practice.)

A motivated driver can adopt their own safe driving style by:

- Keeping C.A.S around the vehicle – which means keeping plenty of distance between your vehicle and the vehicles in front, at the rear and to the sides.
- Staying alert – driving is a serious responsibility with other road users and different traffic conditions requiring a driver’s constant attention in order to scan the entire environment, process the information and decide how to respond.
- Driving appropriate to the conditions – adjusting the way we drive in bad weather or when other drivers cannot easily be seen (eg, in rain, fog, or at night), adjusting speed and driving to suit the road and traffic conditions (eg, on gravel or heavily congested roads) and sharing the road by letting other drivers know your intentions (and all the time expecting, and being prepared for, other drivers to not always do the same in return!)

# REDUCING THE RISKS

## REALITY CHECK!

It is practice that helps make safer drivers – not driving tests.

At best, a driving test can assess if a driver is able to control a vehicle under relatively simple circumstances. Full understanding of the rules tested at the learner level will only come with on-road experience.

## SUPERVISING

## DRIVERS

GETTING THEM THERE AND GETTING THEM BACK AGAIN – SOME FINAL SURVIVAL TIPS NOW THEY'RE ON THEIR PS.

Now you've helped them get their Provisional Drivers' Licence, your young driver will be responsible for getting themselves to their destination and back again without incident. As their supervising driver, you've given them lots of experience and tried to instill in them your values and safe driving habits. The Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS) recognises that passing a driving test doesn't mean a new driver is ready for anything by imposing certain conditions on novice drivers. This helps to reduce the risks they are exposed to. As they progress through the system, drivers are rewarded with a relaxation of conditions.

As your young driver approaches their next learning phase (Provisional P1 or Provisional P2), it might be a good time to agree on some conditions of your own.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

- **'CRUISING' AROUND** – A car is an expensive mode of transport that helps you get from 'A' to 'B'. Both your bank account and the environment can suffer when cars are driven 'just for the sake of driving around'. This type of driving increases a young driver's exposure to risk.
- **PASSENGERS** – If you allow your new driver to carry other passengers (friends), make a point of knowing who they are. Similarly, if your child gets a ride with a friend, try to find out as much about them and their driving experience as you can.



- **VEHICLE CHECKS** – Whether they are using your car, or their own, vehicle maintenance is important. Have a way of making sure the car is checked on a regular basis. Let your young driver know you will be making regular inspections of the vehicle’s exterior and that they should advise you of any physical problems or incidents straight away. A junk free interior is also important. Empty bottles and cans can become dangerous projectiles in a braking situation and empty chip wrappers on the floor can cause a driver’s feet to slip.

#### SPEEDING

Speeding! Whether unintentional or deliberate, we’ve probably all done it. It was a choice we made as drivers; and every time we sped, and got away with it, we were rewarded (by arriving sooner, by not getting booked, etc.)

Adding speeding to inexperience, along with the young driver’s exaggerated opinion of their driving ability, can have devastating results.

The important thing to note about speeding among inexperienced drivers is that often they do not even realise they are speeding. Young drivers generally lack the ability to judge speeds (their own and others) and also to judge distances. The more experience a young driver has during the learner period, the quicker they will be able to overcome this skill deficiency.

For more detailed information look at the fact sheets and other information on our website [www.mynrma.com.au](http://www.mynrma.com.au)



“

**I FIGURED ONCE HE’D PASSED HIS TEST MY JOB WAS OVER – ANTON**

*It was almost three months after he got his Ps. I remember it well. He swore he hadn’t been speeding but the Police report said something else. It wasn’t until I went for a drive with him that I understood he was still having trouble judging his own speed.*

”

# REDUCING THE RISKS

## REALITY CHECK!

It is practice that helps make safer drivers – not driving tests.

At best, a driving test can assess if a driver is able to control a vehicle under relatively simple circumstances. Full understanding of the rules tested at the learner level will only come with on-road experience.

