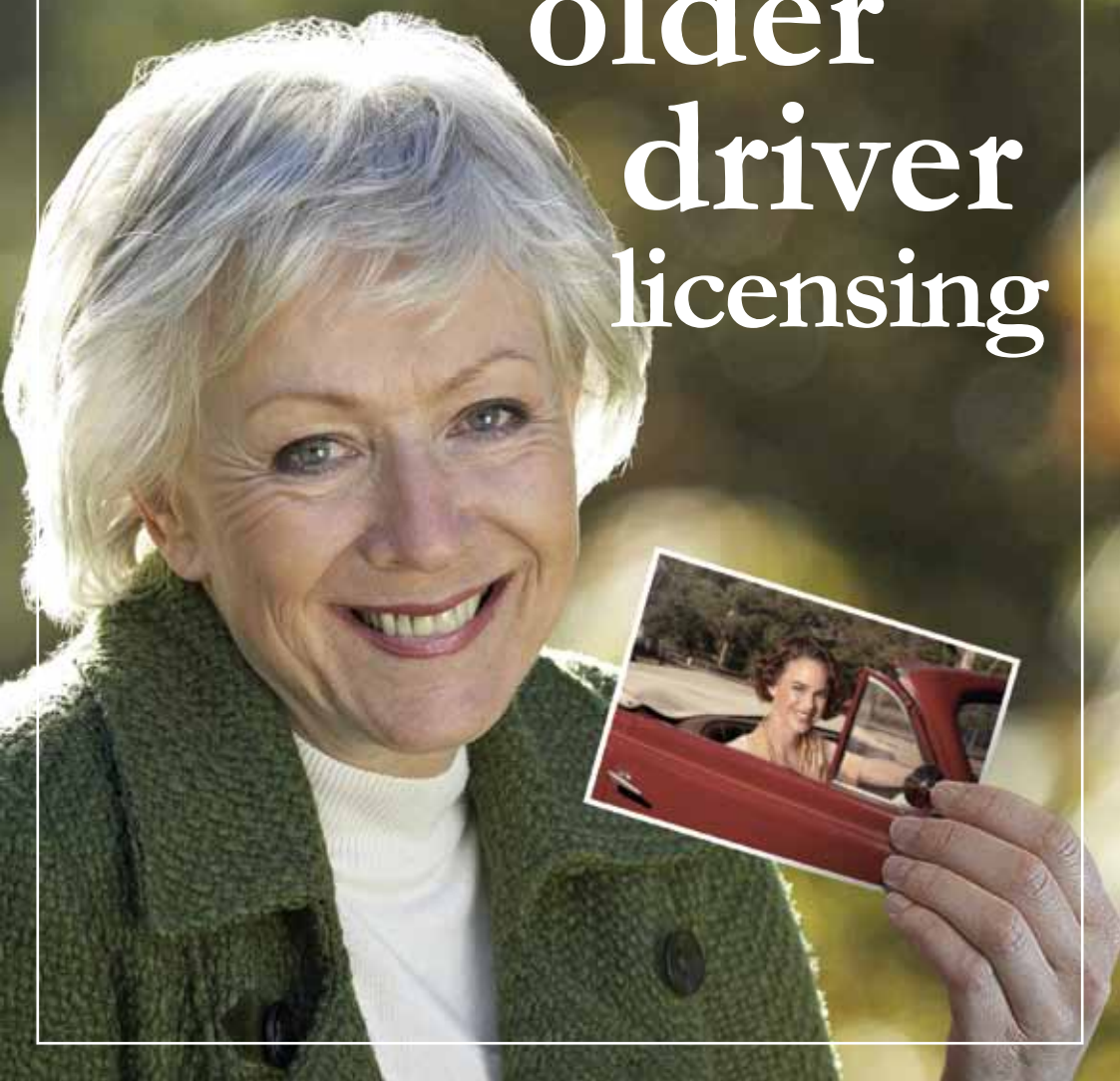




# A guide to older driver licensing





# Introduction

This guide explains the older driver licensing system, licensing options and what the practical driving assessment involves. It does not give information on the road rules – this can be found in the Road Users’ Handbook.

