

key  
facts for  
new  
drivers

# Introduction

The Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and the Australian Driver Trainers Association have developed these materials to help learner drivers, their supervisors and driver trainers.

Research shows that first year drivers are three times more likely to be involved in road crashes than more experienced drivers.

Research shows that it takes around three to five years to become a fully competent driver.

Research also shows that if learner drivers complete at least 120 hours of supervised driving practice during the learner phase, their risk of crashing in the first year of driving will be reduced by about a third.

During the L-period, it is important for the learner to develop not only the physical skills of driving, but also:

- » decision-making and thinking skills;
- » the ability to recognise and avoid hazards, and
- » knowledge about the risks they face, and what to do about them.



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# Tips for supervisors

Before you get started on practice drives with your learner driver there are a few things you could consider:

- » Learner drivers are among the safest drivers on the road. They rarely have crashes.
- » Within the first six months of gaining a provisional licence they have gone from being the safest group of drivers to the most unsafe.
- » People aged 17 to 25 years account for over a quarter of drivers killed and seriously injured on Australian roads, even though they make up only 12.5 per cent of the population.

## What can explain this?

Driving looks easy but, like many other activities, it takes a long time to master. There is a lot to learn.

Experienced drivers can automatically put together all of the skills needed to be a safe driver, such as:

- » applying the brakes, clutch, gears
- » interpreting and applying the road rules
- » making decisions about where and when to go
- » looking out for things that may cause problems and then dealing with them.

New drivers spend a lot of time and attention on the physical skills required for driving (braking, steering etc.) and forget about the other skills that are most important in terms of safety.

Researchers suggest that it takes more than 100 hours of practice for a learner to be able to do things automatically. Having plenty of driving practice is essential for every learner.



## Before your learner gets behind the wheel of your car:

- » Make sure your own driving reflects the good points you are teaching them.
- » Read as much as you can about your role as a supervisor of the driving practice sessions. Check out the websites on page 28. Read the booklet this page came in, paying particular attention to how to help sensitise the learner to speed (page 13).
- » Make sure the learner practises on all type of roads (suburban, highway, country) and in all kinds of weather (rain and shine) and driving conditions (at night, weekends, rush hour, long and short trips). Make sure the first time they have to deal with a tricky situation isn't when they are on their own as a P-driver.
- » Find a professional driver trainer with whom you and your learner feel comfortable. The instructor will be important for teaching safe driving techniques and correcting any mistakes. Make yourself known – and it's a good idea for you to sit in on one of the early lessons.
- » Don't try to rush the learner. Expect them to take a long time to put together all the skills required for safe driving – that's why the learner licence is valid for a long period.
- » Plan lessons so that at first your learner is doing lots of driving practice in quiet local streets. After a while you can go out into busier streets and more complex situations and at different times of the day. By the time they are ready to go solo they should have driven on all types of roads and under all types of conditions.

# Learning the language

This booklet may use some terms you are not familiar with.

Here are some commonly used road safety terms and what they mean.

Physical skills or Car control	Steering, braking, and using the pedals, buttons and other controls make up the 'physical skills' required for driving. These skills are usually learned quickly and lead the learner to think they can drive.
Cognitive skills or Decision making skills	Driving involves a lot of decision making, such as when to slow down and by how much, when to accelerate, what speed is best for different conditions, when to change lanes and how. The ability to make safe decisions consistently only comes with experience and a lot of practice.
Hazards	These are anything on or near the road that could become a danger or a problem for safe driving. Possible hazards are other road users (pedestrians, cyclists etc.); weather conditions (rain, fog, bright sunlight etc.); road conditions and types (gravel, tight curves etc.) and intersections (with or without signals).
Hazard perception or Hazard detection	This refers to the driver's ability to identify possible risks or dangers on or near the road. Recognising where risks are and what to do about them can take years longer to learn than the physical and cognitive skills.
Risk exposure	Every time you drive you are taking a risk. Learner drivers take more dangerous risks than others – but mostly because they are not experienced at knowing what and where the dangers are.



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Risk factors for young drivers	Young people are involved in more crashes than other drivers. Certain things increase their possibility of being involved in a crash: they speed, drive when tired or fatigued, may mix alcohol and other drugs with driving and take passengers who distract them from driving safely.
Anticipation	If you anticipate a situation, you can respond to it before it happens. You see a bus pulling up in the distance – and anticipate pedestrians will get out and try to cross the road and so you slow down. You notice the lights ahead have been green for a while – and anticipate they will change before you get to them, so you slow down.
Scanning	Looking ahead and to either side and using rear view mirrors to be able to see possible hazards.
Blind spots	In every vehicle there are areas behind and to the side of the driver that can't be seen using only mirrors.
Head checks	This involves systematically looking over your shoulder to see if there are other road users in the blind spots.
Judging gaps	Deciding if there is sufficient space and/or time to go between travelling vehicles.
Driving environment	The roads and other places nearby that other road users may be using, such as footpaths, bicycle paths/lanes, driveways, car parks.

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# Why is it important to get plenty of driving practice?

If you want to become good at something you need to get plenty of practice – in different conditions and at different times.

## Learning a new skill

Think about this: learning to drive is like learning to play a sport – for example, tennis.

