

THE NEW DRIVER

Common Tendencies – Possible Solutions

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Introduction

This information is provided as supplemental material for **Geared To Go: A Workbook for Coaching New Drivers**.

As a coach (parent) of a new driver you will face many challenges. Learners experience problems in similar areas. This web site explores these tendencies* and common problems, and explains how to coach the learner to correct problems or to avoid problems from developing and re-occurring.

**Tendency – a proneness to a particular kind of thought or action*

Visual Skills

Visual skills are the root of almost every success or failure in driver education and training. Visual skills are the driver's awareness of **where to look and when**. Good visual skill habits should be developed in the early stages of learning and need to be reinforced continually until they become habit. Proper visual skills while the vehicle is in motion (vision and movement) are the basis for developing most other aspects of information gathering and vehicle handling.

Identifying focal points will help the new driver. **Focal points** are objects ahead or behind the vehicle that are used to ensure the driver is looking far enough away from the vehicle in the direction of travel to allow for planning for potential hazards. Traffic lights two to three blocks ahead are an example of a focal point.

Scanning is your field of vision all around the vehicle. By scanning ahead, behind, and around the vehicle valuable information is gathered to help the driver assess changing situations and allow proactive planning to avoid or reduce potential risks. Learning where to scan is a very important skill for the new driver to develop. Knowing where to look is the key.

When the activity ahead is turning or travelling on a straight road, suggest focal points, such as the next set of lights, or a vehicle at the end of the street, to develop proper visual skills.

Watch for the learner's chin being raised. This is not helpful for correct vision. Remember, if the chin is up, the eyes are down. This is easier to detect when the learner is practicing parking.

Good visual skills require checking the rear view mirror regularly. Checking every five to eight seconds, or about every block, is a good habit to develop to allow planning when stopping or slowing.

Many drivers, whether new or experienced, will check the rear view mirror when braking. This is a good idea, but it is not planning ahead. A driver who is scanning 15 to 20 seconds ahead will receive information about what is happening in advance of being there. If the traffic light one and a half to two blocks ahead is stale (the Don't Walk light

is on), it is safe to assume it will be red by the time the vehicle is at the intersection. Teach the learner to anticipate stopping or slowing for the situation ahead. This is an ideal time to check the rear view mirror, and plan for what is happening behind. This is a better time than when braking hard at the light, wondering if a stop is possible, and hoping the vehicle behind, that likely began braking later than you, can stop.

Commentary Driving

Commentary driving is a very effective tool for both the learner and the coach. Encourage the learner to say out loud what is being seen and planned. This takes away a lot of the guessing and assuming by the coach. For some new drivers, talking and driving will seem difficult in the beginning. However, it will become easier with practice.

Do not expect the learner to speak continually. Provide an example of topics to talk about. Identify the possible hazards, traffic signs, traffic lights, and so on. The goal is to ensure that the learner is scanning far enough ahead (one to two blocks) and checking behind the vehicle.

When the learner has improved at identifying important aspects of driving, expand the commentary driving to include the action that will be taken to deal with the recognized hazard.

It may be necessary to limit the commentary driving to 15 to 30 seconds in the beginning. The time can be extended to longer periods as the learner improves. Another method is to have the learner identify traffic signs or traffic lights for a specified number of lights or blocks. It is important for some new drivers to know that the commentary will end at a specific point or time.

Demonstrations, Pictures, and Observing

Before doing a high-risk activity, such as merging and traffic circles, demonstrate the activity, draw pictures to explain it, and have the learner observe the situation when possible.

Find a location on a quiet street to preview the activity with demonstrations and diagrams, where the learner can focus without other distractions. This gives the learner the opportunity to 'visualize' the activity prior to attempting it. Provide thorough explanations in a logical sequence. To ensure all the information has been understood have the learner repeat (paraphrase) what has been learned. Their feedback should be specific. Encourage the learner to ask questions at this point.

Observation is another very effective method for learning and teaching. Park the vehicle in a safe place where the activity can be watched for a few minutes. Encourage the learner to ask questions about what the learner has observed.

