

# A Guide to Older Driver Licensing

Transport for NSW



[nsw.gov.au](http://nsw.gov.au)





# Introduction

This guide has information about older driver licensing options and driving assessments.

We have other useful resources including:

- Road User Handbook - covers the main roads rules and requirements for driving on NSW roads
- A Guide to the Driving Test - covers what you need to do before taking a test, what you'll be tested on and what happens afterwards.

These are available at **nsw.gov.au**, by calling **13 22 13** or from a service centre.

If you need the current and complete set of Road Rules visit **legislation.nsw.gov.au**

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# Road safety and the older driver

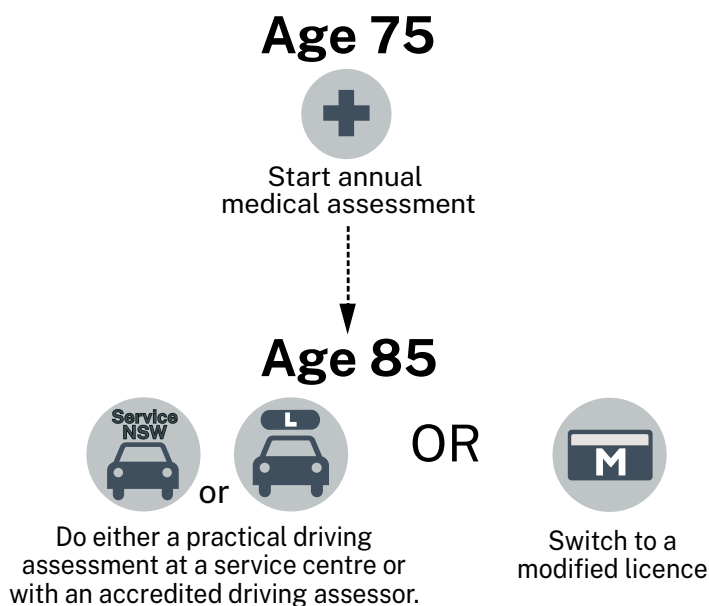
Crash patterns for older drivers are significantly different to those of other age groups. For drivers aged 80 and over, the most common crashes are intersection crashes where the older driver is turning right across traffic, and crashes where the older driver drives off the road.

Studies show that many older drivers compensate for their age-related decline in driving competency by self restricting and limiting their driving, for example, by driving in local areas or avoiding complex, difficult situations.

# The licensing system

The older driver licensing system is designed to balance the safety of road users and the general community with the continuing independence and mobility of older drivers.

## All licence holders age 75 and over



When you reach 75 years of age, you need a medical examination every year to keep your licence. A medical letter is sent about eight weeks before your birthday. This reminds you to visit your doctor to ask them to complete an online medical assessment.

If you plan to be away from home (for example, on holidays) around the medical due date, you can get the assessment done early. You can visit

your doctor up to six months before your birthday to get an online medical assessment. If you need a paper medical form, call **13 22 13** or visit a service centre to request one.

When visiting your doctor, talk about any concerns you have with driving during the day, at night, or over distances. Your doctor can discuss what licence restrictions may help you drive safely.

At the end of your medical examination, the doctor will send your report online to Transport for NSW.

If you need other assessments, we will send you a letter explaining what you need to do next.

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## Heavy vehicle drivers age 80 and over

If you have a licence to drive a heavy vehicle (LR to HC) you will also need to pass a Driving Test every year from age 80.

Heavy vehicle (MC) licence holders need an annual Driving Test from age 70.

You must pass all assessments before your birthday.

If you are unable to meet this time frame, contact Service NSW on **13 22 13** at the earliest opportunity.

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## Car and rider licence holders age 85 and over

When you reach 85 years of age, in addition to the annual medical examination, you are required to pass a practical driving assessment every second year (age 85, 87, 89 etc) to retain your full (unrestricted) driver licence. If you no longer require a full driver licence you can opt for a modified licence without the need for a practical driving assessment.

# Licensing options

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## Modified licence

A modified licence is a driver licence that allows the holder to drive in their local area where they are familiar with the traffic conditions. Modified licence options are based on the individual's personal driving needs. The limits on the modified licence are negotiated with the local service centre manager, based on the driver's essential weekly journeys. If a person's driving needs change they can convert back to a full (unrestricted) licence at anytime, after they pass a practical driving assessment.

**If you hold a modified licence and change your residential address you must contact the manager of the local service centre to review the conditions on your licence.**

If you wish to apply for a modified licence, you should complete an application form and take it to your local service centre. The manager will then discuss the application with you.

Modified licences are only available for Class C (car) and Class R (rider) licences.

You can convert to a modified licence at anytime, provided your driver licence is still current.

**The conditions on a modified licence are printed on the licence card and penalties apply if the conditions are breached.**



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## Full (unrestricted) driver licence

If you need to retain your full driver licence you are required to pass a practical driving assessment. You can choose between a:

- Driving assessment from your home conducted by a licensed driving instructor accredited by Transport for NSW
- Driving Test at a service centre conducted by a Service NSW testing officer.

Driving assessments conducted by accredited driving instructors are on a 'fee for service' basis. You are able to choose any driving instructor accredited by Transport for NSW to deliver the assessment. The Driving Test conducted at a service centre is provided at no charge.