- » First, you develop an interest and find out the requirements to play the game (how old you must be to drive, who can teach you, what are the basic rules, etc.).
- » You find a good coach (the driving instructor) and someone to practise with (your parent or supervisor).
- » You learn the basic skills (steering, braking, turning etc.) and practise at the local level.
- » As you improve, you begin to realise there is more to it than you first thought. You need to learn how to position yourself to have time and space to react to opposition players; how to anticipate what other players may do; and how to cope with different playing surfaces and conditions. (You practise driving on different roads, at different times and in different conditions).
- » After lots of lessons and practice you are ready for greater challenges (freeways, night time driving, wet weather).
- » Eventually, after even more practice, you no longer need either your coach or your practice partner. (You gain your P licence).
- » If your skills begin to slip, for example, your backhand or overhead lob (reversing, changing lanes), you take another couple of lessons.

## Ask yourself this:

- » Can you become good at tennis without practising?
- » If you described the game of tennis would you say it's only about the way you use the racquet?
- » Would you take up tennis and then compete in a big tournament after only a couple of lessons?

## How much practice is enough when learning to drive?

Driving is more difficult than it first looks.

There is more to it than just handling the vehicle's controls and manoeuvring the car in and around the roads. (These are called the *physical skills* of driving).

There are a lot of decisions to be made while driving, like 'Who has right of way here? Can I turn left from this lane?' and using the road rules. (These are called the *cognitive* or *thinking* skills of driving).

At the same time, you must look out for and manage unexpected hazards – such as other road users and changing weather conditions. (These are called *perceptual* or *detection* skills).

It takes a long time to put all these skills together and be a good driver.

**In fact, most road safety experts advise that you will need at least 120 hours of driving practice.**

That sounds like a lot, but it is not that difficult to build up to this number of hours.

Most young people have their learner licence for at least a year, and practising 2–3 hours a week is achievable.

Every time you are in the car you could be behind the steering wheel! Even short trips to school, work or sport can quickly add up to become lots of experience.

It is important that over the learner period every possible type of driving experience is practised (e.g. day and night, clear and rain, fog, long and short trips). The support – and extra set of eyes – that your supervisor can give during practice drives is invaluable.

Make sure that the first time you come up against a difficult driving situation isn't when you are in the car on your own after gaining your 'P' licence.

*The more experience you get in the learner period, the safer you will be when you are on your own.*

# Driving for the conditions

Imagine you are driving in a 60 km/h zone.

In which of the following situations would you slow down?

✓	✗	When travelling near or through a shopping centre
✓	✗	When near a school zone just before school begins or after school ends
✓	✗	When there is more traffic than usual
✓	✗	When it is raining heavily
✓	✗	When it is raining lightly
✓	✗	When the sun blinds you for a moment
✓	✗	When there are roadworks
✓	✗	When the area you are driving in is unfamiliar to you.

The answer is ✓ in every one of those situations.

Speed limit signs indicate **maximum** speeds allowable.

In every State and Territory of Australia you must adjust your travelling speed below the posted limit if the driving conditions mean that the maximum speed is unsafe.

It is not enough to be within the law; you need to be in control and able to cope with the unexpected.

Being legally in the right is not much comfort once:

- » your car is off the road damaged, or
- » you or someone else is injured or dead.

Why is it often safer to lower your speed limit to below the posted speed?

Busy roads are full of unexpected problems. A child may see its parent on the opposite side of the road and dart across without looking. You may be in control of your vehicle but you can't control what other road users may do.

***If you reduce your speed, you have more time to react to an unexpected situation.***

When roads are wet and slippery it takes much longer for your vehicle to come to a stop after applying the brakes (see page 11). When it rains after a long period of dry weather it is even more important to go slower, as the rain mixes with oil and dust on the road, making it even more slippery than usual.

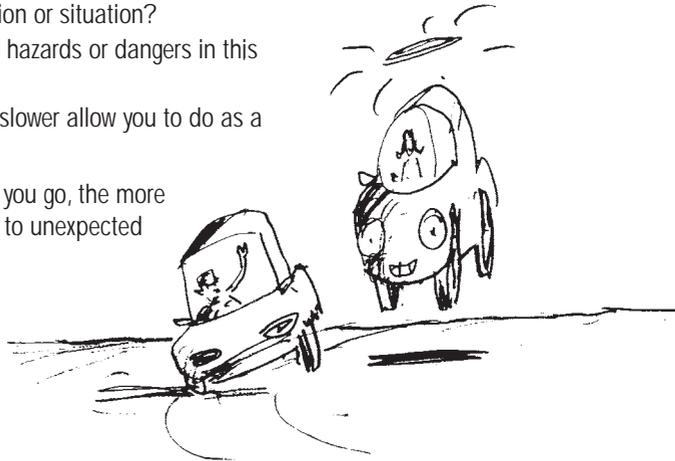
Bright sunlight can blind you just for a moment when a hazard appears in the distance. If you are travelling at a slower speed you have time to react safely.

If you are travelling in an unfamiliar area, you will not be aware of the dangers that are around. By slowing down, even by 5 km/h, you give yourself an opportunity to see any hazards and more time to react.

After you have completed a practice drive, talk with your supervisor about situations you have come across that would be safer if you travelled at less than the posted speed limit.

- » What is the condition or situation?
- » What are potential hazards or dangers in this situation?
- » What would going slower allow you to do as a driver?

Remember, the slower you go, the more time you have to react to unexpected situations.

