

# Drive Safe Driving School



## Defensive Driving

### Introduction

By now you should be well on the way with mastering *forward planning, L. A. D. A. and the hazard drill*.

To become proficient at handling traffic you will need to further develop your *hazard perception and defensive driving skills*.

### Hazard Perception

The term perception in driving can be like at times like detective work you don't just have to think about your self but every one else on the road as well.

**This is an art of being able to pick out the important details to enable you to anticipate what's likely to happen next from all the information provided by your senses.** As a perceptive driver you must look for clues and build up a mental picture of what the other driver may do next. While hazard perception skills can only truly be acquired through experience you can speed up the learning process by having a better understanding of the factors that an expert driver considers when building up this mental picture of what's likely to happen next. These are the main factors that an expert driver would consider:

**What would you call a hazard?** A Hazard is anything that may require you to **change speed, position or direction of your vehicle.**

Hazards can be caused by static road features e.g. *junctions, bends, humps, dips, passing places, traffic lights, bridges, crossings, road works, parked vehicles, wet leaves, spilt oil, ice, snow, surface water*. Or even by the actions of other road users or a combination of the two.

### Road Signs

Road signs and road markings provide you with clear information of what lies ahead, It is essential that you train yourself to identify them and obey them it will save your life.



### Location

Always consider the type of hazard that you may expect to meet there and drive at such a speed that you can stop safely if necessary.

### The Time of Day

Time of day can give you a lot of information about what to expect on the road.

**If you see a warning sign for cattle you should be especially vigilant at dawn or dusk, why?** Because cows are often taken for milking at these times and may well be on the road ahead perhaps around the next bend.

Think children on the road at any time but more so before and after school and in school holidays.

It may seem fairly obvious that you should look out for inconsistent road users at school time and even at the end of factory shifts (tired) as the build up of traffic and pedestrians are very high and mistakes can happen.

**But remember you are not just looking for them you are looking for clues about what may happen next!**



### Pedestrians

The Highway Code explains that **those pedestrians most at risk on the road are over 60 and less than 15 years of age.**

Older people do not judge speed and distance very well and their reactions can be slow. Ask yourself - **Have they seen you? Can they hear you?**

**Look for clues - Are they carrying a white stick? Are they looking your way?** And so on.

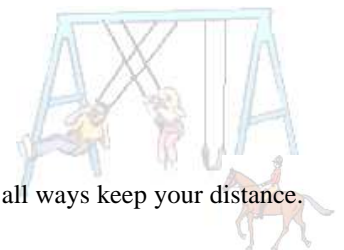
**Children are more interested in playing (footballs in the road are followed by children) and the ice cream van that they are running after.**

**Abandoned cycles at the side of the road will mean that children are not far away.**

**If there's one child runs into the road there will often be at least one more following.**

Again look for clues. **Are they alone?** All pedestrians are at risk on the road.

If there are pedestrians about make sure that you know what they are going to do before they do it.



### Animals

Vehicles can easily frighten animals therefore drive slowly don't sound your horn/ rev up the engine and all ways keep your distance. Watch their behaviour carefully and particularly if it is a horse being ridden by a child.

## Cyclists

**A High Court judge once ruled that a cyclist is entitled to wobble.**

Drivers should have more control over their vehicles than cyclists! **Cyclists depend upon physical strength and effort to pilot their cycle so always leave plenty of room.**

Look for clues about their next move.... For example a cyclist who looks over his or her right shoulder may be about to turn right. There may even be a puddle or hole ahead of them in the road this will also cause the cyclist to move out.

Cyclists are not easy to see and they can easily get lost in your blind spots of your vehicle. Particularly out watch for them in slow moving traffic & built up areas as they may overtake you on either side when you least expect.



## Motorcyclists

Like cyclists, motorcyclists are not easy to see particularly at dusk and at night. They may also take up unusual road positions to avoid holes and bumps in the road surface. It is very easy to miss an approaching motorcyclist when emerging at junctions so remember

**Think once, think twice, think bike!**

## Drivers

If you are unsure about what a driver is going to do next leave plenty of space between you and them.