There is a limit of three Driving Test attempts for service centre testing. But there is no limit on the number of driving assessments you can take with a driving instructor accredited to assess older drivers.

### Practical driving assessment

The driving assessment from home and a service centre Driving Test use the same assessment criteria. The practical on-road drive has set requirements. Generally you will be on the road for about 15 to 20 minutes. During the drive you will be directed where to drive. Your result will be based on your driving performance in a range of situations and your ability to demonstrate safe driving behaviours.

Some driving behaviours such as not stopping at a 'Stop' sign or speeding are deemed to be 'high risk'. If you behave this way during the test you will not pass, regardless of your overall driving performance.

# Before you start

## Bribing people is against the law

It is illegal to offer, request or accept gifts, rewards, money or other favours to get a licence without passing the required tests. Penalties are severe and include fines and imprisonment. All cases of corruption will be reported and investigated, and strong action will be taken against all those involved.

If you know or believe that someone has got or is about to get a NSW licence by offering or responding to a request for a bribe – or if you suspect or know of any other corruption involving a NSW Government employee – call Transport for NSW on **1800 302 750** (free call) or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on **(02) 8281 5999**. This includes Transport for NSW accredited RTOs and their driving assessors.

To avoid misunderstanding make sure all money and valuables in your vehicle are locked away or out of sight.

## Your car must be roadworthy and ready to drive

Before the practical driving assessment starts, your vehicle must be registered and roadworthy. The vehicle will be checked to ensure it is suitable and safe for use. Go to the Test results/Test termination section of this guide for the vehicle checklist. The assessment is terminated, if any item on the list cannot be fixed in time for the driving assessment.

You can switch between a service centre test and an assessment with an accredited driving instructor assessor, but if you demonstrate extremely unsafe driving behaviour and score a 'serious fail' result, your licence will be cancelled.

## Taking the driving assessment with an accredited driving instructor

If you choose to do a driving assessment with an accredited driving instructor you will need to contact them directly. Find the list of accredited Older Driver Assessors:

- online at **nsw.gov.au**
- by calling **13 22 13**
- from a service centre.

When booking an assessment with an accredited assessor confirm all the fees they will be charging.

The fees for the assessment are paid directly to the assessor. Generally the overall time for the assessment session will be about one hour.

As accredited assessors are all licensed driving instructors you may choose to have some refresher training with them before attempting your assessment. Refresher training will require additional time and may incur some additional fees. It is best to compare accredited providers fees and services before you hire.

## Taking the Driving Test at a service centre

If you choose to take the Driving Test at a service centre, you will need to book:

- online at **service.nsw.gov.au**
- by calling **13 22 13**
- at a service centre.

Should you wish to change or cancel your booking, you may do so. This must be done at least 24 hours before the test date.

When you go to a service centre for the Driving Test, plan to arrive at the centre on time for your appointment.

Give your booking confirmation slip to the person at the counter and they will refer you to a testing officer.

The testing officer will ask you to sign the test sheet. Remember to ask any questions before you start. The testing officer cannot tell you how to drive or coach you during the test as it is an assessment of your ability to drive on your own.

After the test, the testing officer will give you feedback on your test performance. Testing officers will provide general comments rather than discuss specific situations or events.

At the completion of the assessment you will receive a Driving Test report that shows the areas where you did well and where you may need to improve.

A monitoring officer may sit in on your test/assessment. The monitoring officer's job is to watch the testing officer/accredited assessor and make sure that the drive is conducted properly. Nobody, other than the testing officer/accredited assessor and monitoring officer, is allowed to be in the vehicle with you during the practical assessment drive.

## Why a test can be cancelled

If there is any suspicion you have consumed alcohol or drugs, the assessment will be cancelled. If you offer money or some other bribe the assessment will be stopped. The police may be called or you could be taken to the police station and charged with offering a bribe.

# The practical assessment

Safe driving requires a combination of sound knowledge of the road rules, good decision-making ability and vehicle control. The practical driving assessment will check you still have all these skills essential to safe driving.

In all the diagrams in this guide you are always the blue car, marked A.

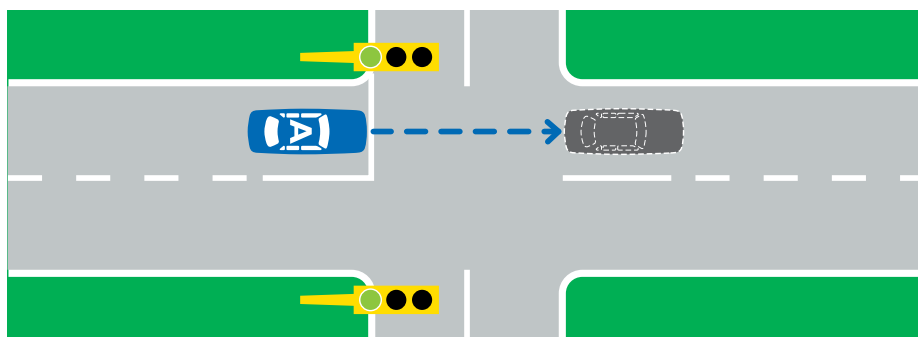
## Applying the road rules

During your assessment you must comply with all regulatory traffic signs, signals and road markings.

### Traffic lights and stop signs

When approaching traffic lights that are green, check your mirrors and be prepared to stop. You must stop at a yellow light, unless sudden braking might cause a crash.

