



**Aging and Driving:  
Ontario's Licence Renewal  
Program for Drivers Age 80  
and Above**

*(Supplemental Reading)*

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# 1. Introduction

## Purpose

Welcome to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Group Educational Session for senior drivers. The goals of this session are to:

- ▶ To promote road safety
- ▶ Build on your strengths as senior drivers
- ▶ Talk about the effects of getting older on driving
- ▶ Provide information about the effects of medication on driving
- ▶ Help you deal with traffic situations of special concern
- ▶ Review some rules of the road and traffic signs
- ▶ Help you drive safely for as long as possible, but also
- ▶ Help you decide when it is time to limit or stop driving



## 2. Strengths of Senior Drivers Age 80+

- ▶ **Judgment** – The best judgment comes with experience. History is full of leaders that made their best contributions later in life. Many current world leaders are in their 60s and older.
- ▶ **Experience** - Seniors have a wealth of experience. By the time we reach 80, most of us have been driving for years, on all kinds of roads and in all kinds of situations.
- ▶ **Knowledge** – Seniors have accumulated tremendous knowledge over their driving careers about road safety and good driving practices.
- ▶ **Vitality** - Seniors are now living longer, healthier and more active lives.

- ▶ **Responsible** - As a group, seniors are quite responsible. Seniors have a low rate of drinking and driving and other risky driving behaviours such as speeding when compared to drivers in other age categories.
- ▶ **Ability to Adapt** - Seniors have shown they can adapt to the many changes that have occurred in roads and motor vehicles over the years. Many seniors also make changes in their driving habits (e.g., choosing not to drive at night, in bad weather or in heavy traffic). This ability to adapt is very important as we experience the effects of getting older.

## 3. The Effects of Getting Older on Driving

### Knowing Yourself

We all have different abilities and skills as drivers. All drivers need to be aware of both their strengths and limitations in order to make good decisions (such as when and where to drive).

**The important thing is to know your own level of ability.**

While we age at different rates, we all experience some changes in our bodies as we get older. This means that even small age-related changes can make a big difference in driving decisions and subsequently, can affect road safety. It is important to be self-aware and identify the types of changes that could influence your ability to drive safely. Knowing more about how aging affects driving is the first step in keeping you on the road longer.

**Did you know that drivers often must make 8 to 12 decisions every kilometre or half mile? Sometimes, you have less than half a second to make a decision.**

This part of the Booklet provides an overview of the most common and important types of changes associated with aging that can affect your driving ability (i.e., vision, flexibility/movement/strength, and other changes such as reaction time and concentration and cognitive impairments).

# Vision

Gradual changes in vision as we age may lead to problems:

- ▶ Seeing moving objects
- ▶ Seeing less clearly (especially at night or at dusk and dawn)
- ▶ Judging distance
- ▶ Being more sensitive to glare (such as rain and light on the windshield)

Your vision is tested when you renew your driver's licence to make sure it meets driving standards. If you are having any of these problems, see your doctor.

Medical conditions can also affect vision.

**Did you know, by age 75, almost half of us will have early cataracts, and about one in four will have advanced cataract disease.**

Cataracts are like having a waterfall in front of your eyes, and can seriously affect your ability to drive. The good news is the problem can now be easily corrected.

Other eye disorders that can lead to reduced vision or even blindness are glaucoma and macular degeneration (loss of sharp central vision). These disorders become prevalent in adults over the age of 60. Glaucoma, if detected early, can be effectively treated, in most cases. There are new and effective treatments for many people with macular degeneration. Those with diabetes may also experience vision changes on account of the disorder. Regular eye exams can detect these problems.

## Hearing

By age 65, one-third of us have some hearing loss. Gradual hearing loss increases with age. Medical problems (such as tinnitus or ringing in the ears and infections) can also impair hearing. Regular hearing exams can pick up these problems. The good news is that better hearing aids are being developed all the time.

**Hearing loss affects one's ability to hear horns, sirens and brakes. You may also have to rely on your vision more to compensate for hearing loss.**



## Flexibility, Movement and Strength

As we age, we often have more stiffness and less range of movement in our neck, shoulders, arms, legs and trunk. Similar to flexibility or movement, strength also tends to decrease with age, especially if people are not physically active. If you lack flexibility, movement and strength in your limbs or joints, it could affect your ability to drive.

Flexibility affects our ability to:

- ▶ Check your blind spot
- ▶ Look for traffic and pedestrians at intersections
- ▶ Merge with oncoming traffic
- ▶ Yield the right of way, back up and park

Remember, you need to turn your head or body to check your blind spot and to see what is around you.