## NIGHT DRIVING

It is vitally important for learner drivers to experience different driving conditions. Before being eligible to apply for a P1 license, learner drivers must complete at least 120 hours of supervised driving, 20 hours of which must be completed at night time. Even those of us who have been driving for a long time can experience difficulties driving at night. The glare from headlights, limited vision of the road side and poorly illuminated and sign posted areas make night driving hazardous. Add fog, ice or a shower of rain and driving at night becomes even riskier, especially for the young and inexperienced driver.

The young driver's lifestyle means they tend to do more driving at night (when crash risk is high) than older drivers do. At night, drivers receive a reduced amount of information which is also usually of a poorer quality. This alone increases the demands placed on a driver. It is important that the learner driver experience this environment while you are there to help and guide them.

## HERE ARE OUR TIPS FOR DRIVING AT NIGHT.

- Make sure your headlights, brake lights and indicators are working.
- Ensure your vehicle's headlights are dimmed.
- If the glare of oncoming vehicle headlights is strong, suggest the driver shift their gaze to the left of the roadway until the vehicle has passed. This will reduce the intensity of the lights and help them refocus more easily.
- Adjust the rear-view mirror if the headlights behind are strong.
- Remember, if you are having trouble seeing, so are other drivers, so take extra care and slow down if necessary.
- The half-light of dusk or the early morning period can also be difficult. Use of headlights is recommended as they will help you see better, and allow others to see your vehicle.

## COUNTRY ROADS

To those not used to them, country roads can be difficult and dangerous. Those who are used to them run into the danger of being too familiar – in fact, complacency can be a dangerous thing.

There may not be a lot of traffic, but a driver needs to be aware of the speed limit and the hazards that are specific to driving in the country. For example, the road itself is often more narrow and may not have a centre line marked. The edges of the road can be crumbly dirt or gravel, or have trees quite close to them. Obviously you're more likely to see animals on or near rural roads, so you need to scan well.

Adverse weather conditions can bring new challenges to country driving. Heavy rain can cause flash flooding and winter fog in low-lying areas can make driving hazardous.

### HERE ARE OUR TIPS FOR DRIVING IN THE COUNTRY:

- On narrow or winding roads reduce your speed and adhere to advisory signs.
- On narrow roads keep away from the edges, but be ready to move over for an oncoming or overtaking vehicle, or when approaching a crest in the road.
- If you have to move over, then reduce your speed and move off and back onto the sealed surface gradually.
- Scan carefully for animals, particularly at dawn or dusk, and where there are bushes or trees close to the road's edge.
- If you have to drive through animals (eg, sheep) grazing on the side of the road, slow right down to a walking pace and move through slowly. Remember that animals can often act unpredictably.
- Be prepared for more unusual traffic including wider or longer trucks and farm machinery.
- Take particular care at railway level crossings and always scan carefully for trains.

# REDUCING THE RISKS

- On flooded roadways, slow down, assess the situation and don't take unnecessary risks as water can cause a car's engine to malfunction.
- In foggy conditions, reduce your speed and drive with your lights on low beam.

## ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND DRIVING

Everyone already knows that drinking or taking drugs and driving is illegal and dangerous, don't they? No! Even though there is a huge amount of information around about the effects of alcohol use on driving ability, it is an issue that should still be discussed, if only to satisfy yourself that your learner driver has a proper understanding of the issues. The same goes for drugs. Drugs and driving is a growing issue and there are certainly concerns about the effect of illicit drugs and medications on driving.

We've added a few critical bits of information to help you get the message across.

## ZERO BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION

Since May 2004 the legal limit in NSW for all learner and provisional licence holders is zero. This means people on L and P plates can have no alcohol prior to driving. The zero limit has been set as learner and provisional licence holders are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol than experienced drivers.