At red traffic lights and 'Stop' signs you must stop completely before reaching the 'Stop' line with no part of your vehicle over the line.



You must completely stop at 'Stop' lines.

## Final position at a stop line

If initially you stop more than one car length back from the stop line you must move up and stop at the correct position before proceeding. After you have stopped in the correct position you may then move forward if you need a better view.

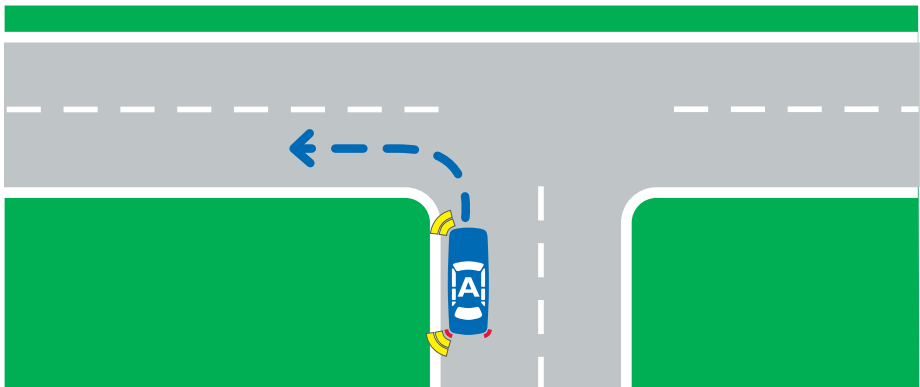
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## Road position

Your road position when making turns is important to ensure a smooth and safe flow of traffic.

You must also keep in your lane when turning at an intersection as mounting or straddling (one wheel either side of) a traffic dome, mounting the kerb or touching the centre of a roundabout may result in a fail.

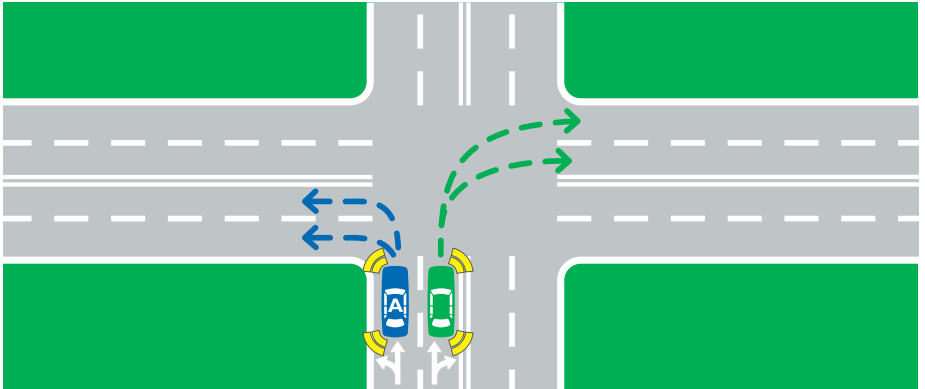
When turning left on unmarked roads you must approach as far left as practical. When turning left on laned roads, you must approach in the left lane, or any marked left turn lane.



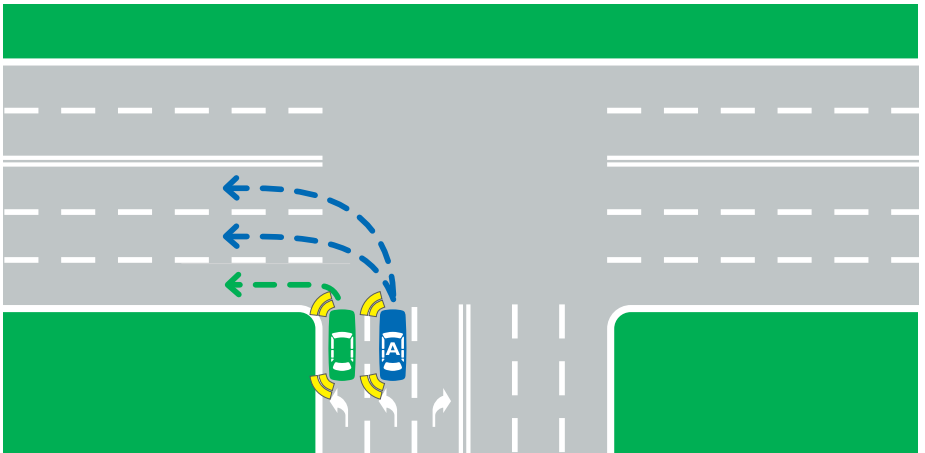
Approach left turns as far left as you can.

As you finish a left turn, exit into the lane or part of the road that is best for the traffic conditions. Your choice will depend on where you are going next, whether vehicles are parked in the left lane, or whether outside lanes must be left clear for overtaking.

When there are multiple turning lanes, you must finish in a permissible lane. You will fail if you exit in an incorrect lane.