The Road Users’ Handbook is available for free on the RTA website at [www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au) or can be purchased at any RTA motor registry or by calling the Contact Centre on 13 22 13.

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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.

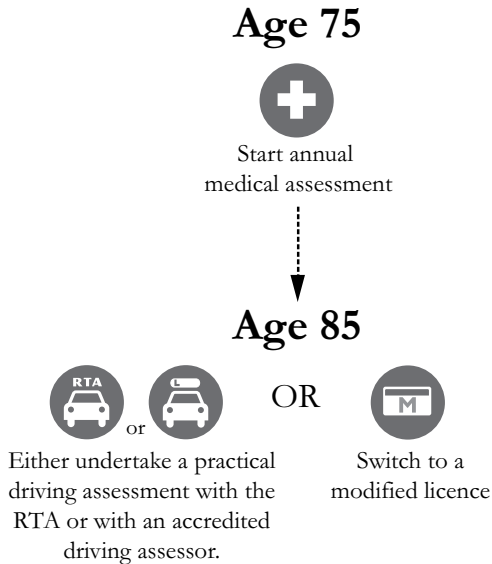
Studies show that many older drivers compensate for their age-related decline in driving competency by self restricting and limiting their driving, for example, by driving in local areas or avoiding complex, difficult situations.

# 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.

## Licensing requirements from 75 years of age

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## All licence holders age 75 and over

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When you reach 75 years of age, you will need to have a medical examination each year to retain your licence. The RTA will send you a form approximately eight weeks before your birthday for your doctor to complete.

If you will be unavailable to undertake your medical check-up at this time (for example, if you will be interstate or overseas on holidays) you can choose to undertake the check-up and submit your medical form up to six months before your birthday. In this case, you will need to obtain the medical report (Form 1008) from an RTA Motor Registry or the RTA Contact Centre

so you can take it to your doctor to complete.

If your doctor considers you medically fit to drive, you can mail the completed form to the RTA or take it to a motor registry.

If you want to restrict your driving, for instance, to certain times of the day or to the area you live in, you should discuss it with your doctor when you have your examination.

If your doctor considers you medically unfit to drive or wants to refer you to another doctor or for a driving assessment, they will send the completed form directly to the RTA and you will be notified about the outcome shortly after.

### **Heavy vehicle drivers age 80 and over**

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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.

Annual driving tests are required for multi-combination (MC) licence holders from age 70 onwards.



You must pass all assessments before your birthday. If you are unable to meet this time frame, contact the RTA at the earliest opportunity.

### **Class C (car) and class R (rider) licence holders age 85 and over**

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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 unrestricted driver licence. If you no longer require an unrestricted driver licence you can opt for a modified licence without the need for a practical driving assessment.

## Modified licence

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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 motor registry manager based on the driver's essential weekly journeys. If a person's driving needs change they can convert back to an 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 motor registry 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 motor registry. The motor registry 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.

## **Unrestricted driver licence**

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

- A driving assessment from your home, conducted by a licensed driving instructor accredited by the RTA, OR
- A driving test from an RTA testing centre, conducted by an RTA 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 the RTA to deliver the assessment. The driving test conducted by the RTA is provided at no charge.

There is a limit of three attempts at the RTA driving tests. However, there is no limit on the number of driving assessments you can take with an accredited assessor in the specified period.

## **Practical driving assessment**

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The driving assessment from home and the RTA 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 in duration. 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**

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It is illegal to offer, request or accept gifts, rewards, money or other favours in order to get a licence without passing the required tests and assessments. Penalties are severe and include fines and imprisonment. All cases of corruption will be 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 an RTA employee – telephone the RTA on 1800 043 642 (free call) or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on (02) 8281 5999.

### **Your car must be roadworthy and ready to drive**

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For the practical driving assessment your vehicle must be registered and roadworthy. The testing officer/accredited assessor will check to make sure that your vehicle meets the required safety standard. See the checklist in Section 6 Test results.

### **Taking the driving assessment with an accredited assessor**

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If you choose to do a driving assessment with an accredited assessor you will need to contact them directly. A list of driving instructors accredited by the RTA to conduct the assessments can be obtained either:

- Online at [www.myRTA.com](http://www.myRTA.com).
- By calling 13 22 13.
- Or going to an RTA motor registry or agency.