Turns

A. Right Turns

New Driver Tendency:

- Right turns tend to be performed too widely or too tightly, due to the following.

1. Approaching the turn too quickly

Solution:

- Enter the turning lane, usually the furthest right lane next to the curb, well in advance of the intersection (half a block or more – two to three light standards).
- Begin slowing down at this point. Don't just cover the brake - apply a little pressure.
- The speed on approach should be about 8 to 10 km/h, or slow enough that it is easy to stop.

2. Approaching the turn with the vehicle incorrectly positioned in the lane

New drivers will tend to stare at the curb at the intersection. This causes movement toward the curb or away from it. This is not what a driver should do.

Solution:

- Position the vehicle about one metre from the curb as soon as possible when approaching the intersection. Stay parallel with the curb by looking well ahead a block or so along the intended path.

3. Taking too long to check the traffic situation in the intersection

New drivers will tend to stare to the left when approaching the intersection while checking for traffic. In the meantime the vehicle is rolling straight ahead into the intersection, and away from the curb.

Solution:

- Quickly glance left while checking for traffic.
- Check to the right, while adjusting the wheels to stay with the curve of the curb.
- Check for pedestrians and cyclists on the curb.
- Glance again, to the left, to check for traffic.
- If it is not clear, stop.
- If clear, look well along the intended path, keeping the eyes up, and gently accelerate.

Note: Proper visual skills are very important here. New drivers tend to watch the curb (because of concerns about running into it), or the line immediately to the left of their vehicle as they turn, to avoid the curb. Find a focal point, such as a vehicle parked at the end of the street, the next set of traffic lights, or a house along the intended path. Encourage the learner to focus on this point while completing the turn and gently

accelerating. Proper visual skills and movement are critical to vehicle handling and information gathering.

This turn should be performed at about 10 km/h, not 20 to 25 km/h, as many drivers want to do. Trying to do all the things just mentioned above at 20 to 25 km/h is very difficult and dangerous, and even more dangerous when road conditions are poor.

B. Left Turns

New Driver Tendency:

- Left turns tend to be performed too widely or too tightly.

Left turns are extremely dangerous, and should be done with caution.

1. Approaching the turn too quickly

Solution:

- Slow down well back of the intersection, half a block or so.
- Use the lane most to the left, nearest the yellow line, or one of the lanes that are designated for left turning.
- Some left turn lane approaches are fairly long and should be used for slowing down as well as turning.
- If the vehicle in front is in the intersection, stay clear of the intersection, behind the crosswalk, until that vehicle has cleared it completely.

2. Not knowing the intended path before beginning the turn

Solution:

- While approaching the intersection scan left, centre, and right for vehicles and other possible hazards. Scan for the lane the left turn will be made into.
- Once at the intersection, enter into the intersection far enough that the turn must be made. Some new drivers will want to stay close to or straddling the crosswalk. This can be dangerous, because when the light changes to amber the tendency is to stay in that spot. New drivers may think that their vehicles are out of the way of cross traffic. In fact, it is blocking the crosswalk and likely restricting the first lane of traffic that will be crossing in front of the vehicle. Pedestrians will have to walk around the back of the vehicle, or even worse, around the front of the vehicle into the first lane of traffic to cross the intersection.
- Enter the intersection so that the vehicle is about one lane's width from the lane that will be used to make the left turn into. Stay there until the intersection is clear or the light has turned amber and it is safe to proceed. The tendency for new drivers is to spot an opening in oncoming traffic where a turn can be made, and then begin rolling toward the opening. This changes the vehicle's position in the intersection. **Do not** roll forward until ready to turn.
- Keep the wheels straight until it is time to do the turn. This is to prevent being pushed from behind into oncoming traffic.
- When beginning to turn, check left for pedestrians in the crosswalk. If clear, look well along the intended path toward the next set of traffic lights. The tendency is to focus on the vehicle to the left of the intended path, the yellow centre line, or the lane markings. Looking at these objects will cause the learner to go toward them. **You go where you look.** Remember, proper visual skills and movement is critical to all activities.
- Accelerate gently while focusing well ahead along the intended path.