**The good news is exercises and stretching can improve flexibility, muscle strength and range of motion. Talk to your doctor about becoming more active.**

Many people develop some arthritis with age. Osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis (which affects 1 in 10 adult Canadians), affects the body's joints causing swelling and pain. Rheumatoid arthritis is less common, but more painful. Both forms of arthritis can restrict movement. Osteoporosis (bone disease) also makes moving more difficult and painful. Other conditions such as fibromyalgia, lupus and gout can also limit your flexibility, movement and strength.

Muscle weakness or muscle stiffness can make it difficult for you to drive. For example, arm strength is important for the safe control of your steering wheel, particularly when you have to make quick or sudden movements. Leg strength is important for pressing your acceleration and brake pedals, especially when quick actions are required.

## Reaction Time and Concentration

With age, we may also experience gradual changes in:

- ▶ Reaction or response time (slower)
- ▶ Concentration (more easily distracted), and
- ▶ Coordination (poorer)



Medical problems such as Parkinson's Disease, stroke, Lou Gehrig's Disease, tremors and muscle spasms can limit coordination making it difficult to respond to sudden events on the road.

## Cognitive impairments

Senior drivers are at an increased risk of suffering from late-life cognitive impairment and dementia.

Dementia affects the brain and the ability to think, remember, and speak. It impairs a person's logical reasoning, memory, and their language skills. Nearly 10% of Canadians over the age of 65 have dementia; the disease increases crash risk by up to 4.7 times. Drivers with dementia are likely to commit unsafe driving maneuvers such as improper turning or following too close).

Mild cognitive impairments can be difficult to detect. Those who have them typically suffer greater memory problems than others of the same age. But these mild impairments can develop into dementia or Alzheimer's, typically within five years, sometimes in a shorter period.

**It is always a good idea to discuss not only physical changes with your doctor, but also cognitive issues.**

## **4. Medications and Driving**

- ▶ Drowsiness
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Blurred vision
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating and staying awake
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Memory lapses
- ▶ Difficulty keeping a steady course (staying in the proper lane)

Seniors need to be cautious about taking medications and driving.

Seniors age 80 and above tend to take more medications than other age groups. It is not uncommon for seniors to have multiple prescriptions – 1/3 of adults 65 and older take five or more prescriptions! Some medications (both prescription and over-the-counter) have side effects that could make driving unsafe so it is important to be cautious.

- ▶ The risk of side effects and interactions increase with the number of medications taken.
- ▶ One medication may not impair driving, but combinations of medications could.
- ▶ Alcohol mixed with certain medications can also be very dangerous.
- ▶ With age, our bodies react differently. It takes longer for the body to break down or get rid of medication.
- ▶ Medical problems can also alter the body's response to certain medications.



Possible effects of medication on driving:

- ▶ Drowsiness/sleepiness
- ▶ Confusion and difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Dizziness/light-headedness
- ▶ Blurred vision
- ▶ Tremors
- ▶ Slowed reaction time
- ▶ Memory lapses

These symptoms can make it difficult to stay in the proper lane, maintain appropriate speed, maintain a safe following distance, react to road signs, and respond quickly (braking or swerving to avoid a collision).

**If you have any of these symptoms, you should not drive. Wait until you feel better, take a taxi or get someone to drive you. If you develop any of these side effects while driving, pull over and rest. Tell your doctor.**

Any medication that impairs the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) could potentially make driving unsafe. Certain medications are likely to cause the above symptoms and affect driving ability. These can include:

- ▶ Tranquilizers and sedatives
- ▶ Anti-depression and anti-anxiety medications
- ▶ Narcotics (medication for pain)
- ▶ Muscle relaxants
- ▶ Sedating antihistamines (for allergies and hay fever)
- ▶ Cold and flu medications

Some of these medications are available over-the-counter or could be 'natural' or 'herbal' remedies. It is important to remember that non-prescription medications can also have side effects that make driving unsafe.

**Always carefully read the warning labels! If you are not sure, ask the pharmacist.**

## Medication Action List

All older adults should keep an up-to-date list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications that they are taking. Fill out a list such as the one located here and keep a copy with you in your purse or wallet and in the glove compartment of your vehicle. Take this list with you when you see your doctor and pharmacist and review it with them.