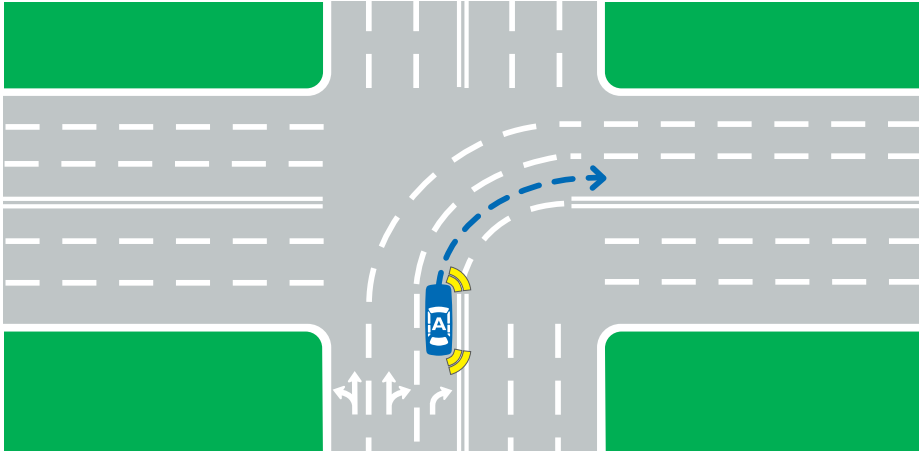


You can turn into either lane, depending on traffic.



When there are multiple turning lanes, you must finish in a permissible lane.

When turning right on unmarked roads you must keep to the left of, but as close as practical to the centre of the road. When turning right on laned roads you must approach in the right lane or any marked right turn lanes.



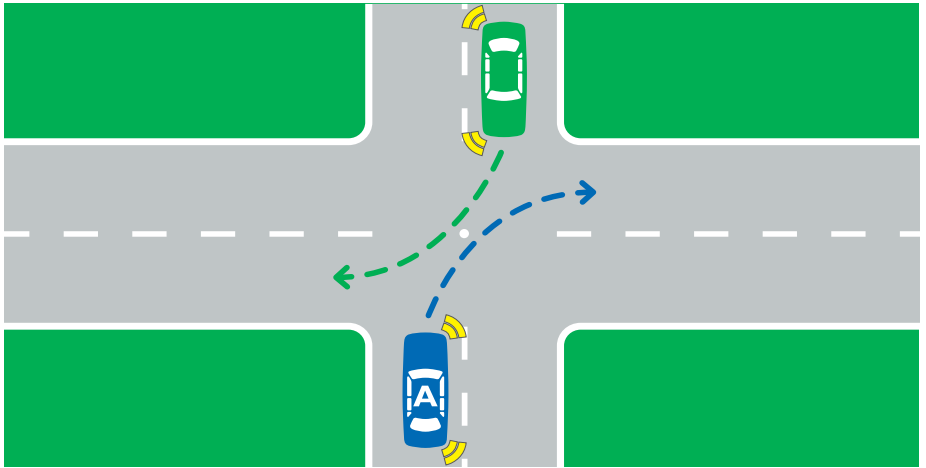
In marked lanes stay in the same lane.

In marked lanes you must stay in the same lane as you go from one road to another.

To protect you from being pushed into the oncoming traffic if hit from behind, you should keep your steering straight while waiting to turn right.

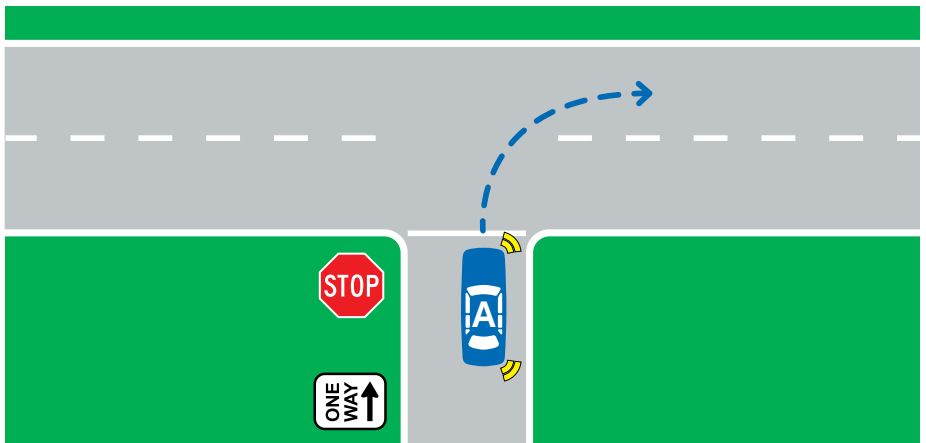


When turning right, steer to the right of an imaginary centre of the intersection. This allows vehicles opposite you to also turn right. As you exit you must keep to the left of the centre of the road.