Tracking (Position in the Lane)

New Driver Tendencies:

- Difficulty staying centered on a straight road.
- Difficulty staying centered on a curve.

While traveling on a straight road or a curve, the learner may position the vehicle too closely to the dotted or solid line that divides the lanes, or may cause the vehicle to wander back and forth in the lane.

1. Difficulty staying centered on a straight road

If the learner is having trouble driving down the centre of a straight road, the problem is likely due to where the eyes are focused. Watching the line to the left of the vehicle will cause the vehicle to ride next to the line, or far to the right side of the lane as an attempt to correct the problem.

As well, the learner may be very aware of being next to the curb, and end up driving too close to it. The tendency is to stare at the curb, and then drift close to, against it, or to pull away and avoid it by driving on the left side of the lane.

Solution:

- Provide a focal point 15 to 20 seconds ahead of the vehicle. For example, have the learner identify the color of a set of lights two to three blocks ahead. Staying focused on the focal point for a few seconds will likely result in the vehicle gradually moving to the centre of the lane.

Note: Never stare for long periods of time on one object. Scanning from side to side 15 to 20 seconds ahead of the vehicle is recommended.

2. Difficulty staying centered on a curve

The tendency, for new drivers, on a curve is to look at the road markings beside the vehicle. Doing this will make the curve seem sharper than it is and cause the learner to slow the vehicle down. This will make the learner look even closer at the markings, and the problem is made worse.

Solution:

- Keep the speed where it is safe and within the legal or recommended speed limit. Look 7 to 10 seconds around the curve along the intended path. Proper visual skills and movement are critical to all safe and effective driving.

Parking

A. Parallel Park

New Driver Tendencies:

- The vehicle is too far from the curb when the park is finished.
- The vehicle is backed into the curb.

1. The vehicle is too far from the curb when the park is finished

As in every other aspect of driving, visual skills and movement are very important to parallel parking.

Finishing too far from the curb is a result of not allowing the vehicle to travel in reverse far enough while at the 45 degree angle step of the parking process.

Solution:

- After backing to the right until the vehicle is at about a 45 degree angle to the curb, continue backing with the wheels straight until the right front corner of the vehicle is in line with the left rear corner of the vehicle that is being parked behind.
- While moving at a crawl or walking speed turn the steering wheel as far left as possible, and continue to move at a crawl or walking speed.

Note: The learner should be looking in the direction the vehicle is moving, with quick glances to the front and all around the vehicle.

2. The vehicle is backed into the curb

This usually is the result of poor judgment of distance, or allowing the vehicle to reach an angle greater than 45 degrees before the straight backing step of the parking process.

Solution:

- It is better for the angle step of the park to be done at 45 degrees or slightly less. Greater than 45 degrees makes it much more difficult to finish the park within 50 centimetres of the curb without hitting the curb with the right rear tire.
- Walk or crawl speed is all that is required.

B. Downhill Park

New Driver Tendencies:

- The tire rubs the curb as the learner tries to get the vehicle close to the curb.
- The vehicle is parked with the back end too far from the curb.
- The curb is hit hard as the vehicle moves forward to settle against the curb.

The key to a good downhill park is in the approach. Ensuring the vehicle is close and parallel with the curb on the approach will ensure the vehicle is close and parallel when the park is completed.

Solution:

- Watch where the learner focuses when approaching the curb. The tendency is to raise the chin and stare at the curb. This will almost guarantee running into it. To avoid running into the curb vision should be directed well down the curb lane with short glances to the curb, and small steering wheel adjustments to move the vehicle closer to the curb.
- Once the vehicle is close and parallel to the curb, the hands should be at the 9 and 3 position on the steering wheel. Turn the wheel half way around (180 degrees) to the left (touch the forearms together) and roll about half a meter. Now turn hand-over-hand all the way to the right as the vehicle rolls slowly to the curb.

Caution: There is a strong tendency for new drivers to press on the accelerator when steering hard to the right to complete the downhill park. The first couple of downhill parks should be done on a slight slope, and with the vehicle **in neutral** to prevent the vehicle from running up onto the curb.