### **Talk to your doctor and pharmacist**

- ▶ Make a list of all the medications you take.
- ▶ Always ask if a medication can affect your ability to drive.
- ▶ Read warning labels and ask about interactions with other medications.
- ▶ Be careful when taking over-the-counter medications.
- ▶ If you have any negative side effects, particularly when starting a new medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist.
- ▶ Never stop taking medicine or change the dose without talking to your doctor or pharmacist first.
- ▶ If you are unsure if a medication will affect your ability to drive, be cautious and choose not to drive after taking it.

**Discuss the possible effects of each medication you are taking (both prescription and non-prescription) with your doctor. Ask if the drug can have any possible effects on your driving**

## My Medication Action List

<b>Medication</b>	<b>Date started</b>	<b>Should I drive while using this medication? (Yes or No)</b>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		

## 5. Good Practices to Maintain Driving Fitness

Not only is it important to be aware of the effects that aging can have on our ability to drive, it is equally important to maintain an overall healthy lifestyle. Being healthy helps maintain fitness for driving and can keep you on the road longer. Remember to:

- ▶ Have regular medical, vision, and hearing check-ups with your doctor.
- ▶ Eat well and get enough sleep.
- ▶ Stay physically active by exercising (i.e., walking, gardening).
- ▶ Stay mentally active by reading, doing puzzles, or playing cards or other brain games.
- ▶ Be aware of the effects of medications on driving.

Regular check ups, including review of medications, are necessary to catch and treat any medical problems. Good nutrition, getting enough sleep and staying mentally active (reading, doing crossword puzzles or playing cards) also helps us concentrate while driving.

**Regular exercise will increase your flexibility, strength, balance and coordination. It will help you prevent falls and drive better!**

The good news is that it is never too late to begin exercising and you will notice an immediate difference in how you feel. To find out how to be more active and to obtain the new physical activity guidelines see Section 12 of this Booklet. Also consider joining an exercise class for older adults at your local community or seniors' centers. There are many fun classes (such as aquatics, Tai Chi, yoga, dance) for you to choose from. Remember to consult your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

## 6. Driving Habits Checklist

Being aware of our own abilities is key to road safety (our own as well as the safety of passengers and other drivers).

Many people make changes to their driving habits as they get older without giving it much thought. Others, however, fail to notice the changes they are experiencing that affect driving ability. This Section helps you identify some of the issues or challenges that you might encounter when driving. For every issue, there are several driving habits or tips that you can use to improve safety.

It is important to be aware of our strengths as drivers but it is also important to know our limitations and honestly assess our driving habits and abilities. Complete the following exercise and identify the safe driving habits that could help you be safer on the roadways.

Here's an exercise you can do at home, either on your own or with a family member, in order to honestly assess your own ability and come up with your Personal Action Plan for safe driving.

- ▶ Circle each statement (issue or problem) that applies to you, then,
- ▶ Circle the tips below that you find most helpful.

## Night Vision and Glare

Reduced night vision can make it more difficult to read road signs and see people walking or riding bikes.

- ▶ Do you find it hard to see driving at night?
- ▶ Does glare from the sun or lights of other cars bother you?
- ▶ Do you need to slow down to read unfamiliar road signs?



### Tips:

- ▶ Avoid night driving
- ▶ If you need to drive at night, allow 5 minutes for your eyes to adjust
- ▶ Avoid glare by looking to the right hand side of the road rather than directly at the oncoming traffic
- ▶ Drive on well lit roads where possible
- ▶ Get regular eye examinations
- ▶ Keep your windshield, inside of windows and car lights clean
- ▶ Wear quality sun glasses
- ▶ Turn headlights on 30 minutes before sunset
- ▶ Always wear your latest prescription glasses. Don't wear old glasses or someone else's

## Side Vision and Flexibility

As we grow older, we may need to pay closer attention to what is going on around us. Neck and trunk flexibility may make it harder to see things around us.

- ▶ Do you find it hard to turn to check your blind spot?
- ▶ Are you sometimes surprised by cars that appear beside you?
- ▶ Do you sometimes not notice people walking or riding on bikes at intersections?



### Tips:

- ▶ Do regular flexibility exercises
- ▶ Look for things happening to both sides of your car and well up the road
- ▶ Check mirrors regularly. Reduce your left side blind spot by adjusting your side mirrors. First, lean your head against the window, adjust your mirror outward so that when you look at the inside edge you can barely see the side of your car. If you use a wide-angle mirror, practice before using it in traffic
- ▶ Don't drive in other car's blind spot
- ▶ Always check before backing up
- ▶ Watch for people walking at intersections. Remember that they have the right of way. Pay attention to signs including at crosswalks and school zones.
- ▶ Avoid backing out of parking spaces, if possible
- ▶ Park your car so that you can exit going forward

## Judging and Reacting

Difficulty judging distance and slower reaction times can make it harder to deal with fast moving traffic.

