



DRIVING TIPS FOR P-PLATERS

John Duffy

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BEFORE YOU DRIVE

1. Ensure you maintain current with the road rules!

a) Assume others are not!

2. Ensure you are fit to drive:

a) Alert / not fatigued

b) Not under the influence of drugs and alcohol
(INCLUDING prescribed medications)

c) Physically/mentally/emotionally able to react quickly and proficiently on the road.



3. Ensure your vehicle is fully functional, including:



a) Tyre treads adequate and pressures correct

b) Lights are fully operational

c) Horn works

d) Braking is sufficient

e) Steering is accurate

f) Acceleration is adequate

g) No visual obstructions (know your *blind spots*)

h) No distractions (INCLUDING mobile phones, ornaments, entertainment systems)

i) Know how to use ALL instruments and controls (preferably without looking for them)

4. Develop enhanced hazard perception

a) Take *Defensive Driving* lessons (theoretical and practical)

b) As you encounter incidents on the road, consider how you could manage them if you were involved.

* Don't be overly distracted by these thoughts that they interfere with your driving!

c) Weekly watch and analyse Dashcam videos on *YouTube*. eg.

i. <https://www.youtube.com/@DashCamOwnersAustralia>

ii. <https://www.youtube.com/@aussiecamsbaddriving>

* Refer to the back page:

What am I looking for in dashcam videos & on the road?

5. Plan your route

a) Have plenty of fuel, food and water (and allow for time in travel for these)

b) Plan where you can replenish these en route.

c) What is worth seeing on the way - driving and touring is great fun!!!

d) Carry communication devices and know emergency contacts.

e) Carry a first aid kit and (maybe) fire extinguisher.

f) Pack your load securely.

WHILE YOU DRIVE

1. **CONSTANTLY SCAN** your road environment:

a) Use the EXACT same parameters as in the *Dashcam Analysis!*

b) Your eyes should be cycling - road ahead, mirror, road ahead, instruments, road ahead, other mirrors - all within a 5 second cycle.

c) Don't fixate on any one thing, but return to observe it more regularly in your observation cycle.

d) Monitor the road far ahead to see what the traffic is doing, to react sooner and smoother.

e) Steer with your peripheral vision (another



reason for **4.a.** following distance of more than 2 seconds in optimum conditions.)

f) Monitor and avoid potential bad drivers / road rage.

2. **SLOW THE DRIVING PROCESSES**, but maintain reasonable progress for the conditions.

a) QTMR Driving Examiners use 10km/h under the speed limit in OPTIMUM conditions as a guide. Slower than that is impeding the flow of traffic.

b) In adverse conditions you can reasonably expect to drive slower.

Slowing the driving process allows more time to think and therefore manage!

3. **COMPLY WITH ALL SIGNS**, and you will prevent or minimise most handling problems.



4. Apply **Defensive Driving** Techniques:

a) Minimum **2 second following distance**, in optimum conditions.

i. Increase allowing for conditions and vehicle weights (towing trailers, boats, caravans, etc.)

b) **Keep an empty zone around** your vehicle (out of other vehicles' blind spots)

c) ALWAYS maintain an **escape route** just in case!

d) Pull up behind vehicles (eg. Traffic lights, stop signs) **a small car length** (you should be able to see the bottom of the front vehicle's tyres and more):

i. If they roll back, you have time to sound horn.

ii. If you get hit from behind, it won't propel you into the front vehicle (less damage).

iii. If there is an emergency vehicle behind, you may have room to get out of the way!

iv. If the vehicles in front breakdown, you can still get around easily.

5. When stopped **at traffic lights, engage park brake** and exercise your hands, feet, and shoulders.



- a) Rear impacts are less likely to propel you into the intersection if park brake is on.
- b) This minimises fatigue.
- c) Helps remain more relaxed to focus on continued driving.
- d) AFTER lights change, release park brake and proceed.
- e) ALWAYS check for **red light runners** before you enter intersection.

6. **Stop every 2 hours** and walk around vehicle:

- a) To inspect your vehicle remains roadworthy
- b) To minimise fatigue (one of the *fatal four*)

AFTER YOU DRIVE

- 1. Inspect your vehicle, and manage any issues.
- 2. Replenish any requirements when safe (eg. Fuel, oil, coolant, etc)
- 3. **Let mum & dad know you have arrived safely** 😊



AROUND HEAVY VEHICLES

When a truck or bus is displaying **DO NOT OVERTAKE TURNING VEHICLE** sign:



- a. Give plenty of space and wait for it to complete its turn.
- b. Don't try to squeeze past on the left or right; they need the whole space!
- c. Large vehicles turning left might move into the right lane first, and a truck or bus turning right might use the left lane – they need room for their length.

You MUST give way when a bus displays a **GIVE WAY TO BUS** sign:

- a. in a built-up area with a speed limit of **70 km/h or less**.
- b. bus has **right indicator** on (for 5 seconds)
- c. **Bus is stopped or SLOWLY MOVING** into traffic from a bus zone/stop/bay, road shoulder, or far left side of the road



s78 Keeping clear of police and emergency vehicles ...

(2) If a driver is in the path of an approaching police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm, the driver must move out of the path of the vehicle as soon as the driver can do so safely.

Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Road Rules) Regulation 2009

If you are blocking an emergency vehicle with lights and/or sirens on, you must proceed through a stop sign, amber or red traffic light, etc. to enable them through, IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

What am I looking for in dashcam videos & on the road?

A. Psychological patterns

- * dashcam driver's behaviour (attitude, surprise, aggression) that contributed to or prevented the incidents.
- * Other drivers' or pedestrians' behaviors that contributed to or prevented the incidents.



B. Vehicle conditions of all involved

- * tyres or configurations impacting traction
- * loads are secured
- * appear unroadworthy or well-maintained

- * Lights working and on (including indicators)

B. Traffic Conditions

- * Traffic density
- * traffic flow rates
- * incidents or hazards ahead or around



C. Traffic Environment

- * Weather
- * Light & sun position
- * Road conditions, signs & markings

How could I improve the same situation ...

If I was the dashcam driver?

If I was another party in the incident?

NOTES

John Duffy is a heavy vehicle transport instructor and industry consultant, with nearly 40 years experience at all levels of operations. He has over 70 qualifications pertaining to the transport and logistic operations, specialising in the bus and coach sector.

Consulting for training, management, auditing, and forensic investigations of incidents (for court purposes), John is able to service the truck and bus industry. He published the *Australian Bus and Coach Drivers' Guide* (2014) and has attained the two highest national awards for Australian transport and logistics.

As a professional driver, instructor, and incident investigator, John has a passion for road safety, especially for those in the highest risk of injury or death - *P-platers*! He hopes this booklet helps novice drivers (and learner supervisors) to enhance their skills and become safe and protected road citizens. Soli Deo gloria.

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