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 prior to attempting your assessment. Refresher training will require additional time and may incur some additional fees. The RTA recommends you compare the services and fees of a number of accredited providers prior to engaging their services.

### **Taking the driving test at the RTA**

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If you choose to take the driving test with the RTA, you need to make a booking either:

- Online at [www.myRTA.com](http://www.myRTA.com).
- By calling 13 22 13.
- Or going to an RTA motor registry or agency.

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

When you go to the RTA testing centre for the driving test, plan to arrive at the testing 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.



You can switch between RTA tests and assessments by accredited assessors, however you should note that if you demonstrate extremely unsafe driving behaviour and score a 'serious fail' result, your licence will be cancelled.

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 drive.

## **Why a test can be cancelled**

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If there is any suspicion that you have recently taken alcohol or another drug, the test will be cancelled. If you offer money or some other bribe to the testing officer, the test will be stopped, you will be taken to a police station and may be 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 handbook you are always the blue car.

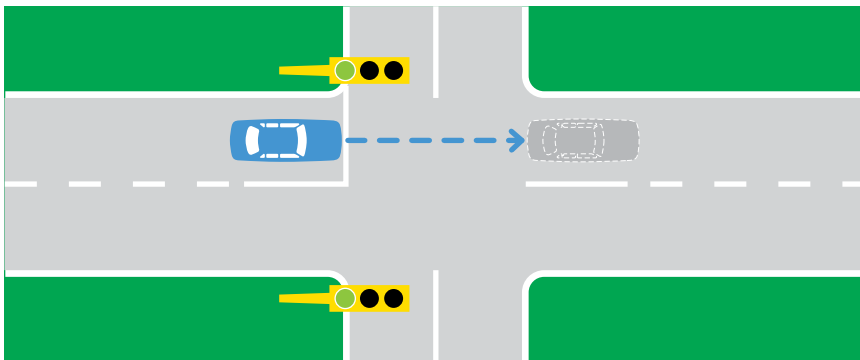
## Applying the road rules

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.



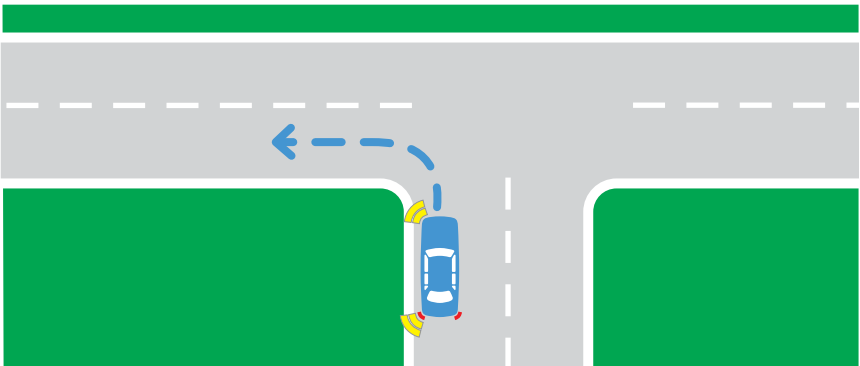
### Final position at a stop line

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.

## Turns at intersections

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

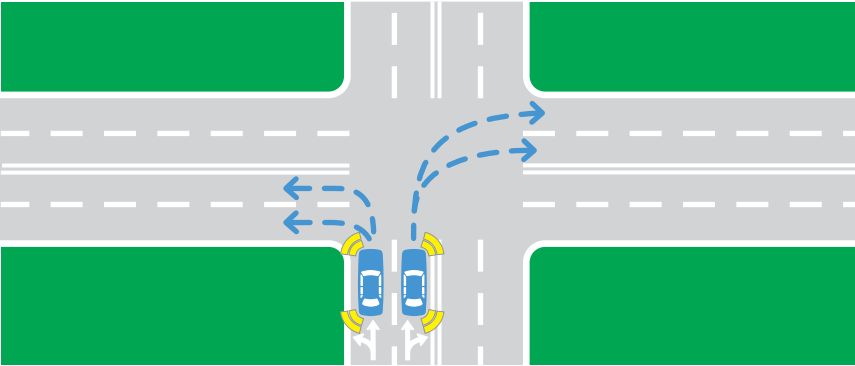
When turning left you must approach in the left lane or any marked left turn lanes on laned roads, or as far left as you can when on unmarked roads.