A sporty looking custom car may be driven by someone more interested in posing than driving!

## Large vehicles

Buses and large vehicles need more room and may take up unusual road positions to turn round corners at junctions. **Hold back and give them plenty of room.**



## Inconsistent behaviour

Just because a bus is signalling left prior to a side road that you intend to emerge from doesn't mean that you should go on the assumption that the bus is turning left? Look to see if all the actions of the driver are consistent with the signal.

**Is the vehicle slowing down? Is their position consistent with the proposed manoeuvre? Is the driver looking in the direction they intend to turn? Could the driver be signalling left for a purpose?**

In the above example the bus driver is signalling left to pull up at a bus stop just after the side road. Make sure you look at all the evidence before you finally decide.

## Thinking ahead

Consider what you can see that other drivers cannot see. This may play an important part in determining what may happen next. Your on a open road travelling at 60 mph there are two cars ahead of you. You see the 1st cars brake lights come on! Your instinct should to check your mirrors and come off the gas pedal..... As the 2nd car may have his mind on other things and may not react to the last minute!

## The weather and visibility

**All weather conditions can severely affect visibility therefore remember to slow down and give yourself more space and time.**

At dusk and at night the driver loses the ability to see any detail and dark objects easily merge into the background. Consider not only how this may affect your judgment but also how these conditions may affect other drivers. **Is the other driver being blinded by bright sunlight or at night by headlights on full beam? Are the windows of other vehicles misty? Can the driver see you?**

**Will the high sided vehicle in high wind remain stable when it crosses a gap in the hedge or buildings?**

Also remember the effects of water, ice and snow on the road surface.

**Are the other drivers driving too fast for the weather conditions? Are you driving too fast for these conditions?**

## Defensive Driving

Driving defensively is all about giving yourself time to react and keeping your options open.

Even someone with lightning fast reactions needs time to react.

## Be seen

Take up a safe road positions that allow you to see and be seen.

Always focus on the driving task and never let your mind wander.

Keep your eyes moving and scan the road well ahead however avoid staring at any single point ahead or to the side.

**By now you should be gaining to recognise and sensing what is important and what is not.** Ignore the superficial information you can see.

For example-Identifying individual drivers or pedestrians or the make, model or the colours of vehicles is useful.

Also concentrate on the **position, speed and potential course of other vehicles and/ or pedestrians both to the front, rear and sides of your vehicle.**

Look as far down the road as you can see for any potential hazards whether they are static road features or situations being caused by other road users.

**A gap in the tree line ahead may mean that there is a side road at that point or an upside down triangle sign in the distance may warn you that you are approaching a T Junction and so on.**

[www.DriveSafeDriving.co.uk](http://www.DriveSafeDriving.co.uk)

Initially you may perceive risks that are not really there or indeed ignore risks that are. With experience you will begin to develop your own judgment in this regard.

### Apply the hazard routine in good time

Each time you are presented with a potential or actual hazard on the road (i.e... **anything that may require you to have to change speed, position or direction**) you will go through the hazard routine one or more times. While each step of the drill needs to be considered in the order shown it need not necessarily be acted upon. Observations to the front, rear and sides are carried as necessary throughout the application of the drill.

### Give yourself plenty of space

You need to give yourself the time to recognise a potential problem and apply the hazard routine. We refer to this as **driving in space**. The higher your speed (the greater your stopping distance) the bigger the gap needs to be.

### Space to the front and the rear

Always allow yourself enough room to stop. If other vehicles follow too close slow down and let them pass. Remember that it's your neck that will suffer if someone hits your car from the back! (whiplash) The less space you have at the back the more you need at the front.

### Space to the sides

Make sure that you leave enough room for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and other vehicles. **If you are unsure whether or not you will fit through a gap, you won't!** Give parked cars and pedestrians at the side of the road plenty of clearance. **Remember pedestrians are far more vulnerable than vehicles.**

At 30 MPH allow for car doors opening (1 metre) for children are appearing from between parked cars or pedestrians wandering onto the road particularly in crowded streets. Position your car accordingly and reduce speed as the space to your sides is reduced.