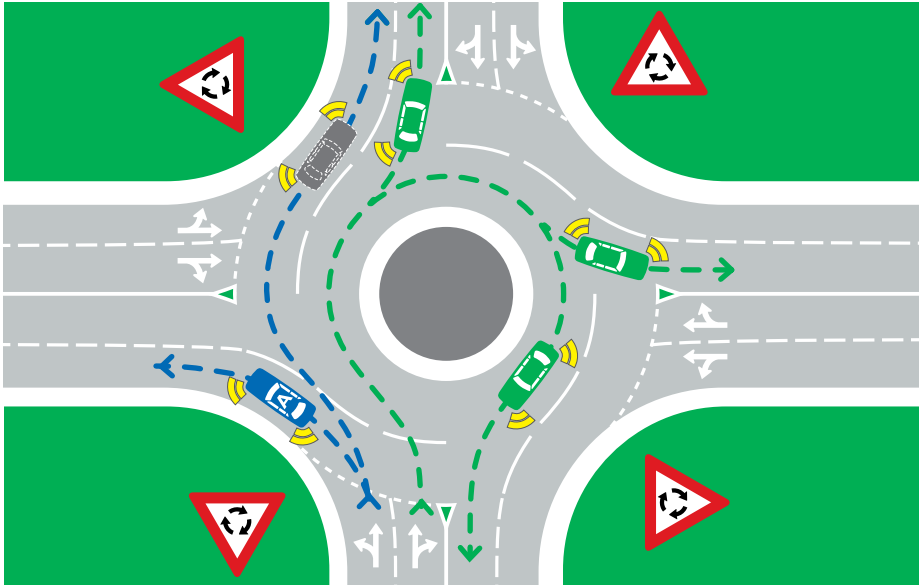
Turning vehicles pass in front of each other.

When turning right into a one-way street, approach and exit as close as possible to the right hand side of the road.



Keep to the right when turning right from a one-way street.

On multi-laned roundabouts stay within the road markings for your direction of intended travel. You must exit in the permitted lane.

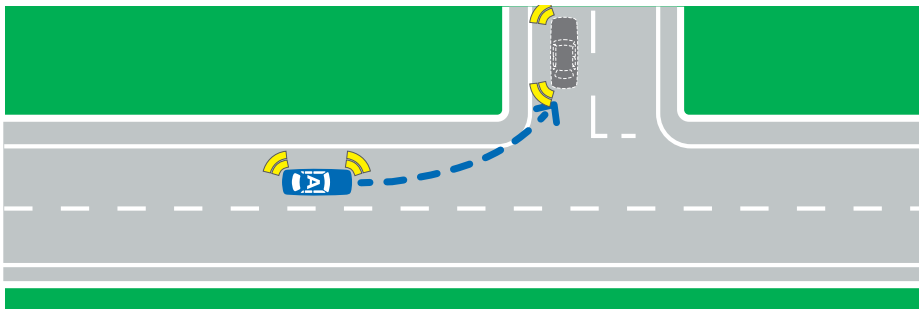


Indicate left when leaving the roundabout.

## Keeping in the lane

In the test you need to drive in a safe, legal position on the road.

If you drive on the wrong side of the road, cross edge lines or lane markings, without a legal reason to do so, you will not pass.



You may cross an edge line for up to 100 metres when turning at an intersection.

## Speed management

You must drive at a safe and legal speed, managing your speed to suit traffic, weather and road conditions. If you exceed the posted speed limit in the test, you will fail.

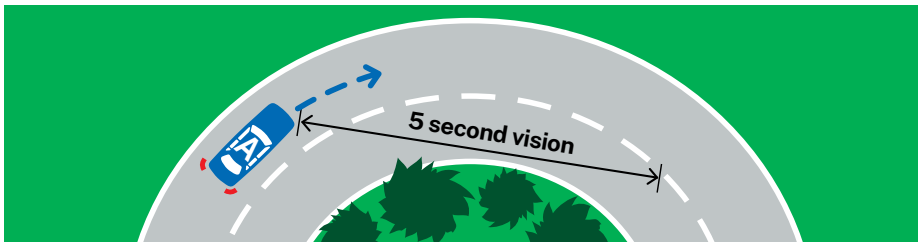
Be aware of changes to speed limits, especially during the operating hours of a 'School Zone'.

Adjust your speed to keep a safe distance from the car in front and slow down if you do not have a clear view of the road ahead. Situations where your view of the road may be reduced include:

- blind corners
- blocked intersections
- crests and
- poor weather conditions.

Slow down if you cannot see five seconds ahead.

To calculate 5-second vision in a curve, pick a fixed point in the oncoming lane that has just come into view and start a count 'one thousand and one, one thousand and two... one thousand and five'. If you reach the point before 5 seconds, you are driving too fast for the available vision.



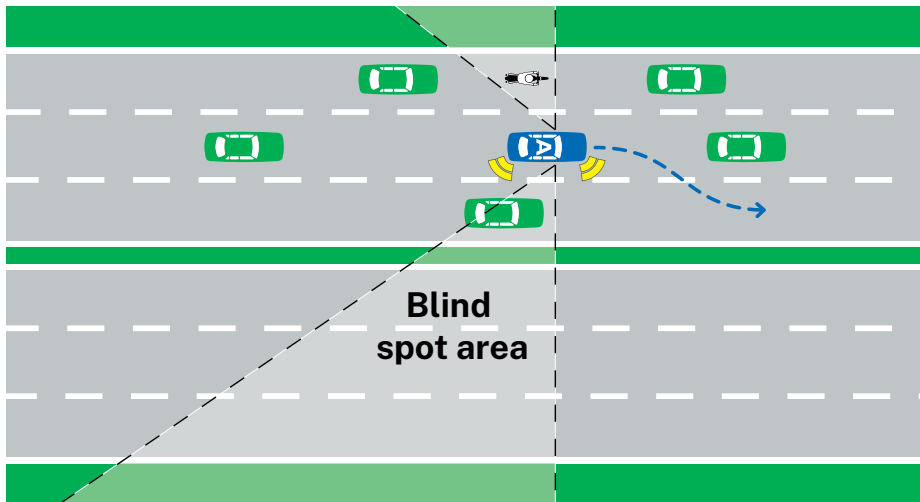
Slow down if you cannot see 5 seconds ahead.