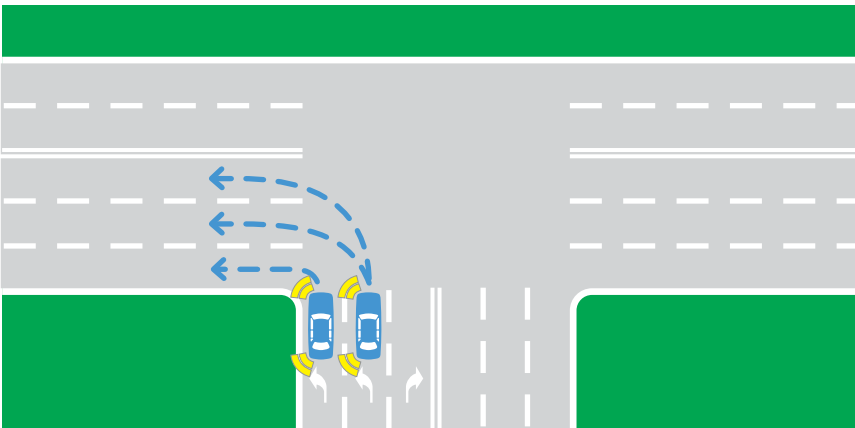
**Approach left turns as far left as you can.**

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 cars are parked in the left lane and other traffic conditions.

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

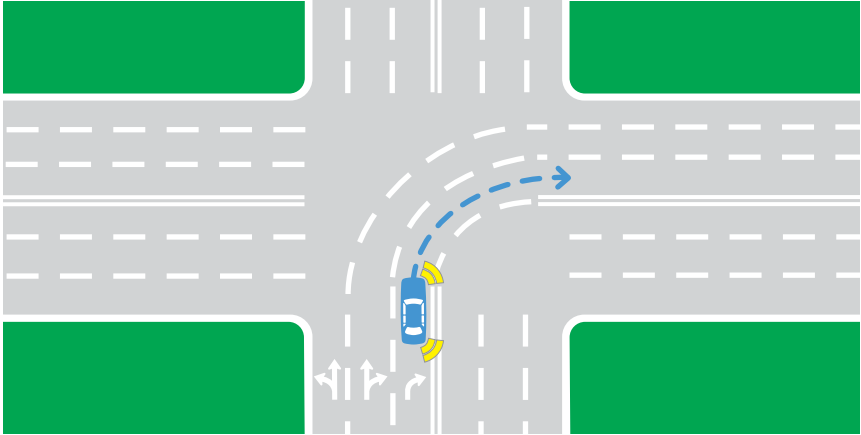


You can turn into either lane, depending on traffic.



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

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



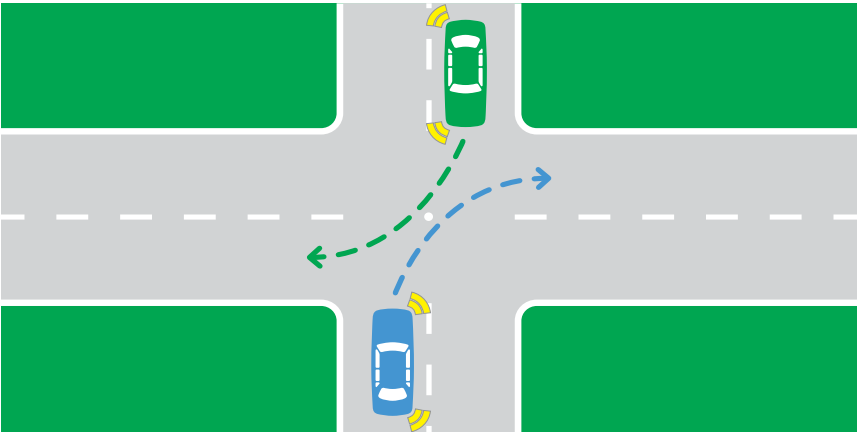
**In marked lanes stay in the same lane.**

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.