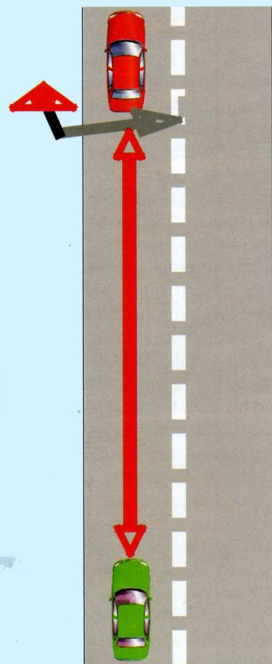
## Four golden rules of defensive driving ...

To drive defensively there are four important rules for maintaining space. The primary rule to protect the front and rear of our vehicle whilst moving must certainly be the Two-Second Rule, adding additional seconds as necessary to match de-

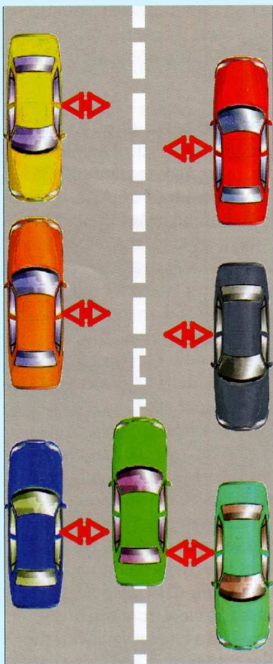
graded environmental conditions. Secondly, we must also maintain safe space at the sides of our vehicle – the Door's Width Rule, and its proportionate multiples depending upon speed when passing stationary objects. Thirdly, for maintaining space

there is the Diagonal Rule' "Always position yourself diagonally to other vehicles, when travelling in a multi-lane system at a similar speed to other traffic", i.e. don't travel alongside another vehicle which is steering, or which may steer, as you may come into contact.

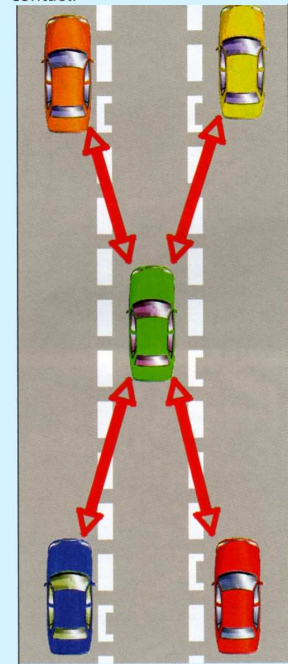
And, fourthly, to protect our front and rear when stationary we have the Queuing Distance Rule.



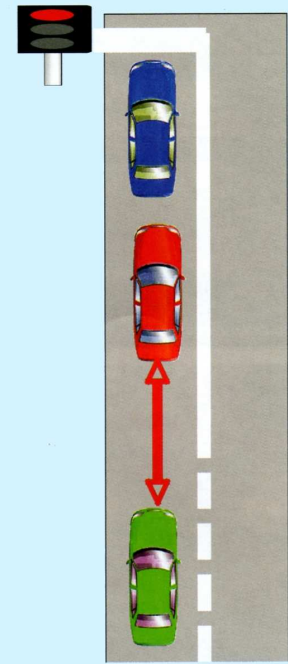
**1** Always maintain a two-second interval at all speeds above 6mph, with additional seconds to match conditions



**2** Always maintain a space at least a door's width from stationary objects while travelling at 30mph, and pro-rata at other speeds



**3** Always position your vehicle diagonally to other vehicles when travelling in a multi-lane system at a similar speed to other traffic



**4** Always maintain a safe queuing distance, at least five metres in length, behind the vehicle ahead when stopping in any queue