## Decision making

Many older driver crashes are due to poor gap selection. A critical decision must be made whenever you enter traffic, change lanes, cross or turn at an intersection. You must give way to any vehicle that has priority over you at an intersection and if required give way when entering a traffic stream, merging or lane changing.

## Observation

Observation is essential for making good driving decisions. Keep your eyes moving, checking in one area for no more than a couple of seconds and then move your eyes to another area. Good drivers check their rear vision mirrors before they slow down or change direction and they turn their head to check their blind spot is clear before changing lane, merging or diverging.



Turn your head to check your blind spot is clear.

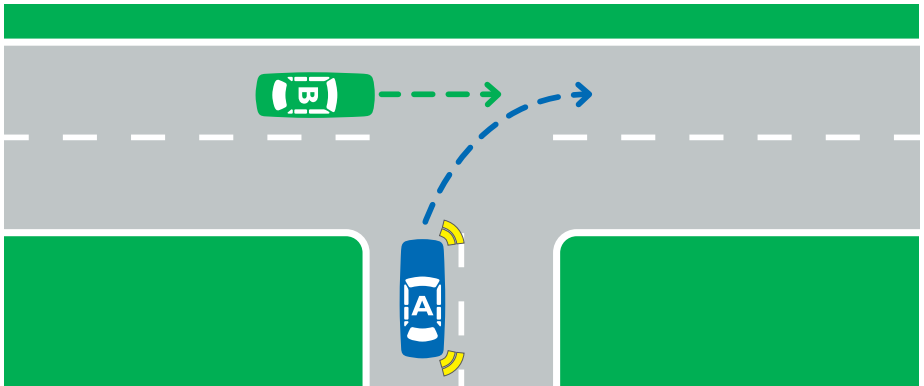
## Giving way at intersections

The testing officer will be checking that you proceed only when there is a safe gap in the traffic and that you are not affecting other drivers or pedestrians.

A safe gap ensures that other vehicles do not need to change their speed or position. When turning across traffic make sure your vehicle will be well clear of the intersection before the approaching vehicles arrive. When joining a traffic stream, select a gap that allows you to reach the traffic speed before the approaching vehicles are too close.

## Giving way at T intersections

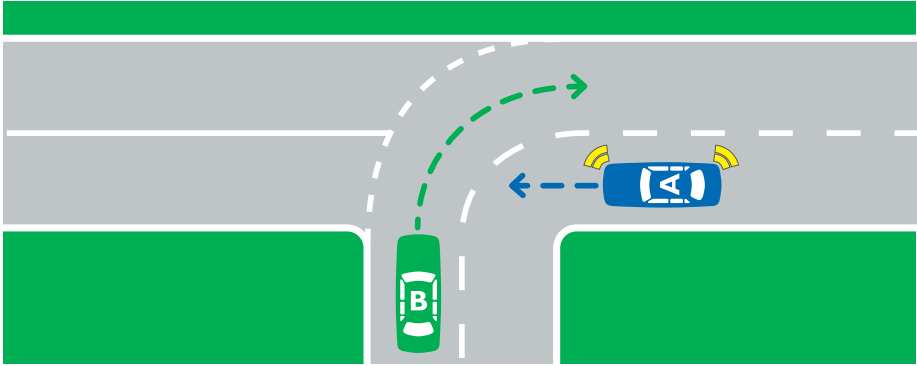
At T intersections the vehicle travelling on the road that ends must give way to any pedestrians crossing or vehicles travelling on the road that continues unless otherwise signposted.



The car turning right from the road ending at a T-intersection (Car A) must give way to the car going straight ahead on the continuing road (Car B).

Take extra care when turning at intersections, as many older drivers crash in these situations.

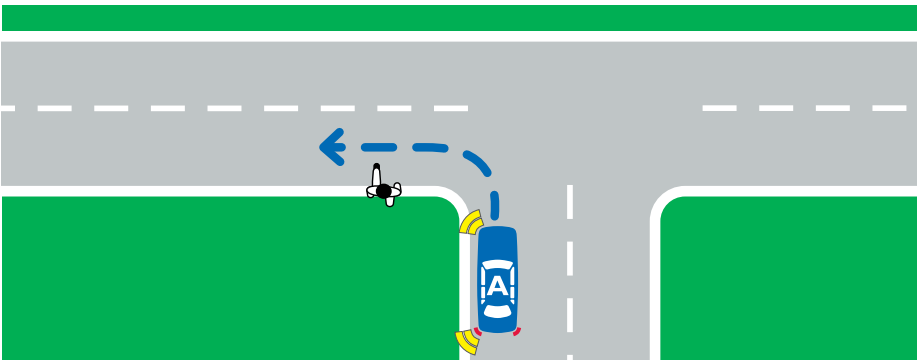
This diagram shows a (modified) T intersection where the continuing road (which is marked with broken white lines) goes around a corner. Car A must signal to leave the continuing road and enter the terminating road.



Car A must give way to Car B.