- ▶ Do you find it hard to pull out in heavy traffic?
- ▶ Do you find it hard to judge the distance and speed of other cars?
- ▶ Do you find things happen too quickly for you to make good driving decisions?



### Tips:

- ▶ Keep a buffer of space around your car
- ▶ Stay 3 seconds of travelling time behind the car in front of you
- ▶ Slow down for bad weather or road conditions
- ▶ Brake smoothly and gradually
- ▶ Make sure that your front tires are pointed straight ahead while waiting to make a left turn
- ▶ Make 3 right turns rather than making a left
- ▶ Pre-plan your trip
- ▶ Check your rear view mirror when braking
- ▶ Stay mentally active (e.g., puzzles or crosswords)
- ▶ Avoid driving in bad weather
- ▶ Avoid heavy traffic and highway driving
- ▶ Drive at the speed limit, driving too slow is unsafe
- ▶ Switch to a road with a lower speed limit
- ▶ Drive in the right lane wherever possible
- ▶ Signal your intentions well in advance
- ▶ Check your mirrors often
- ▶ Consider alternative transportation options



## Concentration

Short lapses in attention can lead to missing important information like lights, stop signs and traffic conditions.

- ▶ Do you get lost while driving?
- ▶ Do you sometimes change lanes or merge without looking?
- ▶ Do you tend to drive much faster or slower than other traffic?
- ▶ Are you distracted or does your attention wander while driving?



### Tips:

- ▶ Do not let passengers, the radio or cell phone distract you
- ▶ Turn the volume on your radio down or turn off the radio completely
- ▶ Plan your driving for mid-morning when you are most rested, traffic is lighter, glare is less and visibility is greatest
- ▶ Plan the route to your destination so that you need to make fewer trips, and to minimize left turns
- ▶ Avoid busy streets
- ▶ Take frequent breaks, stop for stretching and walking exercise Let someone else drive when you are tired or stop for a rest Avoid driving on less familiar roads
- ▶ When backing up ensure that you are in the correct gear and that your foot is on the correct pedal
- ▶ Do not drive when upset
- ▶ Look twice both ways before making a turn or entering an intersection
- ▶ Do not drive in situations that make you nervous
- ▶ Always check your mirror and look over your shoulder before changing lanes or merging

## Concentration

During the class discussion, your group may have come up with other tips. Write down those you feel are most useful.

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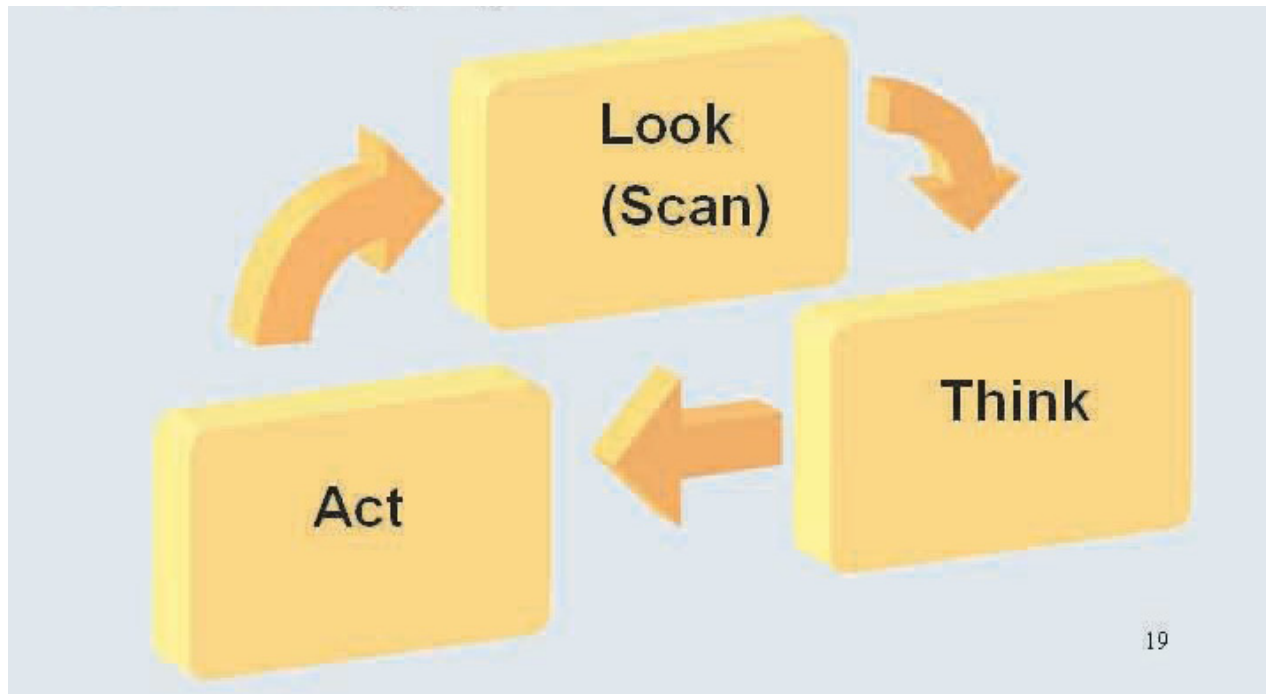
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It is important to keep this Personal Action Plan for safe driving up-to-date. As you get older, you will experience more changes. You need to continue to be aware of what you can do to help yourself to drive safely.