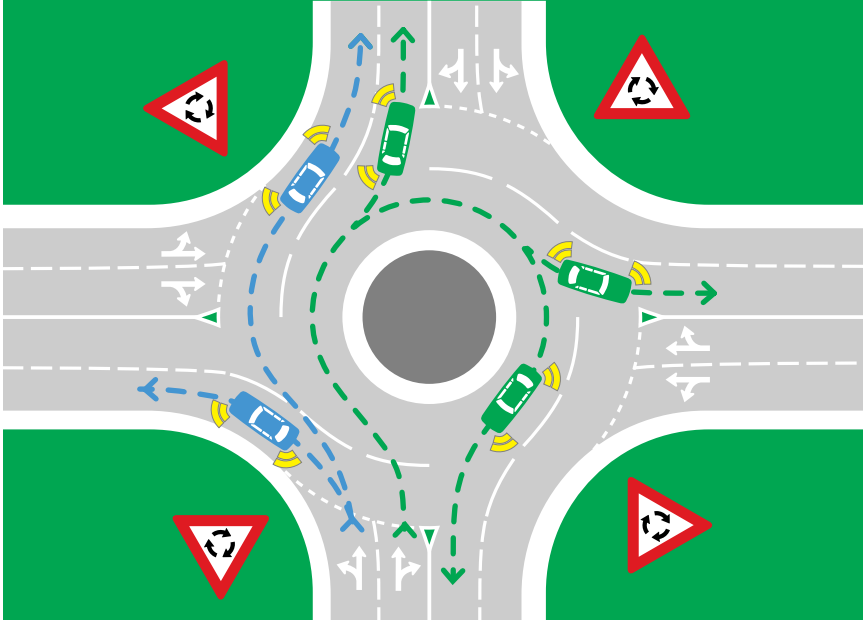
When turning right, steer to the right of an imaginary centre of the intersection. This allows vehicles opposite you to also turn right. As you exit you must keep to the left of the centre of the road.



**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.

On multi-laned roundabouts position your vehicle in accordance with the road markings for the direction you intend to travel. You must exit in a permissible lane.

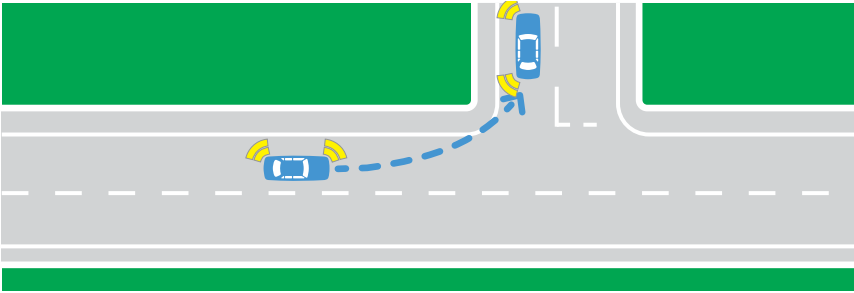


Indicate left when leaving the roundabout.

### **Keeping in the lane**

During the test you will be expected to maintain a safe, legal position on the road.

If you unnecessarily drive on the wrong side of the road, or unnecessarily cross any edge lines or lane markings, you will not pass.



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

You must also keep in your lane when turning at an intersection, 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.

## **Managing your speed**

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 during the test you will fail.



Be aware of changes in speed limits, in particular 'School Zone' and their operating times.