## Giving way to pedestrians

You must give way to pedestrians at marked crossings and intersections and give way to pedestrians crossing the road into which you are turning. Even if there is no marked pedestrian crossing, you must give way to pedestrians – if there is any danger of colliding with them.



You must also give way to pedestrians if there is any danger of colliding with them.

When the flags are displayed at a 'Children's Crossing' you must slow down and stop before the Stop line if a pedestrian is on or entering the crossing. You must not proceed until all pedestrians have left the crossing.

As you approach a pedestrian crossing or children's crossing where a School Crossing Supervisor is displaying a 'STOP Children Crossing' sign, you must slow down and stop. You may proceed when the School Crossing Supervisor no longer displays the sign in your direction or has indicated it is safe for you to proceed.

Stop signs may be placed at an intersection immediately after a pedestrian crossing. You must stop at the stop sign even if you have already stopped at the pedestrian crossing.

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## Responding to hazards

Your hazard perception skills are essential to low risk driving. During the test you will be assessed on your ability to recognise hazards and make an appropriate response.

### Hazard and response

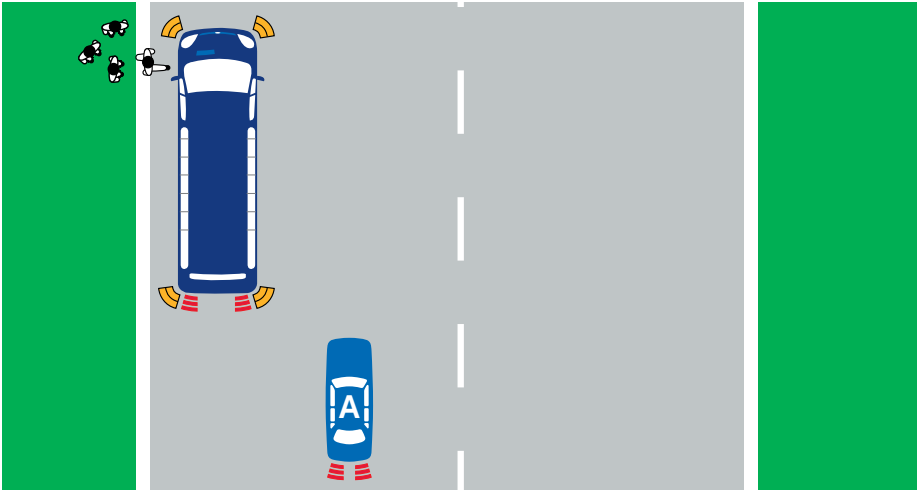
During your test you must respond appropriately to hazards.

As you scan the traffic environment you should be asking yourself whether the things you see could possibly enter your crash avoidance space.

If the answer is yes and something could block your path, your response should be to protect your crash avoidance space by:

- 'setting up' or covering the brakes
- easing off the accelerator
- reducing speed
- creating a 'buffer' from the hazard by changing your position on the road or changing lanes.

Your ability to respond means that you are better able to deal with any dangerous situation that might occur.



Respond when something can enter your crash avoidance space.

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## Vehicle control

Your ability to control the vehicle is assessed by the way you handle the tasks involved.

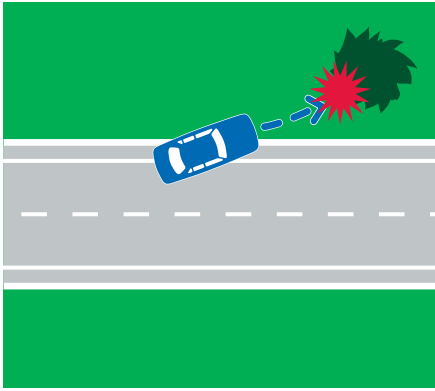
### Operating the controls

Some of the driving tasks that will be observed and recorded are listed here:

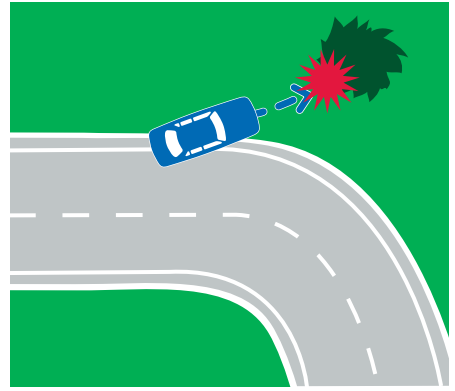
- Operate accelerator smoothly, when accelerating and decelerating.
- Operate brakes smoothly and effectively.
- Coordinate clutch and gear lever to make smooth gear changes.
- Seat belt correctly fastened, fitted and adjusted (low, flat and firm).
- Correct park brake use securing the vehicle and full release to drive.
- Steer with both hands on the outside of the steering wheel (except to use other controls), with either 'hand-over-hand' or the 'pull-push' method.



Maintaining vehicle control is very important. Many crashes happen where the older driver runs off the road.



Running off the road on a straight section and hitting an object or parked vehicle.



Running off the road on a curve or bend and hitting an object or parked vehicle.

You must be confident using and operating the controls without being distracted. You will not pass if you:

- allow the vehicle to roll back too far when moving off
- skid or spin the wheels
- clutch coast (allow the vehicle to roll along with your foot on the clutch) or coast in neutral
- do not maintain effective control of the steering wheel.