The more difficulties that apply to you, the more important it is that you take a good look at your driving and consider talking with your doctor, family and friends.

**It is up to all drivers to make changes to improve their driving.**

# 7. The Safety Driving Cycle



## **Look (Scan)**

Looking (or scanning) means paying attention to everything around you, including what other drivers are doing. You should always be aware of what is happening in front, behind and to both sides of your vehicle. Remember to keep your eyes focused on the road some distance ahead. As we age we tend to focus on the road just in front of us. The sooner we see or hear a problem, the more time we have to react. Examples to watch for include; brake lights of the car in front of you, an emergency vehicle in the intersection ahead, a car in front of you turning onto the road, a honking horn, or road signs and traffic lights.

## **Think (Decide)**

Now that you are fully aware of what is happening on the road, you now need to interpret these events and decide how you should respond based on what you see and hear. For instance: Why did the car in front of you put on their brake lights? Do you also need to slow down? How close is the car behind you? Is that a siren you hear? Where is it coming from?

## **Act**

Finally you need to act. For instance, when you see an intersection ahead with a stop sign, you will need to check your rear view mirror, gently apply the brakes and slowly come to a complete stop a safe distance behind the car in front of you.

**Taking a proactive approach to driving can make a real difference.**

## 8. High-Risk Driving Situations

Drivers age 80 and above are generally very responsible drivers, however, they are the most overrepresented age group in crashes. They are also at a higher risk of being fatally injured in a collision than younger drivers.

To prevent crashes, it is important to be aware of situations that are shown to be high-risk for drivers age 80 and above. You can develop strategies for avoiding or dealing with these situations. Whenever possible, plan ahead.

One strategy is to regulate your driving. This includes avoiding the following situations whenever possible:

- ▶ Driving in bad weather (such as heavy rain, snowstorms/freezing rain, fog)
- ▶ Nighttime driving
- ▶ Driving in heavy traffic (during rush hour on freeways or highways)
- ▶ Driving on poorly maintained roads (bumpy, broken, or gravel roads)
- ▶ Driving long distances or traveling unfamiliar routes

**When you have a choice, it is always a good idea to avoid traffic situations that are fast paced.**

While driving can be challenging at times, the good news is that there is a lot that you can do to ensure your own safety and the safety of others while still enjoying the benefits of driving. In addition to the tips already covered, knowing the rules of the road is key to driving safety.

Areas of special concern include:

- ▶ Intersections
- ▶ Yielding (right-of-way)
- ▶ Turning (particularly left turns)

- ▶ Merging (entering and exiting roadways)
- ▶ Following distance
- ▶ Backing up

The examples below are taken from the Official Driver's Handbook published by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. You are encouraged to review these scenarios to refresh your safe driving knowledge. Keep your copy of the Handbook handy. It contains many more useful tips for safe driving.

**Taking a proactive approach to driving can make a real difference.  
Always remember to:**

- ▶ **Look (scan) – pay attention to everything around you.**
- ▶ **Think (decide) – interpret what you see and decide how you should respond.**
- ▶ **Act accordingly.**

## Backing Up

When backing up (or into a parking space) remember to:

- ▶ Move slowly
- ▶ Make sure that you are using the correct gear and foot pedal
- ▶ Check the way is clear. Always look for pedestrians or cyclists
- ▶ If going straight back or to your right, turn your body and head to the right and look back
- ▶ If backing to the left, turn and look over your left shoulder
- ▶ Always check the opposite shoulder
- ▶ If you are turning as you back up, check to make sure that the front of your car has lots of room and will not hit anything.