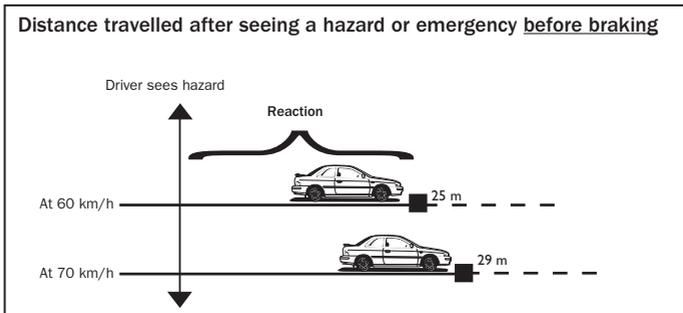


# Speed

## Four reasons why your choice of speed is important.

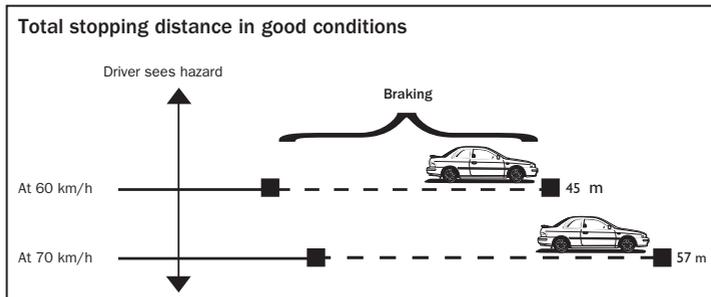
### 1. You have less time to react to an emergency.

Imagine you are travelling at 70 km/h instead of 60 km/h. A pedestrian or another vehicle suddenly appears, you brake immediately. In the time **before** you actually start braking you will have travelled almost 4 m more than a driver travelling at 60 km/h.



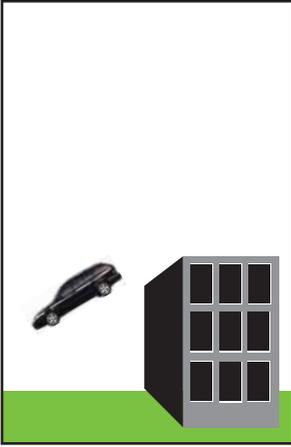
This decision-making time, or reaction time, is the time it takes to recognise an emergency and then to brake. Young drivers take longer than experienced drivers to even notice an emergency or a hazard, so travelling at a slower speed will help. A few kilometres per hour can make a big difference in seeing and reacting to an emergency.

### 2. It takes a longer time to come to a complete stop.

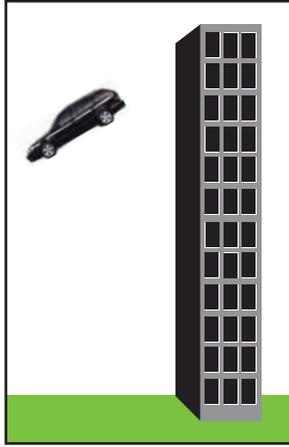


A car travelling at 70 km/h will take around 57 m to come to a complete stop after the driver first notices an emergency. The same car travelling at 60 km/h will take about 45 m to stop. 12 m is a lot of extra distance to travel in an emergency. Step it out sometime and see for yourself!

## >> Speed



Dropping off three storeys is equivalent to crashing at 50 km/h



Dropping off 12 storeys is equivalent to crashing at 100 km/h

3. The faster you travel, the harder you hit!

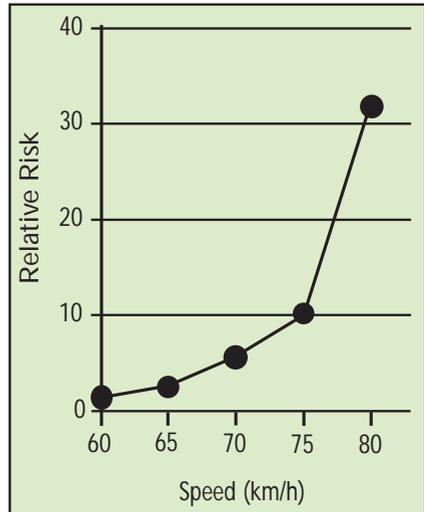
Think about this. Crashing at 50 km/h is equivalent to dropping a car from a three storey building. Crashing at 100 km/h is about the same as a 12 storey building. You would be much more likely to survive the 50 km/h crash than the 100 km/h crash.

4. You are more likely to have a serious crash.

Choose your speed and choose your consequences. In a 60 km/h zone, travelling at:

- » 65 km/h, you are twice as likely to have a serious crash
- » 70 km/h, you are four times as likely to have a serious crash
- » 75 km/h, you are 10 times as likely to have a serious crash
- » 80 km/h, you are 32 times as likely to have a serious crash

than if you drove at 60km/h



**It makes sense to slow down when driving!**

**For further information on this topic, check out these websites:**

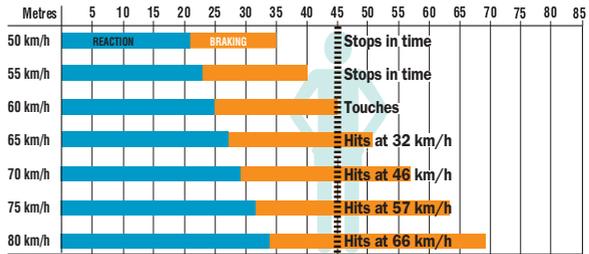
- » [www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/)
- » [www.casr.adelaide.edu.au/speed](http://www.casr.adelaide.edu.au/speed)

# Speeding

It may seem like fun but speeding is downright dangerous. The faster you travel the more likely it is that you will be involved in a car crash, and the faster you go, the harder you hit.