C. Uphill Park

New Driver Tendencies:

- The vehicle is parked with the back end too far from the curb.
- The curb is rubbed as the learner attempts to get the vehicle close to the curb.

The key to a good uphill park is in the approach. Ensuring the vehicle is close and parallel with the curb on the approach will ensure the vehicle is close and parallel when the park is completed.

Solution:

- Watch where the learner focuses when approaching the curb. The tendency is to raise the chin and stare at the curb. This will almost guarantee running into it. Vision should be directed well down the curb lane with short glances to the curb, and small steering wheel adjustments to move the vehicle closer to the curb.
- Move the vehicle forward very slowly, about one meter, while turning the steering wheel all the way to the left (just enough to get the wheels all the way to the left).
- Select reverse and, while covering the brake, back very slowly until the right front tire **gently** contacts the curb.

Note: Properly completed uphill and downhill parks will look exactly the same when the passenger door is opened next to the curb. The vehicle should be straight and parallel to the curb for uphill and downhill parks.

Braking Too Late, Too Hard, or Too Softly

New Driver Tendencies:

- The brake is covered an appropriate distance from the stopping point, but no pressure is applied to the brake, so the speed is not reduced.
- Poor judgment of distance, speed, and time results in braking too late or too hard.
- The new driver looks directly over the hood of the vehicle.

Drivers who look directly over the hood of the vehicle tend to brake hard and late because their vision is not far enough ahead to assess time and space properly. As the vehicle slows down, vision is dropped near to the front of the vehicle. This is the beginning of poor judgment of speed, time and distance. Vision should remain at eye level along the intended path.

Solution:

- As in other activities, visual skills are critical here. Vision must be kept at eye level and well ahead of the vehicle. Watch the learner's head and chin. If the learner's chin goes up, the eyes will go down. Keeping the chin level will ensure the vision stays at eye level and well along the intended path.
- When anticipating having to slow down or stop, check the rear view mirror. When covering the brake, apply some pressure to the brake and reduce to about half of the posted speed. This will help in a couple of areas. If the time and space needed to stop or avoid an object has been misjudged, it is safer to brake more in the beginning rather than near the required stopping point. As well, if the vehicle behind is following too closely, braking sooner will give other vehicles warning and force them to slow down well in advance of the required stopping point. This reduces the chance of being rear-ended.

Following Too Closely

New Driver Tendency:

- Following the vehicle in front too closely.

The *Driver's Handbook* recommends at least a two-second following distance. This is good advice, but if a driver is not scanning 15 to 20 seconds ahead of the vehicle, two seconds may not be enough, even in good weather conditions.

Solution:

- Have a three to four second following distance to allow time to slow down for the traffic in front and additional time to deal with vehicles behind that may be following too closely. Scan 15 to 20 seconds or one and a half to two blocks ahead.

Lane Changing

New Driver Tendencies:

- Slowing down while shoulder checking.
- Moving the steering wheel too abruptly or over-steering.
- Looking too long while shoulder checking.
- Moving the steering wheel while shoulder checking.

Proper lane changing requires the following six steps.

1. Check the rear view mirror.
2. Check the outside mirror.
3. Shoulder check.
4. Signal, if clear.
5. Shoulder check again.
6. Move into the next lane, if safe.

1. Slowing down while shoulder checking

Slowing down is usually the result of the learner doing the first shoulder check, then taking the foot off the accelerator, then checking again and not making the lane change, or cutting in too abruptly because the gap has closed. Changing lanes is generally nothing more than changing the vehicle's position on the road. It rarely ever requires slowing down if done where it is safe.

Solution:

- Find a stretch of road that has no obstacles, such as curves and traffic lights, for a few blocks.
- Ensure the new driver is at or near the speed limit. **Remind the learner not to reduce the speed** while glancing to the blind spot. This will take a bit of practice, but the skill will steadily improve.