## Intersections

Slow down as you approach. Look for traffic, yield signs, stop signs, traffic lights, cyclists and pedestrians.

There are two main types of intersections: controlled and uncontrolled. Controlled intersections have traffic lights, yield signs or stop signs. On a green light, drive through the intersection at a steady speed. If the light has been green for some time, be prepared to stop. If the road ahead of the intersection is blocked with traffic, remember to stop before entering the intersection so that you will not block traffic if the light changes.

At uncontrolled intersections all cars must stop. If two cars approach the intersection at the same time, the car to the right goes first.

## Right Turns

The proper way to make a right turn includes:

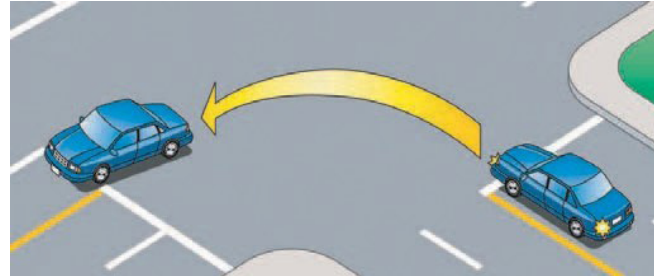
- ▶ Start and end in the right-hand lane
- ▶ Signal well in advance
- ▶ Look ahead, then left and right
- ▶ Then look to the left again
- ▶ Check your right side blind spot
- ▶ Make the turn



## Left Turns

The proper way to make a left turn includes:

- ▶ Signal well in advance
- ▶ Move into the left-hand lane, when clear
- ▶ Look ahead, left, right and left again
- ▶ Check your blind spot
- ▶ Make the turn when the way is clear
- ▶ If making the turn from a stop, keep your wheels pointed straight until ready to make the turn
- ▶ When the turn is complete, move back into the right lane when it is safe to do so

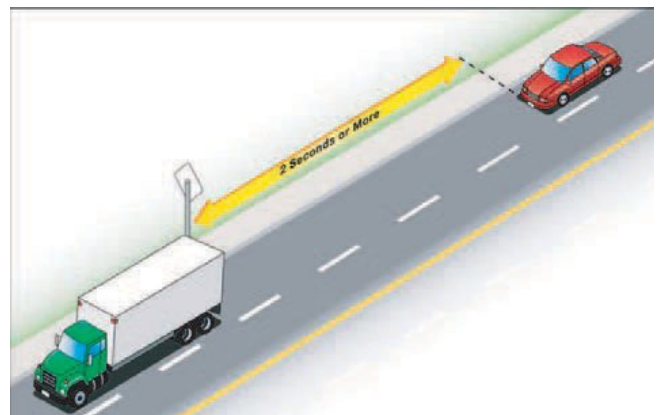


**Keep in mind that you can sometimes make three right turns (going around the block in the same direction) rather than a left turn.**

## Following Distance

The “2 second rule” helps you determine a safe following distance in ideal driving conditions. Due to slower reaction time, older drivers should use the “3 second rule”.

- ▶ Pick a marker on the road ahead, such as a road sign or telephone pole
- ▶ When the rear of the vehicle ahead passes the marker, count “one thousand and one, one thousand and two and one thousand and three”
- ▶ When the front of your car reaches the marker, stop counting

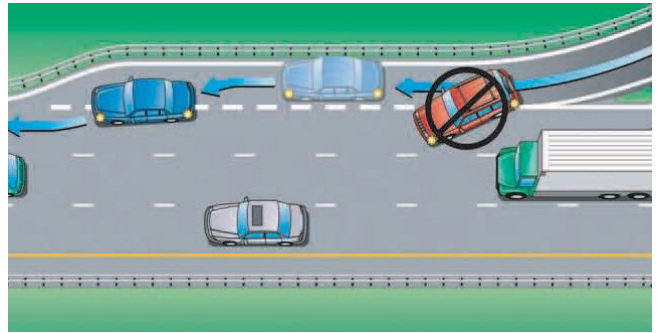


**If you reach the marker before you count to “one thousand and three”, you are following too closely. In poorer weather or road conditions, allow more time (distance) for safe stopping.**

## Merging Into Traffic

The correct way to merge into traffic includes:

- ▶ Check your blind spot when you are on the entrance ramp
- ▶ As you enter the acceleration lane, signal, increase your speed to match the speed of the other vehicles
- ▶ Merge smoothly



If you find freeways stressful and the speed too fast, use less busy streets with lower speeds to get where you want to go. Plan ahead.