## Dry conditions:

The road is dry, you have a modern vehicle with good brakes and tyres. A child runs onto the road 45 m ahead of you while you are travelling in a 60 km/h zone.

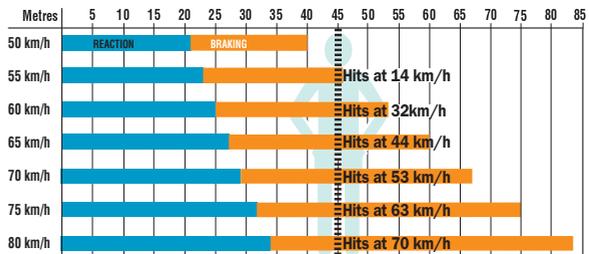


***You brake hard. Will you stop in time?***

If you were driving just 5 km/h over the speed limit, **you won't have time to stop** and you will hit the child at over 30 km/h.

## Wet conditions:

The road is wet, you have a modern vehicle with good brakes and tyres. A child runs onto the road 45 m ahead of you while you are travelling in a 60 km/h zone.



***You brake hard. Will you stop in time?***

In wet conditions, it is much safer to drive below the speed limit. If a child steps onto the road 45 m ahead, **you will have to be driving under the speed limit to stop in time.**

The faster you go, the less time you have to see hazards, assess the risk and respond.

Even though you may be a capable driver, extra speed always means it takes longer for the vehicle to stop.

In wet conditions you should allow much more distance to stop than on a dry road.

The more distance you keep from other vehicles on the road, the better your chances are of avoiding a crash.

All drivers make mistakes at times. If you stay at least three seconds behind the vehicle in front, you will have time to react to unexpected situations. You will also be a lot more visible to oncoming drivers and better positioned to see any vehicles ahead of the one in front of you.

### **Do you feel the pressure to go fast?**

Don't worry if others expect you to go fast. You are in control of the car and ultimately you are the one to face the consequences of speeding. Can you afford the costs of speeding (points and licence loss, \$\$s and injury)?

Even if you don't crash or get fined, higher speeds and hard acceleration will cost you extra money every time you fill your petrol tank.

Speeding can really only save you a few seconds or minutes in a total journey – so it's not worth the risk.

Annoyed that someone has pushed into the gap that you have left between you and the next car? Just make another gap. It's cheaper and less hassle than crashing into their car!

Speeding in an urban area is as dangerous as driving with an illegal blood alcohol concentration. In a 60 km/h zone, even travelling at 5 km/h above the limit increases your chances of having a serious crash as much as driving with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05.

# Speeding

## Why do learner drivers speed?

- » They follow the example of adults that have driven them.
- » They follow the example of other vehicles.
- » Driving is more difficult than it looks. There seems to be too many things to focus on – many different tasks to be done at the same time. While braking, steering, changing gears, looking out for hazards and applying the road rules, learner drivers often do not notice the speed at which they are travelling.
- » Modern cars are built a bit like a comfy lounge – good seats, a great sound system, air conditioning, not much external noise. This quiet, comfortable ride insulates the driver from the clues that indicate the car is going fast – things like vibration, sound of the engine and wind noise.

## How to increase your sensitivity to speed:

- » Often ask yourself what the speed limit is in the area you are driving.
- » Estimate how fast you are travelling without looking at the speedometer. You should get more accurate over time.
- » Describe to your supervisor how the vehicle sounds and feels as you increase or decrease speed. Compare this with what happens if speed is increased or decreased more gradually or if you travel slower.
- » Work out what is a safe following distance from the vehicle in front. A useful rule of thumb is 'at least three seconds' (see page 15). To do this, watch the vehicle in front pass a particular marker, such as a post or tree, and then count how long it takes for your vehicle to reach the same marker. Discuss with your supervisor.
- » On the open highway when you are travelling at 100 km/h and have to slow down as you approach a built up area, slow down until you think you have reached 60 km/h without looking at your speedometer – and then check. Talk with your supervisor about what it feels like dropping from 100 km/h to 60 km/h.

# Crashes

Drivers of all ages are involved in crashes. However, young drivers have more crashes than others and are more likely to be involved in the same types of crashes.

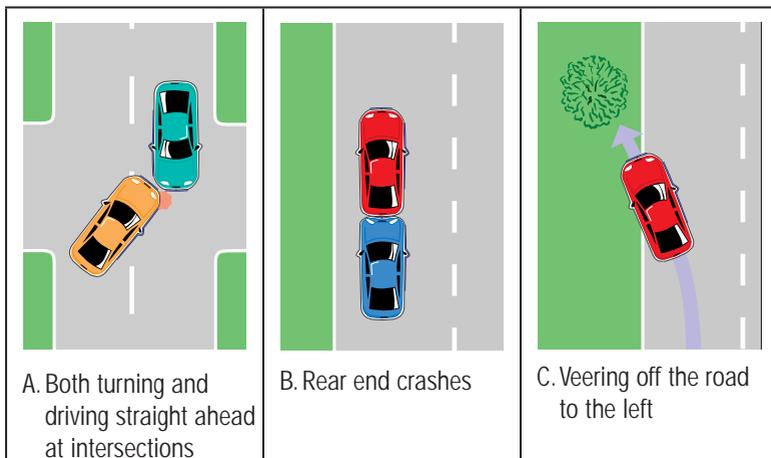
Two important things that can help reduce the involvement of young people in road crashes are:

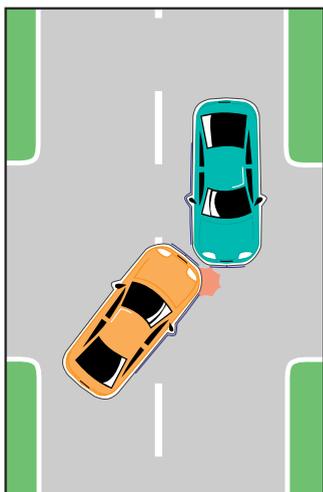
1. Having plenty of driving practice during the learner period.
2. Slowing down to provide plenty of space and time to be able to react to the unexpected.

Common errors made by learner drivers are often as a result of:

- » Not scanning the driving environment well.
- » Misjudging the speed of other vehicles, particularly oncoming cars.
- » Travelling too close to other vehicles.
- » Travelling too fast, both for the road conditions and for their level of experience.
- » Being overconfident in their ability.
- » Travelling too close to other vehicles.
- » Speeding.
- » Inattentiveness or fatigue.

The three most common crash types for young drivers involve:





## A. Both turning and driving straight ahead at intersections

Why do young people become involved in this type of crash?

- » Poor or insufficient scanning of the driving environment.
- » Not judging the gap in the traffic well.
- » Overconfidence in driving ability.
- » Speeding.
- » Reliance on other drivers to avoid a crash.

Supervisor and learner can practise and discuss together:

- » What the learner is seeing as they scan ahead: How far in front is the learner looking? What is on the sides? What is behind?
- » Park the car or stand near a busy intersection and observe the traffic. Have the learner predict when it would and wouldn't be safe to make a turn.
- » Practise estimating the speed of oncoming and passing vehicles.
- » Observe and discuss changing traffic lights and unsignalled intersections. Talk about when it would be safe to enter the intersection.
- » Discuss the idea that despite being technically 'right' in a driving situation, all drivers have a shared responsibility to ensure crashes do not happen. If another vehicle is illegally or unsafely entering your space, take action to avoid a crash.
- » As a driver who is going straight ahead, predict what the right-turning vehicle might do and when. Have the learner driver talk about what they may need to do to avoid a crash.

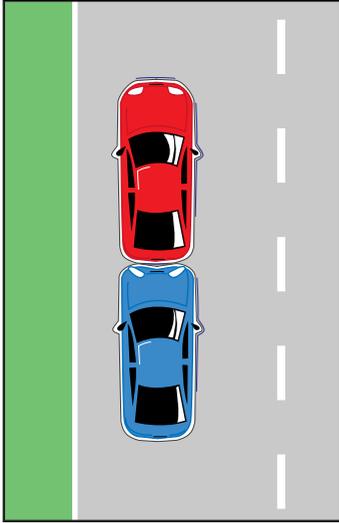
### What is the 3-second rule?

The 3-second rule is a simple way to keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. The faster you're travelling, the more space you need to react to a hazard. Counting the time instead of distance automatically adjusts the size of the gap to whatever speed you're travelling at. Three seconds should give you enough time to react, and stop if you need to. If you are driving in rainy or foggy conditions, you should increase the count to 5 seconds, because it will take longer to stop.

To use the 3-second rule there are two simple steps:

1. Note when the vehicle in front of you has passed a stationary landmark (like a post or tree beside the road).
2. Count how many seconds it takes to reach that object. Say out loud, not too fast "one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three". If you reach the landmark before you finish counting, you need to back off.

Many drivers don't keep this much space between them and other vehicles. When you do, someone might cut in between. This is annoying, but you really won't lose much time by just dropping back a little bit and making that gap again.



## B. Rear end crashes

Why do young people become involved in this type of crash?

### Driver at rear:

- » Speeding.
- » Not enough space left between vehicles.
- » Relying on other drivers to avoid a crash.
- » Driver distracted.
- » Misjudging the required stopping distance.

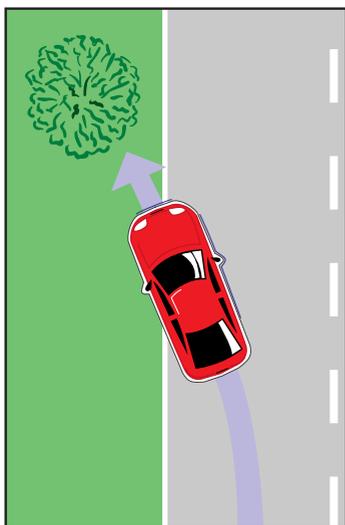
### Driver in front:

- » Driver distracted.
- » Not doing enough (or any) mirror or head checks.
- » Indicating intentions late or not at all.
- » Poor route planning.
- » Misjudging stopping distance, and late braking.

