

# **CLASS-DRIVING TIPS - SECTION ONE – OBSERVATION**

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## **LOOK OFTEN**

Look often at each new ‘traffic scene’.

Whenever you go through an intersection, over a hill crest or around a bend, you have a new ‘traffic scene’.

1. Look ahead to the distance that you will drive in the next twelve seconds. [That is about a city block at traffic speeds and around a kilometre at highway speeds].
2. Scan your view back towards yourself in a zigzag pattern, then look out and do it again.

You might get three or four scans for each new traffic scene.

Look often and avoid staring at any object for longer than a second or two.

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## **IMPROVING YOUR OBSERVATION**

Learning to look through things will improve your observation technique.

On the approach to intersections form the habit of looking through the garden layout or shop window into the other street early. Look through other moving vehicle's windows, around them and even under them while they are at a distance. You may notice relevant things or people that are partially hidden in the traffic scene.

Look through problems for solutions.

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## **PERIPHERAL VISION**

Develop the art of seeing out of the corner of the eye as you drive.

Our vision has two parts; the sharp central cone which is great for reading signs, and the side vision with which we can monitor previously noticed hazardous things. Scan from the distance back towards yourself and notice each hazard. Remain aware of the hazards in the corner-of-your-eye as you do your next scan.

Learn to limit the time you look directly at each object and remain aware of it in your side vision.

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## GUIDE POSTS ARE FOR GUIDING

In country areas, guide posts cluster at side roads and depict bends. The closer together guide posts are, the sharper the bend.

Guide post reflectors are helpful at night and have the following meanings:

- **Red** reflectors are always on the left of the road, so if you can only see red reflectors ahead, the road bends to the right.
- **White** reflectors are on the right side of the road, so if you can only see white reflectors ahead, the bends to the left.
- **Yellow** reflectors are in areas where there is potential for snow and ice (including 'black' ice), so prepare for a very slippery road.
- **Blue** reflectors indicate the presence of a fire hydrant.
- A **black** band at or near the top of the guide post indicates a water hazard at the side of the road.

Guide posts help you to see the road condition ahead.

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## **LOOKING FOR AND CATCHING THE TRAFFIC GAP**

Look for the traffic gap as you approach give-way signs and roundabouts.

A traffic gap is the distance between two vehicles that you judge to be safe to drive into. “Catching the traffic gap” means that you arrive at the correct moment to smoothly and safely move into it. To do this, look for the traffic gap early, brake firmly until you are arriving at the centre of the gap, then control your vehicle into it with gentle acceleration.

Catching the traffic gap improves your safety and smoothness.

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## **FLASHER REFLECTION ON WET ROADS**

Sometimes you can see the reflection of a flasher on the wet street or in the shop windows.

Sometimes the flashing vehicle may be several cars ahead or behind you and you can't see them directly. Interpret what the vehicle plans to do; anticipate how that will affect you and decide if you can help out by providing a little more room.

Look for subtle clues and respond early.

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### **LOOKING PAST THE VEHICLE AHEAD**

Don't look at the back of the car ahead, because relying on its brake lights will reduce your reaction time.

You may be able to look through the vehicle's windows or either side of it. You can look over the car ahead when you are going downhill or when you are driving a high vehicle. Sometimes you can even look under it as it goes over a hill crest. The more gap you have to the vehicle, the easier it is to see past it.

Hanging back from the car ahead and looking past it improves your safety.

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## **PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC LIGHTS**

Watch for pedestrians walking towards pedestrian operated traffic lights

Because a green light may change quickly when a pedestrian pushes the button, you need to be ready for a sudden change.

If someone is walking towards the traffic light button, check your mirror and put your foot over the brake pedal ready to react.

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### **ADJUST YOUR SPEED FOR VISIBILITY**

When the visibility is poor, drive at a speed that would enable you to stop in the distance that you can see ahead.

At average highway speeds an alert driver can stop a modern vehicle on a good surface in about four seconds. In fog when you see a fixed object like a tree at the side of the road, count off four seconds like this: “one-thousand-and-one, one-thousand-and-two, one-thousand-and-three, one-thousand-and-four. If you reach the tree before you finish the count, you are travelling too fast.

Driving faster than you can stop in the distance you can see ahead of your vehicle is like playing Russian-roulette.

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### **ONCOMING VEHICLE – HIGH BEAM LIGHTS**

Avoid being dazzled by oncoming headlights.

When bright lights trouble you, look to the left edge of the road and close one eye until the vehicle passes. Looking to the left edge of your lane will enable you to steer and notice any bicycles; closing one eye will preserve that eye's night vision.

Minimise dazzle by avoiding any direct look at the light.

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### **FOLLOWING VEHICLE – HIGH BEAM LIGHTS**

When you are followed by a vehicle with bright lights, avoid being dazzled.

Set the night position on the mirror quickly, and avoid looking directly at the mirror. If you look past the mirror you will be able to judge the vehicle's distance out of the corner of your eye. Encourage the other driver to overtake you as soon as possible.

It isn't a good idea to put your mirror out of adjustment.