**When you have a choice, it is always a good idea to avoid traffic situations that are fast paced.**

## 9. The Importance of Signs

In addition to the rules of the road, you need to pay close attention to road signs. Road signs and traffic lights are important because they tell us what to watch out for and what to do or not do on the road. You can be charged for failure to follow road signs and traffic lights. If you miss these signs or do not know what they mean, it could be very dangerous for you, other drivers and pedestrians. You need to be familiar with these signs. When you are going 60 kilometers an hour, you do not have time to look at your Driver's Handbook. Some types of signs are reviewed below.



**Refreshing your knowledge of road signs is always beneficial. Consult your Official Driver's Handbook regularly to be familiar with rules of the road and all road signs.**

The following are examples of different types of signs. Remember that you should always be alert while driving and scan every 5 seconds for signs as they provide information about the road ahead.

## Regulatory Signs



Do not turn left at this intersection



Do not enter this road



Traffic may only travel in one direction



Do not turn right on red light

Regulatory signs normally have a white background with black markings. They may have additional colours of red or green. They give specific directions about what actions must be taken and what is permitted and what is not.

## Warning Signs



Lane ahead is closed for road work. Obey the speed limit and merge with traffic in the open lane.

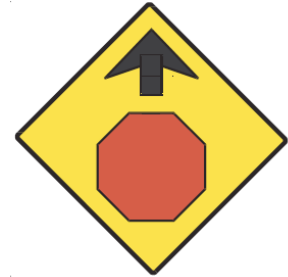
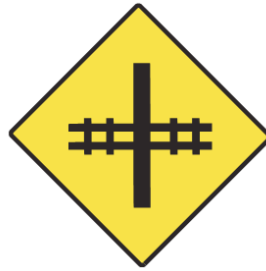


The road ahead is split into two separate roads by a median. Keep to the right-hand road. Each road carries one-way traffic.



Traffic Lights Ahead. Slow down.

## Other Signs



Examples of other types of signs include yield, railway crossing and stop sign ahead, as well as construction, slow moving vehicle and directional signs, etc. It is critical that we pay attention to what signs are telling us to assist in driving safely.

## Other Important Rules of the Road

- ▶ Yielding to buses
- ▶ Emergency vehicles

It is always courteous to yield to buses. It is also the law to yield the right-of-way to a transit bus, with this sign on the back, that is, signaling to re-enter your lane from a bus bay.

This sign appears on the back of a bus, just above the left-hand signal light.



When a police, fire ambulance or other emergency vehicle is approaching from either direction, with lights flashing or siren on, motorists are required to pull over to the right and stop. Motorists must also yield to an emergency vehicle at intersections.

The law requires motorists, when approaching a stopped emergency vehicle with its red lights flashing (in the same direction of travel in a lane or shoulder), to slow down and proceed with caution. If the road has two or more lanes in the same direction, the motorist must move over into the other lane if this can be done safely.

# 10. Alternatives to Driving

## A Big Decision

While the tips in this Booklet may help improve your driving safety and comfort, there comes a time when we all must consider limiting our driving or retiring from driving. It's the responsible thing to do.

Often, this is not an easy decision. We may use our car for shopping, banking, appointments as well as social and recreation activities. We do not want to burden others and value the independence driving gives us.

Some people may deny the fact that they are no longer safe drivers. Others may feel angry or depressed. While these feelings are normal, it is good to know that other seniors have limited their driving or have retired from driving completely successfully by adapting their lifestyle and you can too.

## Things To Watch For

Many people gradually reduce their driving, until one day they simply stop. Others have more trouble deciding when it is time to limit their driving. Here are some warning signs to alert you to the fact that you may no longer be a safe driver and may need to consider alternatives to driving:

- ▶ Am I nervous behind the wheel?
- ▶ Do other drivers frequently honk at me?
- ▶ Have I had a number of fender benders and near misses?
- ▶ Do my family or friends worry about my driving?
- ▶ Do my children trust me to drive with my grandchildren in the car?
- ▶ Have I ever become lost when driving or forgotten where I was going?
- ▶ Do I have any physical and/or cognitive limitations that make it challenging to drive safely?

If you answered yes to several of these questions, it might be time to begin planning ahead and exploring alternatives to driving.

## Plan Ahead

Instead of driving all the time, try using buses, taxis or sharing rides. And, if you decide to move from your house into an apartment, condominium or senior's residence, try to pick one that is close to public transit or offers a shuttle service.