Supervisor and learner can practise and discuss together:

- » Know and practise the 3-second rule (page 15).
- » Have the learner (when a passenger) estimate a safe distance to travel behind another vehicle (three second gap).
- » Have the learner driver predict what a vehicle immediately in front may do.
- » After scanning the driving environment, have the learner comment on (and predict) what might cause the vehicle in front to stop unexpectedly (e.g. a pedestrian approaching or about to use a pedestrian crossing, children on bikes ahead).
- » Have the learner practise their navigation skills so they can confidently find their way to and from places without putting themselves and others in danger.
- » Build an awareness of blindspots. Have the learner seated in the driver's seat with mirrors positioned appropriately. Walk around the vehicle and as the learner follows you in the mirrors, have him or her tell you when you disappear from their vision.
- » Continually remind the learner to do head and mirror checks. Eventually these will become automatic.

*For insurance and legal purposes, the driver in front is rarely judged to be 'at fault'; however, their driving behaviour may have contributed to the crash happening*



## C. Veering off the road to the left

Why do young people become involved in this type of crash?

- » Speeding.
- » Lack of steering control.
- » Distracted from the driving task.
- » Fatigue.

Supervisor and learner can practise and discuss together:

- » Make sure driving practice sessions are not all undertaken in silence or without passengers or distractions. As the learner becomes increasingly competent, introduce at random some distractions or extra tasks to manage. Then discuss the effects of the distractions.
- » Remind the learner that people generally drive where they look and that they need to keep their eyes ahead, while continually scanning the road ahead and to the sides.
- » Practise changing gears while the car is stationary. As the learner improves, have them call out gears while looking straight ahead.
- » Find an empty carpark or other quiet space and, using plastic bottles or cardboard boxes, set up a small obstacle course to practise steering.
- » Have the learner, as a passenger, constantly monitor travelling speed by guessing the speed being travelled without looking at the speedometer. Check the accuracy of the guess. They can call out speed zones along the travel route as they arise or change.
- » Ensure the learner keeps their hands at the 'ten to two' or 'quarter to three' positions on the steering wheel at all times except when changing gears. The steering wheel must not be allowed to spin back to the straight ahead position after turning.

# Fatigue

## Fatigue results in thousands of crashes every year

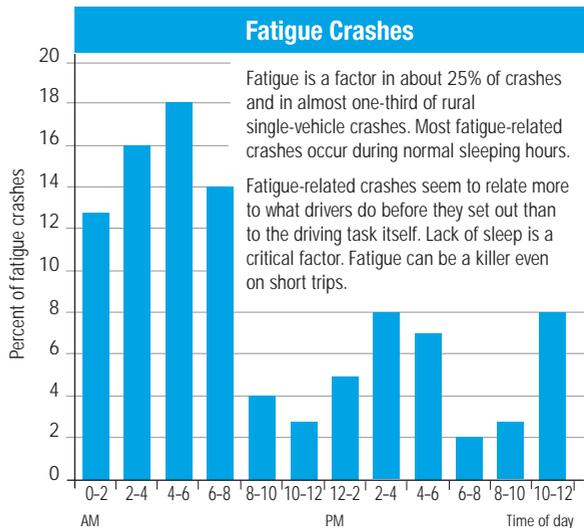
What do we mean by 'fatigue'? You are fatigued when you become tired and can't concentrate on your driving. You may even have a micro-sleep\* or fall asleep at the wheel.

### How do we know?

Unlike alcohol-related crashes, there are no simple tests to determine if fatigue was a cause in a crash.

Investigators suspect fatigue as a cause when:

- » The crash occurs late at night, early in the morning or late in the afternoon.
- » A single car has run off the roadway.
- » Nothing indicates the driver tried to avoid the crash (e.g. no skidmarks).



**\*Micro-sleeps ('nodding off') typically last between 2 and 20 seconds – but if you are travelling at 100 km/h, in one second the car will have gone 28 m without you being in control.**

There are many warning signs for fatigue. A combination of any of the following signals that the driver is becoming fatigued and needs to take a break:

- » yawning
- » eyes feeling sore or heavy
- » vision starting to blur
- » start seeing things
- » daydreaming and not concentrating
- » becoming impatient
- » feeling hungry or thirsty
- » reactions seem slow
- » feeling stiff or cramped
- » driving speed creeps up or down
- » starting to make poor gear changes
- » wandering over the centre line or onto the road edge.

## What has research told us about fatigue?

Everybody needs sleep and we all have our own patterns of sleepiness and wakefulness. Fatigue (sometimes referred to as drowsiness or sleepiness) causes crashes because it slows down the driver's reaction times and affects their scanning abilities and information processing skills.

- » Although the need for sleep varies among individuals, sleeping eight hours in a 24-hour period is common.
- » The effect of sleep loss builds up. Regularly losing 1 to 2 hours sleep a night can create a 'sleep debt' and lead to chronic sleepiness over time – and cause involuntary micro-sleeps.
- » Just being in bed doesn't mean a person has had enough sleep. Disrupted sleep has the same effect as lack of sleep. Illness, noise, activity, lights etc., can interrupt and reduce the amount and quality of sleep.

Fatigue can strike any driver, but you are at greater risk as a young person if you:

- » Combine heavy study or work with leisure and late night socialising.
- » Change your sleep patterns and reduce night time sleep.
- » Drink alcohol and/or use other drugs.