## Signalling

You must indicate to let others know what you plan to do. Give plenty of warning by signalling before you turn left or right, or change lanes. Make sure your indicator is turned off after each turn or lane change.

# Test results

## What happens after a driving assessment from home?

When you pass an assessment with an accredited assessor they will give you a copy of the signed assessment result form. You can call **13 22 13** to ensure your assessment results are recorded for your licence. If the pass result is not recorded by the required date your driver licence will be suspended. You will not be allowed to drive until your licence records are updated.

If you did not pass, the assessor will provide you with detailed feedback on where you need to improve your driving. You may choose to have some training before your next assessment.

## What happens after a service centre Driving Test?

When you return to the service centre the testing officer will ask you to wait inside whilst they calculate your test result.

Then the testing officer will call you to the counter and tell you your test result. You will also receive a test report, showing your score and any notes on how to improve your driving skills.

If you did not pass, your testing officer will provide general comments about your result. They cannot discuss situations or events from the test, as it is not their job to give you a driving lesson. A driving instructor or supervising driver can help to improve your driving, so you can try again.

## Why you might fail

This guide shows examples of what you must do to drive safely and pass the practical driving assessment. However, some driving behaviours such as not stopping at a 'Stop' sign or speeding are deemed to be 'high risk' and are classed as 'fail items'. If you commit a 'fail item' during the test you will not pass, regardless of your overall driving performance.

Here is the full list of ‘fail items’ that can be recorded on a driving assessment.

1. Disobeying traffic signs, signals or road markings.
2. Failing to give way when necessary.
3. Colliding with a vehicle, pedestrian or object.
4. Performing an illegal act or manoeuvre.
5. Exceeding the speed limit.
6. Action requiring testing officer intervention.
7. Causing a dangerous situation.
8. Failing to maintain proper control of the vehicle.

In most circumstances, even if you commit a ‘fail item’, your test will continue and you will be given a full assessment of your performance. However, if you do anything which is unsafe or dangerous and there is an obvious danger to the public you will not be permitted to complete the test and the testing officer may drive you back to the service centre.

## Serious Fail

A ‘Serious Fail’ result may be recorded for a practical driving assessment where your driving behaviours represent a danger to yourself or other road users.

If a ‘Serious Fail’ result is recorded your driver licence will be cancelled. If your licence is cancelled due to a ‘Serious Fail’ result, you may have a right of appeal through the Court.

## Test termination and vehicle checklist

Termination criteria applies to situations not concerned with the applicant's driving performance for example your test will be terminated if:

1. The testing vehicle is not suitable for safe use.

**Use this checklist to make sure your car is suitable for safe use:**

- indicators and brake lights work
- vehicle is registered
- tyres are correctly inflated and have acceptable tread depth
- wheel rims are undamaged
- windscreen is clean and undamaged
- an approved lap/sash seatbelt is fitted for the testing officer/accredited assessor
- there is no significant body damage or sharp edges
- mirrors are in good order
- front passenger door and window operate
- speedometer operates
- head restraints must be fitted to vehicles that were manufactured after 1 January 1972
- functioning dual controls must be fitted if you are taking the test in an instructor's vehicle and the dual accelerator must be rendered inoperable during the test.

2. The testing vehicle is unsuitable for the class of licence test.

3. The testing vehicle is not suitable for the licence condition or type of disability.

4. The testing vehicle breaks down during the test, or a large number of assessments are missed while off course.

5. A bribe or inducement is offered, or any other form of corrupt conduct is suggested.

6. The driver is, or is suspected to be, under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

7. A crash occurs during the test, regardless of who is at fault.

8. The applicant is ill, to the extent that they may not be able to drive safely.

9. Weather conditions are bad and make the driving task too demanding.

## Complaints

Your test should be conducted fairly and courteously. After you get the results, if you believe the test was unfair or bias, contact the manager from your test service centre. They will look into your complaint and discuss the matter with you.

If you are not satisfied with the service provided by an accredited driving instructor assessor, first contact the driving school manager to discuss the matter. If you need further assistance with your complaint contact us on **13 22 13** or send an email to **[olderdriverassessor@transport.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olderdriverassessor@transport.nsw.gov.au)**

# Glossary

**Accredited assessor** – A licensed driving instructor accredited by Transport for NSW to conduct older driver assessments.

**Driving assessment** – An on-road assessment of driving competency performed by an accredited assessor, generally conducted from the driver's residence.

**Driving instructor** – A person licensed by Transport for NSW to provide driving instruction for a fee or reward.

**Driving Test** – An on-road assessment of driving competency performed by a Service NSW testing officer, conducted from a service centre.

**Intersection crashes** – A collision between two vehicles at the junction of two roads.

**Modified licence** – A licence that allows the holder to access services only in their local area.

**Monitoring officer** – A person employed by Service NSW to monitor quality and consistency of driving assessments and tests.

**Practical driving assessment** – A term covering both a service centre Driving Test and an accredited driving instructor assessment.

**Service NSW testing centre** – Locations where a Driving Test is conducted, including service centres, Council Agencies, Government Access Centres (GACs) and itinerant testing locations.

**Service NSW testing officer** – A person employed by Service NSW to conduct a Driving Test from a service centre.

**Unrestricted driver licence** – A full driver licence without restrictions or conditions.





ISSN 1321-7518  
Pub. 08,371  
Catalogue number 45071419  
08/22

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