2. Moving the steering wheel too abruptly or over-steering

Solution:

- Hand position must be at 9 and 3 throughout the entire lane change. New drivers have a tendency to over-steer (usually because of poor visual skills). A lane change requires nothing more than adjusting the steering wheel so the hand position shifts from the 9 and 3 position to the 8 and 2 position for a left lane change. Lane changes to the right would be from the 9 and 3 position to the 10 and 4 position. The hands do not move on the steering wheel, only the steering wheel moves.

3. Looking too long while shoulder checking

Solution:

- Taking the eyes away from looking forward for too long while the vehicle is in traffic is extremely dangerous. It is safer and more effective to perform two shoulder checks with short glances to the blind spot than it is to stare for several seconds.
- Quick glances, while maintaining speed, will produce positive results.

4. Moving the steering wheel while shoulder checking

Solution:

- Moving the steering wheel is usually a result of looking too far back when shoulder checking. New drivers need to be made aware when they are moving the steering wheel while shoulder checking. Ensure the learner is aware of where the blind spot zones are on each side of the vehicle.

Note: Learners will tend to look through the rear window when shoulder checking to the right. The rear view mirror is used for this. Explain the blind spot zones again to reinforce where to look when doing shoulder checks.

Merging

New Driver Tendencies:

- Treating the merge like a yield.
- Waiting too long to find an appropriate space to fit into.
- Travelling too closely to the vehicle in front.
- Approaching the merge point too quickly or too slowly.
- Trusting that other drivers will cooperate in letting the learner merge.
- Being passive instead of assertive.

Before doing a high-risk activity, such as merging, demonstrate the activity, draw pictures and have the learner observe the situation when possible.

1. Treating the merge like a yield

Solution:

- Yielding and merging are very different, and it is important to understand the difference between the two. **Merge** means to mix or blend with the traffic (a shared responsibility). **Yield** requires that one of the vehicles must legally allow the other to proceed to avoid a collision (one vehicle has the right of way).

2. Waiting too long to find an appropriate space to fit into

Solution:

- Finding an appropriate space to merge should begin as soon as the lane where the merge will take place comes in to view. When this can be seen, planning begins for the merge. At this point, the learner needs to pick a spot to fit into, and to continue to glance left to check for the merge location. The learner will have to be **assertive, not aggressive**. This is a situation that requires the learner to take charge and show clear intention to merge with the flow of traffic.

3. Travelling too closely to the vehicle in front

Solution:

- When planning the merge, the learner needs to leave a two to three second following distance (longer if conditions are poor) between their vehicle and the vehicle in front. Many drivers do not know how to merge properly (see 1). Many experienced drivers treat merging like a yield, and will come to a stop due to poor planning. Following too closely will greatly increase the possibility of a collision. As the learner is glancing for an opening in traffic, the vehicle in front may stop.

4. Approaching the merge point too quickly or too slowly

Solution:

- The learner needs to remember this is a **merge**, not a yield. There are no yield or stop signs. Stopping is a last resort and usually the result of poor planning. One sign seen on the approach to the merge is a speed limit sign that will indicate what speed should

be travelled to merge safely. **If drivers were required to yield or stop, there would not be a sign encouraging an increase in speed.** Speed should be increased to near or at the suggested speed. (The speed may have to be adjusted a little to match the chosen entry location.)

5. Trusting that other drivers will cooperate in letting the learner merge

Solution:

- Other motorists are looking for the driver who is merging to communicate clearly what is being planned. Turn on the signal light. Be assertive. If there is hesitation, other drivers will be unsure about what the learner is planning to do. The learner needs to communicate clearly that he or she is going to merge, and other motorists will make room by moving ahead, slowing down, or changing lanes. Remember, a large number of licensed drivers do not know all the rules of the road. Not everyone understands that merging is a shared responsibility, therefore there is no right-of-way.

6. Being passive instead of assertive

Solution:

- Taking a passive approach can communicate to other drivers that the learner is unsure about what to do. This causes confusion, poor planning, and poor decision-making. Be assertive! Take charge! Take control!