Here are some ideas to minimise fatigue when you are driving:

- » Plan to get sufficient and regular sleep. Most people need around 7–8 hours in every 24-hour period. Making do with less sleep will affect your driving.
- » If you are sleepy or tired, don't drink even small amounts of alcohol. Alcohol acts as a depressant on the central nervous system and can make you feel even more tired and less alert.
- » Try not to drive during your normal sleeping hours. Your body works in a rhythm or pattern and when you upset this rhythm it can badly affect you.
- » If possible take a taxi or a lift with another person rather than driving during your normal sleep times. (You can always pick your car up in the morning if you have to).
- » Think about what activity you were doing before the drive. If it was physically or mentally demanding then fatigue may 'kick in' within a few minutes of beginning the trip.
- » Know the signs that indicate you are tired (see page 19).
- » If you are fatigued, you must stop driving. Let a passenger drive or take a short 'power nap' before continuing with the trip.
- » Fatigue can set in even on short local trips. If there is no alternative to travelling a short distance when you are tired then make sure you make your journey as uncomfortable as possible – too cold, noisy or windy for example. If this works it won't work for long and if it doesn't work you are putting yourself at great risk and you should stop.

**Want to find out more about the issue of fatigue and driving?**

***For information about the link between fatigue and crashes:***

- » [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/home/roadsafety/fatigue](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/home/roadsafety/fatigue)

***For a comprehensive easy-to-read report:***

- » [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/sleep/drsy\\_drv.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/sleep/drsy_drv.pdf)

# Mobile Phones

These days nearly everyone has a mobile phone and for many people it's hard to imagine life without them!

But mobile phones and driving don't mix. Driving demands a lot of attention: unexpected things can happen at a moment's notice. Adding another task like talking on a phone or reading a text message can seriously affect your driving.

In Australia it is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. This includes talking, texting, taking photos and playing games. You can be fined and lose demerit points. Driving with a mobile phone in your hand seriously affects your ability to control the car and leaves you with no capacity to deal with emergencies.

Even with a hands-free phone kit, you can't concentrate fully on the road and what the traffic is doing around you. A recent Australian study showed that the risk of crashing is four times higher than normal when the driver is using a mobile phone, regardless of whether it is hand-held or hands-free.

Don't use the excuse that older drivers do it. They should know better and it is still illegal (and you will be fined when caught).



Driving is more demanding than you might think, especially in the first year or so after getting your Ps. You can't properly watch what other traffic is doing or see hazards developing if your attention is distracted talking to someone.

### What you can do

- » Put the phone away in a pocket or bag when you get in the car. Don't be tempted.
- » Use a message bank and check your calls when you arrive.
- » Tell your friends you won't answer the phone when you're driving.
- » Don't talk to your friends on the phone when you know they're driving. When you call someone on a mobile, you can ask 'Is this a good time to talk?' or even 'Are you driving?'
- » If there is a special reason you must take calls, then pull off the road, providing it is safe to do so.

Resist the urge to read or send text messages (SMS) while you're driving. Because you have to look away from the road, it is even more dangerous than talking on the phone.

# Passengers

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among young Australians aged 16–25 years.

## Fact:

The risk of being involved in a fatal or serious crash is much higher for young drivers when there are passengers – particularly when the passengers are around the same age and when there is more than one.

## Why is this so?

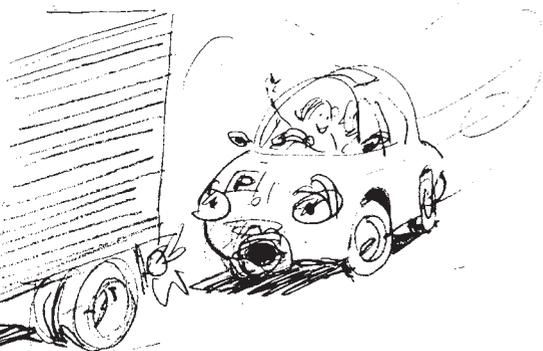
Having your friends in the car can:

- » Distract you when you have not fully automated your driving skills.
- » Encourage riskier driving behaviours – such as driving after drinking alcohol, speeding, swerving, and following the car in front too close.
- » Tempt you to show off your driving skills.

## Here are some tips:

It isn't easy to tell your friends that you won't give them all a lift home from a party – so practise some believable excuses before the end of the night. 'Mum only loaned the car to me on condition that I come straight home.'

- » Leave the car at home and share a taxi with your friends.
- » If you want to take a friend or friends, keep the number to a minimum. The more passengers you have, the riskier the trip becomes.
- » When offering friends a lift, remember that you are the driver and in control of the car. Take them on the condition that they are helpful rather than distracting. Ask them to: help out with directions; not fiddle with knobs and dials; not to point out things unrelated to the driving task (e.g. good looking pedestrians!!).
- » If your friend is driving, allow them to concentrate on the driving – try to help by spotting hazards in and around the road.



## During driving practice

- » For the first 10 hours of supervised practice, keep the radio off and passengers either out of the car or down to a minimum, and silent.
- » As you become more confident and capable as a learner driver, start allowing passengers and other distractions into the car. But be assertive and ask for silence when things get busy or difficult.

## After you get your Ps

- » Avoid taking passengers for the first few unsupervised drives. You will be surprised how much more challenging driving is on your own than when your supervisor was taking up some of the workload.
- » Be in control of every trip you make – resist the temptation to show off your driving skills to your friends or other road users.

# Strategies for Practice

So – you’ve got your learner’s licence and now you are keen to practise with the family car.

You know it’s important to get as much experience as possible. You’re aiming for at least 120 hours before you get your P licence.

But the car is only three months old and your parents are really protective of it. Or they take you for the odd practice drive but have trouble finding time each week.