As some medicines, mouthwash and food contain alcohol, L and P licence holders should carefully read labels for alcohol content if they plan to drive. Remember you could be over the limit if you have been drinking heavily the night before you drive.

## WHAT ALCOHOL DOES

Alcohol impairs your vision, distorts your perception of depth (so judging distances is affected) and causes your eyes to react more slowly to variations in light. It can also lead to a false sense of confidence.

Drivers who have a BAC of 0.05 double their chance of being involved in a crash (and chances are the level of injury will be more serious, too). And while you might be thinking about a time you drove a car while under the influence of alcohol (and got away with it), remember that your young driver is inexperienced. While experience is not an excuse for drinking and driving, inexperience is certainly a good reason to spend some time discussing this important issue.

#### THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

You've probably already talked to them about not drinking and driving. But what about the 'what ifs'?

- **What if...**they drive to a party and someone 'spikes' their drink? They might feel a little light headed or 'not quite right'. What should they do?
- **What if...**the person they go to the party with drinks and insists on driving home? What should they do?

One way of dealing with these issues is to have an agreement that sets out both the young driver's responsibilities as well as a commitment of support and understanding from you.

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

YOUNG DRIVER AGREES:	PARENT AGREES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ To never drink and drive, or get in a car with anyone who has been drinking.</li><li>■ To call for assistance or a ride home at any time of the day or night.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ To arrange for a ride home, some other form of transportation or assistance any place and any time, without reprimand.</li><li>■ To put off any discussion until the morning after (or when things are clearer and calmer).</li></ul>

For more detailed information look at the fact sheets and other information on our website [www.mynrma.com.au](http://www.mynrma.com.au)

# REDUCING THE RISKS

## SEAT BELT FACTS

Each year, around 30 per cent of 17-25-year-olds who are killed in crashes aren't wearing seat belts. An even greater proportion of young drivers suffer brain injury.

Seat belts limit the amount of contact with the car's interior, spread the forces of impact over more of the body and provide protection against neck injury. They are a simple and effective form of protection and should be used all the time, no matter how short the trip.

## AIRBAG FACTS

Airbags are a valuable addition to vehicle occupants overall protection. Front airbags only supplement the seatbelt system, so they are called Supplementary Restraint Systems - you will often see SRS on the steering wheel boss and the dash in front of the passenger noting this. Frontal airbags have been shown to reduce the risk of a serious head injury in a serious crash by 50%. Tests in Australia have shown that without a curtain airbag to protect the driver's head in a collision with a pole at 29 km/h, the risk of a fatal injury is essentially 100%. Side and curtain airbags can provide good protection against impacts by other vehicles and fixed objects like trees and power poles.

### SHARING THE ROAD

Sharing the road means trying to see things from the perspective of other road users. Understanding this helps to anticipate their possible actions, making it safer for everyone.

The road rules require that we do certain things around buses, trucks and emergency vehicles, but what about pedestrians and cyclists?

Large vehicles, like buses and trucks, can seem a little overwhelming, even to an experienced driver. So, try to imagine how vulnerable that cyclist or pedestrian feels when a car whizzes past them. Remember that we are all pedestrians at some time. Everyone knows that buses and trucks need room to turn and room to slow down and stop. Make sure your learner also knows that, due to their size, large vehicles can also be vision blockers. All drivers need to keep a good distance from large vehicles and remain within the driver's field of vision (ie, you should be able to see the driver's face in their side mirror).

For more detailed information look at the fact sheets and other information on our website [www.mynrma.com.au](http://www.mynrma.com.au)



“

I WANTED TO BE THERE EVEN WHEN  
I COULDN'T BE – PAM

*I know Mike is a good driver, and while he drives very carefully when I'm with him, I worried when he was with his friends. So we agreed on some do's and don'ts together.*

”





# REDUCING THE RISKS

## DRIVER DISTRACTION

Distractions are a real risk - they come from both inside and outside the vehicle. For new drivers their attention needs to be on key information like speed, traffic lights, other vehicles or pedestrians.