Traffic Circles

New Driver Tendencies:

- Approaching the traffic circle too quickly.
- Not glancing to the left when approaching the traffic circle.
- Staring at the concrete triangle island divider to the left when approaching or exiting the traffic circle.
- Staring at the left curb, or the white dotted lane markings to the right, while going around the traffic circle.
- Trying to go further than the first exit in the right (outside) lane.
- Attempting to exit the circle using the right (outside) lane from the left (inside) lane.
- Travelling around the circle too quickly.

Before doing a high-risk activity, such as traffic circles, demonstrate the activity, draw pictures and have the learner observe the situation when possible.

1. Approaching the traffic circle too quickly

Solution:

- Braking should begin about half a block (two to three light standards) from the traffic circle. At this point, cover the brake and **apply some pressure** to slow to roughly half of the posted speed. Many new drivers will cover the brake at the appropriate distance but are still coasting near the same speed. Approach at 10 to 15 km/h, not 20 to 25 km/h. This allows for proper scanning and assessing, and time to plan for other vehicles following too closely behind.

2. Not glancing to the left when approaching the traffic circle

Solution:

- The traffic circle should be approached slowly so that the following steps can be done easily.
- Signal well in advance of the circle.
- Assess the traffic flow ahead, behind, and especially to the left in the circle.
- Decide whether there is enough time and space to continue into the circle, or if a stop will be required.

3. Staring at the concrete triangle island divider to the left when approaching or exiting the traffic circle

Solution:

- Proper visual skills are crucial to all driving activities. Approaching too quickly will interfere with the learner's ability to perform all the necessary actions to ensure safe use of the traffic circle. The learner should be aware of the divider, but not stare at it. Scanning should be done on the approach to the circle, from the left to right, checking for a safe opening and for pedestrians.

4. Staring at the curb on the left while going around the traffic circle

Solution:

- New drivers will be very nervous about contacting the curb to the left of their vehicles when they travel in the left lane around the traffic circle. Due to their nervousness about the curb, they will be very focused on it. This will cause them to move towards it. Here is that vision and movement issue. Encourage the learner to look around toward the next exit and make only small steering wheel adjustments. Vision should be aimed high.

5. Trying to go further than the first exit in the right (outside) lane

Solution:

- Although this is legal, it is **not** recommended, especially for new drivers. New drivers are focused on the basics of keeping the vehicle moving, and staying on the road. Unnecessary high-risk activities should be avoided until the learner has more experience.

6. Attempting to exit the circle using the right (outside) lane from the left (inside) lane

Solution:

- Don't. Some new drivers will try to change lanes while in the traffic circle and to exit a traffic circle from the left lane using the right lane, even after discussing it. This comes up very often, and is very likely to happen as you coach the learner. Anticipate this problem, and remind the learner while going around the circle that the exit must be done in the proper lane. A good rule of thumb is 'enter using the left lane, exit using the left lane' and 'enter using the right lane, exit using the right lane.'

7. Travelling around the circle too quickly

Solution:

- Many new drivers, when nervous and unsure, will increase their speed in an attempt to get through the exercise more quickly. This tendency is very strong in traffic circles. Usually because they are accelerating to get in, they continue to drive around the circle quickly. Once in the traffic circle slow down to a speed that allows the vehicle to be easily controlled.

Intersections (Anticipating the Light)

New Driver Tendencies:

- Not recognizing the fresh (okay to walk) or stale (do not walk) light situation early enough.
- Not understanding what the amber (yellow) light means.
- **Hoping** the light doesn't change to amber versus **anticipating** it changing.
- Not understanding the point-of-no-return.
- Not scanning to the front, side, and rear.

1. Not recognizing the fresh (okay to walk) or stale (do not walk) situation early enough

Solution:

- Identify whether the light has become stale (the Don't Walk light is on), or if it is fresh (legally okay to cross the street). This is a very important part of deciding how to handle the traffic light. Note this from as far away as one block (8 to 10 seconds).
- **If the traffic light is fresh**, continue within the speed limit, but be aware that the light may turn to stale.
- **If the traffic light is stale**, check the rear view mirror, and cover the brake. The stale light is the first warning that it will soon be changing to amber. By now the vehicle is likely half a block (two or three light standards) from the intersection.
- Covering the brake does a few things. **First**, removing the foot from the gas pedal allows gravity to take over, gradually slowing the vehicle. **Secondly**, the braking reaction time is lessened because the brake is already covered. **Thirdly**, the learner's focus is now on a possible stop, as opposed to running the light or slamming on the brakes.

