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- Facing the real challenges of driving
- Some facts about driving
- How complicated is driving?



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The challenges of driving

“Nearly everybody I know has a licence. So, driving must be easy.”

Many people believe this is the case. Why should you practise when you think driving is so easy? Don't be fooled into believing this is true.

FACING THE REAL CHALLENGES OF DRIVING

New solo drivers have often done very little driving. This can result in them having almost no experience of the real challenges of driving. These challenges include:

- variety of traffic conditions – from light traffic in local streets to heavy peak hour traffic
- extremes in weather – rain, fog or icy conditions
- different driving manoeuvres – driving in roundabouts, making U-turns or turning at different types of intersections
- effects of the time of day on visibility – night driving or sun glare when driving at dawn or dusk
- unexpected actions of other drivers and riders – stopping quickly, merging or turning without warning
- types of roads – freeways, roads with trams or undivided main roads



“

What is more challenging than driving? Nothing!

”
*Getting where
you want
to be involves
more than
just driving
the car*

- imperfect road surfaces – potholes, gravel or slippery surfaces
- handling any of these challenges when faced with distractions inside the car – radio, noisy passengers or mobile phones.

The worst time to gain this experience is when you are driving solo, on your own – with no supervising driver to give you advice or help. So make the most of your time as a learner driver and don't think that you can master the challenges of driving overnight – you'll never really stop learning. Remember, being overconfident, especially as a new solo driver, can lead to making poor decisions when it counts.

SOME FACTS ABOUT DRIVING

- In Victoria, there are several hundred thousand crashes every year.
- These crashes are not 'accidents' – they are due to drivers making mistakes.

Not all driving mistakes result in a crash. Think about the mistakes you've seen drivers make without causing a crash:

- cutting off other cars
- not giving way
- misjudging gaps
- trying to overtake when it's not safe
- just 'not seeing' other road users.

If driving is so easy, why do so many drivers regularly make mistakes, sometimes resulting in crashes?

All young drivers face the same challenges because *driving is complicated*. It requires a lot of time and effort to become a good driver.

Research has shown that a minimum of 120 hours of supervised practice as a learner, and restrictions on new solo drivers for the first few years, can help reduce the risk of a crash. This is why Victoria has introduced the Graduated Licensing System, including the mandatory 120 hours to be completed in the *Learner Log Book* by those aged under 21 years of age when applying for a probationary licence.

HOW COMPLICATED IS DRIVING?

How complicated is driving a car when compared with playing a ball game?

You will most likely have played one or more ball games, such as football, netball, basketball or hockey. You will have practised for many, many hours trying to improve your skills. Learning to drive a car also requires lots of practice to develop your skills.

With ball games...	With driving...
The playing field or court looks the same each time you play – a regular size and marked out in a set way.	Roads can vary enormously – ranging from busy city streets to country roads, from freeways to shopping centre car parks, and from highways to local streets.
You usually play at a regular time, perhaps on a Saturday afternoon.	You can find yourself driving every day of the week, early in the morning, through the day and late at night...and in all weather conditions.
You often play with teammates and other teams of a similar age and ability.	You'll find people of all ages on the road – ranging from small children and teenagers, right up to the elderly. Skills and abilities will vary – an older pedestrian may not move as quickly as a teenager, and a child on a bike may have little control.
Everyone has the same equipment and can run around the field or court at a similar rate.	Some are walking, and some are riding bikes or motorcycles. Others drive small cars, big cars, trucks or semi-trailers. Speeds can vary from a few kilometres an hour up to 110 km/h.
Everyone has one aim – to score a goal or point – and so you can often predict the play.	On the road everyone is headed somewhere different and may be thinking about things other than driving. The unexpected happens often.





Whether it is playing a ball game, a musical instrument, a computer game or activities like inline skating, driving is much more complicated, demanding and far more dangerous.

Does it make any sense that people usually spend more time practising sport, music or any other pastime than they do practising behind the wheel in preparation for solo driving?

Even a common driving task like turning right at an intersection is very complicated:

- As you approach the intersection you will need to judge when to start slowing down, what your speed should be at various places on approach and whether you'll need to stop completely.
- You will need to take the traffic around you into consideration. Are they changing lanes? Are the vehicles in front braking more than you? Are there pedestrians about to cross the road?
- Perhaps you will need to change lanes to do the turn. Is there a gap? When do you change? Do you need to slow down to let a gap 'catch up' to you?

- Using your mirrors, doing **headchecks**, changing gears and using turn indicators need to all be done at the right times.



A **HEADCHECK** means looking over your shoulder to see things through the rear side windows – but don't take your eyes off the road ahead for more than a second.

- Now you are faced with the challenges in the turn itself. Is this gap large enough? Is that vehicle approaching too quickly? Will they stop because the traffic light has changed?

Now imagine all of these things, and many others as well, all needing to happen in a short length of road and a short period of time. Lots to think about and do.

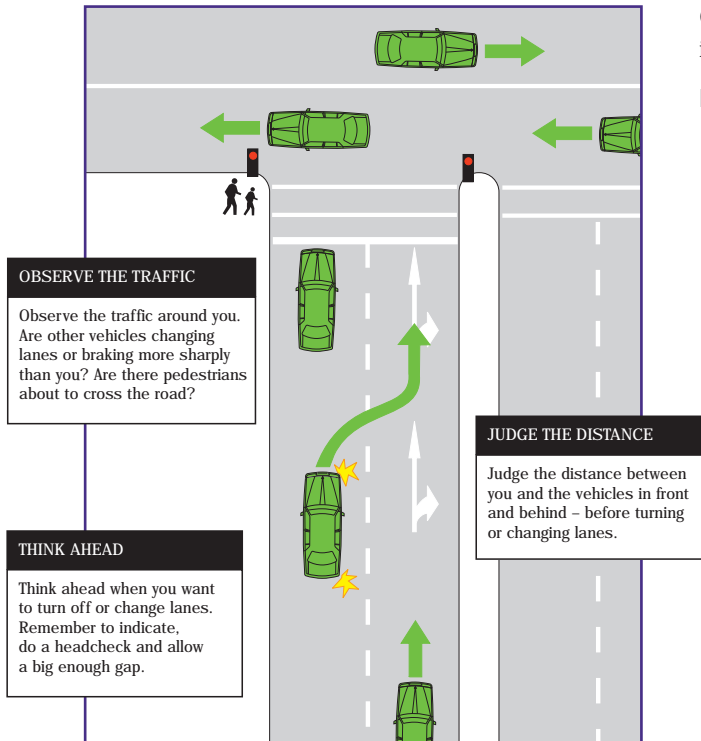


FIGURE 1

Given how complex driving is, it is important you prepare for the challenge!

Point to remember:

1 *Prepare for the challenge*