Young people can often have difficulties gaining on-road experience once they have their learner’s licence. Parents or other supervisors might feel ill equipped to teach the skills necessary to be a safe and competent road user. Learner drivers also have an unfair reputation for being dangerous or unsafe drivers.

Negotiating to use the family car can be one of life’s little challenges! Most successful negotiations require some trade-offs from both sides. For example, you might wash the car in exchange for 30 minutes of practice; do the dishes or unload the dishwasher each day for 45 minutes of practice each week. Negotiation usually involves a win/win situation, so the bottom line needs to include a payoff for parents.

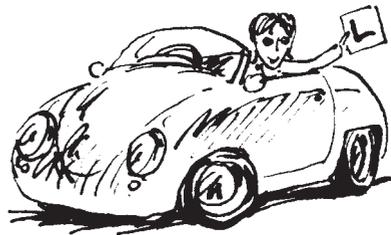


## Why might learners have trouble getting enough practice?

Successful negotiation requires both parties to know what they want and/or need, what difficulties might arise and what result they will ultimately be happy with.

Here are some suggested strategies. You could:

- » Agree to take some professional lessons to start off – that way your parents don't have to teach, just supervise.
- » Agree to practise in a quiet carpark until both you and your supervisor feel you are ready to go on the road (remember that just as you need time to learn and practise, your parents need some time and practice to get comfortable with supervising too!)
- » Take on a task that frees some of your parents' time – like washing the car or cooking a meal – in exchange for a practice session.
- » Look for situations where you can have a practice drive when your supervisor has to go out anyway – like helping with the grocery shopping in exchange for driving there and back.



# Surfing the cyber roads

You can find more information about safer driving on the Internet.

For general road safety tips and information:

- » [www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/)
- » [rac.com.au/community/road-safety.aspx](http://rac.com.au/community/road-safety.aspx)
- » [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/home/roadsafety/](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/home/roadsafety/)
- » [www.racq.com.au/about\\_us/community/road\\_user\\_education/](http://www.racq.com.au/about_us/community/road_user_education/)
- » [www.transport.qld.gov.au/home/licensing/learn\\_to\\_drive/](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/home/licensing/learn_to_drive/)
- » [www.adta.com.au](http://www.adta.com.au)
- » [www.arrivealive.vic.gov.au](http://www.arrivealive.vic.gov.au)

Test your knowledge of the road rules at:

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

For general and background information on travelling speed and the risk of crash involvement:

- » [casr.adelaide.edu.au/speed/](http://casr.adelaide.edu.au/speed/)
- » [www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/speedandspeedcameras](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/speedandspeedcameras)
- » [www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/muarc121.html](http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/muarc121.html)

For information and statistics about young drivers and fatigue:

- » [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/sleep/drsy\\_drv.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/sleep/drsy_drv.pdf)
- » [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/home/roadsafety/fatigue/](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/home/roadsafety/fatigue/)

For information about the effects drugs can have on your driving:

- » [www.drugsdriving.adf.org.au](http://www.drugsdriving.adf.org.au)

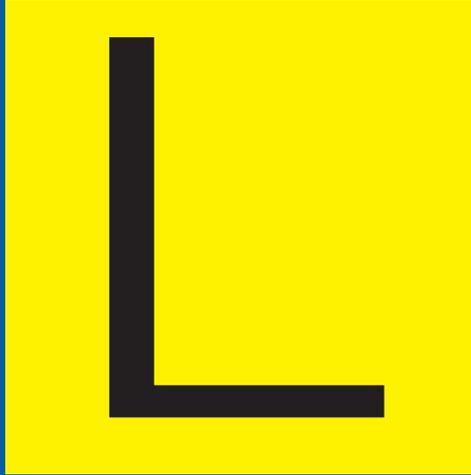
For information from your state or territory

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Victoria	<a href="http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au">www.vicroads.vic.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.tac.vic.gov.au">www.tac.vic.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.racv.com.au">www.racv.com.au</a>
New South Wales	<a href="http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au">www.rta.nsw.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.maa.nsw.gov.au">www.maa.nsw.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.mynrma.com.au">www.mynrma.com.au</a>
Queensland	<a href="http://www.transport.qld.gov.au">www.transport.qld.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.racq.com.au">www.racq.com.au</a>
Western Australia	<a href="http://www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au">www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.dpi.wa.gov.au/licensing">www.dpi.wa.gov.au/licensing</a> <a href="http://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au">www.mainroads.wa.gov.au</a> <a href="http://rac.com.au">rac.com.au</a>
Australian Capital Territory	<a href="http://www.roadready.act.gov.au">www.roadready.act.gov.au</a>
Northern Territory	<a href="http://www.roadsafety.nt.gov.au">www.roadsafety.nt.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.aant.com.au">www.aant.com.au</a>
Tasmania	<a href="http://www.transport.tas.gov.au">www.transport.tas.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.ract.com.au">www.ract.com.au</a>
South Australia	<a href="http://www.transport.sa.gov.au">www.transport.sa.gov.au</a> <a href="http://www.raa.com.au">www.raa.com.au</a>
For information about the Australian Driver Trainers Association	<a href="http://www.adta.com.au">www.adta.com.au</a>

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**Australian Government**

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and Local Government**

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This booklet was developed by the  
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Development and Local Government and the  
Australian Driver Trainers Association to help new drivers and  
their parents/supervisors.