2. Not understanding what the amber (yellow) light means.

Solution:

- When approaching the traffic light, amber should be treated as **prepare to stop**, so covering the brake is a good proactive move.
- If the vehicle is in the intersection (waiting to turn left), then amber means **clear the intersection** when it is safe.

3. Hoping the traffic light doesn't change to amber versus anticipating it changing

Solution:

- New drivers are anxious about approaching traffic lights that may change. Some drivers go faster and try to get through the light instead of slowing and preparing to stop. The learner should plan to stop. If it turns out that stopping isn't necessary...great.

4. Not understanding the point-of-no-return

Solution:

- Scan the area to determine the ‘point-of-no-return’. There is no exact point, but there is an area or range a short distance before the intersection where the driver must decide if it is possible to stop safely before the crosswalk or intersection. At this point the driver has made a ‘decision to continue’.

This requires good judgment and experience. Many things must be assessed before making this decision, such as speed, road conditions, traffic volume, visibility, and even the condition of the vehicle, especially the tires.

5. Not scanning to the front, side, and rear

Solution:

- Scanning should be done all the time when driving. When approaching a traffic light, scan well before the intersection. While the learner is deciding whether to proceed or stop at the intersection, it is wise to know what is happening on the adjacent roadway and behind the vehicle.

Manual Transmissions

New Driver Tendencies:

- Over-revving the engine while finding the friction point.
- Stalling too often.
- Rough shifting and difficulty finding gears.

1. Over-revving the engine while finding the friction point

New drivers seem to have the idea that the only way to make a manual shift (standard) vehicle move is to co-ordinate 'the clutch *and* the accelerator'. This is not necessary. This approach creates huge anxiety in new drivers and coaches. New drivers hear the engine revving and are afraid that once the clutch engages, the vehicle is going to bolt from its spot like a 747. No wonder new drivers remove their feet from the accelerator and depress the clutch to the floor.

Solution:

- For the first hour, in a large parking lot, **do not** use the accelerator to make the vehicle move. The vehicle idles fast enough that no gas is required. Teach the learner to find the friction point, without gas, to move forward.
- The key is to put the vehicle in first gear, with the clutch depressed. Using **no gas**, slowly release the clutch, until the vehicle starts to pull.
- Pause at the friction point. Allow the vehicle to start moving while slowly moving the clutch (in millimetres).
- As the vehicle slowly gains speed, without gas, and moves three or four meters forward, slowly release the clutch all the way out.
- Becoming familiar with the friction point, and what it can do, is critical to the learning process. Using the no gas method provides for a better feel for the friction point, with little or no anxiety that results from the revving engine.

A good rule of thumb for using the clutch is the 4-S rule. The only reasons for depressing the clutch are to:

- Start (ignition) the vehicle.
- Start to move the vehicle in first gear.
- Shift gears.
- Stop.

2. Stalling too often

Solution:

- Stalling is usually due to the new driver releasing the clutch too quickly. Often this happens as a result of anxiety, especially the first time in traffic. The key to not stalling is to release the clutch to the friction point, hesitate with the clutch for three to four meters, and then slowly release the clutch all the way. Hesitating at the friction point as the vehicle starts moving is very important.

3. Rough shifting and difficulty finding gears

This often is a result of the new driver's grip on the gearshift, and the desire to get the shifting over with as quickly as possible. The tendency for new drivers is to make a fist on the gear selector knob. This tends to increase the tension and forces shifting. The gears are synchronized and it requires nothing more than a relaxed open palm grip on the gear selector.

Solution:

- Slow the shifting process by taking three to four seconds to depress the clutch, shift from one gear to the next, and slowly release the clutch. Slowing the process will also reduce some of the anxiety.