Try to keep internal distractions to a minimum. Conversations should be kept short and it is a good idea to turn music or the radio off.

Trying to eat and drive at the same time is very dangerous, particularly while you are developing your driving skills. Mobile phones should be turned off or sent to voice mail. As of 1st July 2007 it is illegal for learner, P1 drivers and provisional riders to use any function on a mobile phone whilst driving, including hands-free mode or with the loudspeaker operating; research shows that these conversations distract concentration leaving you with less capacity to focus on the challenge of driving.

It may be obvious, but never read or send text messages - make the focus of your attention your driving.

The penalty for mobile phone use is three demerit points and a fine (or four demerit points if the offence occurs in an operating school zone).

## FATIGUE FACTS

Fatigue can happen anywhere or at any time. It is not just a factor in long distance trips. If a driver has not had a full night's sleep, or is driving when they would usually be asleep, they are in danger of suffering from fatigue. Fatigue can affect your ability to concentrate and react quickly.

Avoid judging your own level of fatigue against others. While it is generally recommended that you take a 10-minute break from driving every two hours to reduce the effects of fatigue, everybody's experience will be different and some people will feel the effects well before others do. If you can learn your body's signs of fatigue you will know when it's time to take a break to prevent fatigue setting in – either way you need to take at least a 10-minute break every two hours.

Sleep is the only effective guard against fatigue. Turning up the radio, winding down car windows or having caffeine won't work.

For more detailed information look at the fact sheets and other information on our website [www.mynrma.com.au](http://www.mynrma.com.au)



# REDUCING THE RISKS

## BUYING A CAR

When buying a car, safety is paramount. The 17-25 year age group is heavily over-represented in crashes, so good safety features that provide the driver and passenger with protection should have priority over sound systems or colour. The safety features in a car can provide important protection to the occupants of a car if it is involved in a crash. While safety features are more likely to increase your chances of surviving a crash, they don't make you indestructible.

NRMA provides information on vehicle safety for new cars and used cars.

Newer cars are designed with safety shells for occupants and crumple zones – the result is that the car takes the energy from the impact not the people.

Many reasonably priced makes and models score very well in the safety ratings and better than some of the more expensive models.

NRMA has information on their website at [www.mynrma.com.au](http://www.mynrma.com.au) or you can ring the NRMA's Technical Assistance line on 1300 655 443 and they can send you printed brochures of safety ratings for Used Cars and New Cars.

# EXTRA HELP

Published by  
National Roads and Motorists' Association Limited  
(trading as NRMA Motoring & Services)  
ABN 77 000 010 506.

Contributors:  
NRMA Insurance Limited,  
NSW Roads & Traffic Authority,  
Australian Driver Trainers' Association.

## GETTING EXTRA HELP

### SOME GOOD GENERAL INFORMATION SOURCES ARE:

NRMA Safer Driving School

Your local professional driving instructor

Your nearest RTA Motor Registry

### NSW LEARNER DRIVER INFORMATION

RTA Publications for learner drivers include:

*Road Users' Handbook*

*Guide to DART*

*New Drivers' Handbook*

*Learner Drivers' Log Book*

(Note: The log book is issued at the same time as the Learner Drivers' Licence.)

Phone RTA 13 22 13  
[www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au)

### GETTING HELP ON-LINE

[www.shift.nrma.com.au](http://www.shift.nrma.com.au)  
[www.mynrma.com.au](http://www.mynrma.com.au)  
[www.maa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.maa.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.youthsafe.org](http://www.youthsafe.org)  
[www.adta.com.au](http://www.adta.com.au)

### ACT LEARNER DRIVER INFORMATION

When issued a Learner Drivers' Licence, learner drivers receive the ACT's Road Ready Information Pack which also contains important information for parents and supervising drivers.

[www.roadready.act.gov.au](http://www.roadready.act.gov.au)