Your ability to drive might be affected suddenly. It is important to begin thinking about alternatives to driving and to plan ahead in the event that one day you are no longer able to drive.

Talk to your family, friends, and doctor. Together, they can help you decide on the extent of driving that is right for you and also help you explore transportation options in your community.

**Planning ahead can reduce stress and worry should you not be able to drive suddenly. It is always best to be prepared.**

## Alternatives

There are many alternatives to driving. Find out what is available in your area and start trying these options.

- ▶ Buses, taxis and other forms of public transit
- ▶ Having friends and family members drive you
- ▶ Keeping a vehicle that others drive for you
- ▶ Van/bus pick-up scheduled and on demand from senior residences and other groups
- ▶ Taxi vouchers
- ▶ Walking
- ▶ Some volunteer groups offer free rides to seniors (see the back of the Booklet to obtain more information)



## Walking

Walking is a great way to cut down on driving, reduce air pollution and get some exercise to boot. As we age, we tend to walk slower than we used to. It often takes us longer to cross an intersection as a pedestrian or to get out of harms way.

**Remember to leave lots of time to cross at the light and to stand well back of the curb at intersections.**

## Cost

One factor that keeps many of us from using taxis is cost. Many taxi companies offer a chit (voucher) system for frequent users which lowers the cost. While there is no question that taxi fares can add up, have you thought about how much it costs you to use your car? It is worth comparing such costs particularly if you drive mostly in your local neighbourhood to shop, bank, attend church, visit friends and so on.

## 11. Closing Reminders

- ▶ We are all responsible for road safety.
- ▶ Recognize your strengths and limitations.
- ▶ Have regular check-ups and talk to your doctor.
- ▶ Be careful with medications.
- ▶ Avoid high-risk driving situations when possible; plan ahead.
- ▶ Review safe driving practices and road signs.
- ▶ Consider alternatives to driving and talk to your family.

# 12. More Information

## Driver Licensing Information

- ▶ To answer questions about your driver's licence, call the Ministry of Transportation:
  - ▶ Toll free 1-800-387-3445
  - ▶ 416-235-2999

## Information on Seniors

- ▶ To find more information on senior driver safety or other senior driver education programs:
  - ▶ Ontario Seniors' Secretariat at [www.seniors.gov.on.ca](http://www.seniors.gov.on.ca) or phone 1-888-910-1999
  - ▶ Canada Safety Council at [www.safetycouncil.org](http://www.safetycouncil.org) or phone 613-739-1535
  - ▶ Canadian Automobile Association at [www.caa.ca](http://www.caa.ca) or phone 613-247-0117
- ▶ Seniors Canada ([www.seniors.gc.ca](http://www.seniors.gc.ca) or phone 1-800-622-6232)
- ▶ National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers ([www.olderdriversafety.ca](http://www.olderdriversafety.ca) – partnership between the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists and the Public Health Agency of Canada for promoting safe driving among older drivers)
- ▶ To find out how to be more active and to obtain the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology's (CSEP's) Physical Activity Guidelines, visit their website:
  - ▶ <http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804>.
  - ▶ Toll-free: 1-877-651-3755
- ▶ To find out if your area has special transportation services for seniors, call Seniors' INFOline
  - ▶ Toll-free: 1-888-910-1999
  - ▶ In Toronto: 416-314-7511

- ▶ GO Transit runs trains and buses linking Toronto with other communities. Seniors 65 and over travel for half fare. All GO trains have wheel chair ramps and many GO buses “kneel” to make it easier for everyone to board. For GO Transit route and schedules phone:
  - ▶ Toll-free: 1-888-438-6646
  - ▶ In Toronto: 416-869-3200

## **Health-related inquiries**

- ▶ Public Health Agency of Canada ([www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors](http://www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors); 416-973-0003)
- ▶ Alzheimer Society of Canada ([www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca); 1-800-616-8816)
- ▶ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health ([www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca); 1-800-463-6273) – geriatric mental health services and resources for older adults
- ▶ Canadian National Institute for the Blind ([www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca); 1-800-563-2642) – information on disorders such as glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration
- ▶ The Arthritis Society/Canadian Arthritis Network ([www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca); 1-800-321-1433)
- ▶ Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada ([www.heartandstroke.com](http://www.heartandstroke.com); 613-569-4361)
- ▶ Parkinson Society of Canada ([www.parkinson.ca](http://www.parkinson.ca); 1-800-565-3000)
  
- ▶ To answer questions about your health concerns, call Telehealth, a free Ontario Government service, available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day:
  - ▶ 1-866-797-0000

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