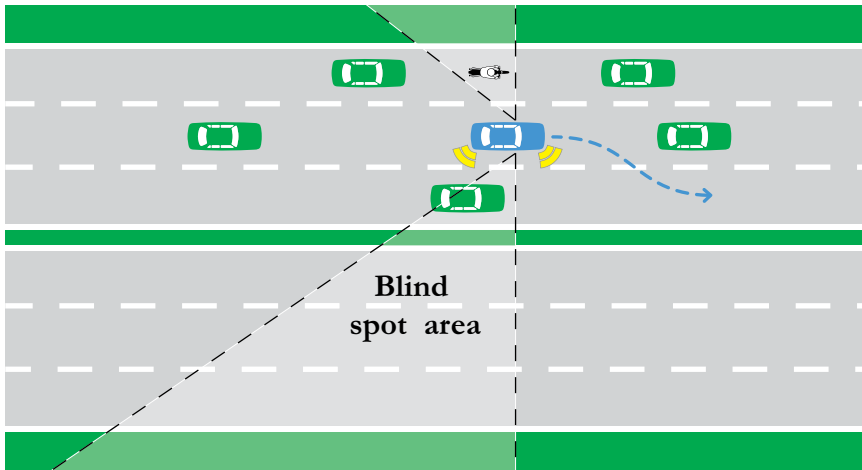
Adjust your speed to maintain a safe distance from the car in front and slow down if you do not have a clear view of the road ahead. Situations where your vision may be reduced include: blind corners, blocked intersections, crests and poor weather conditions.

## 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.**

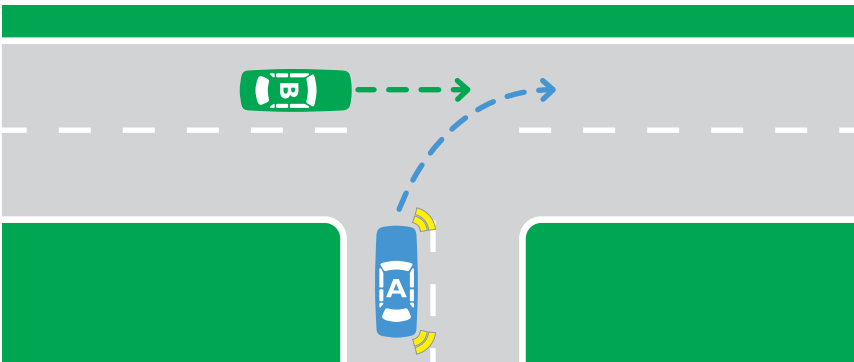
## Giving way at intersections

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.

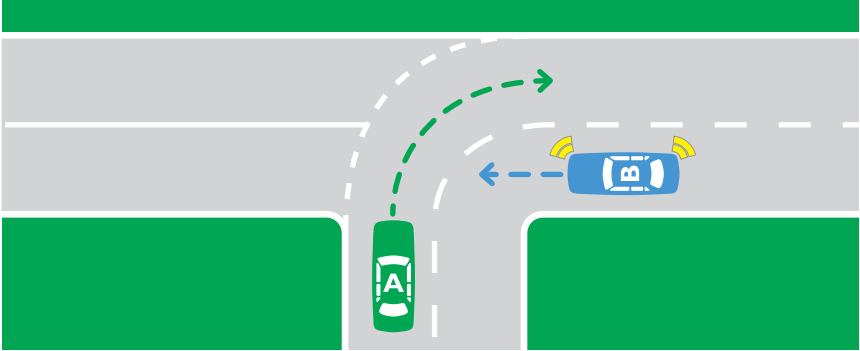


**Car A must give way to Car B.**



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

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

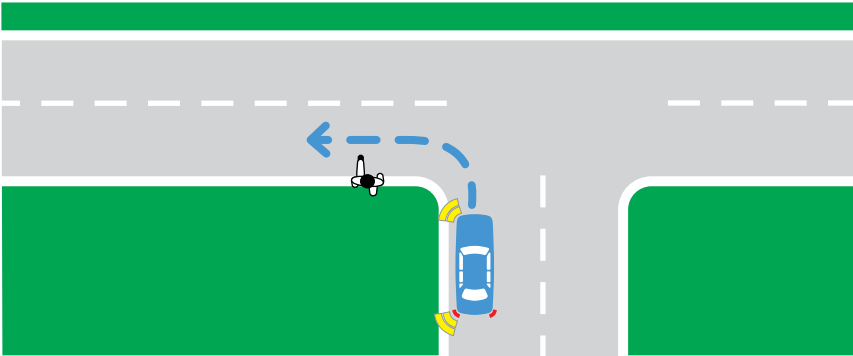


Car B must give way to Car A.

## Giving way to pedestrians

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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.

## Vehicle control

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

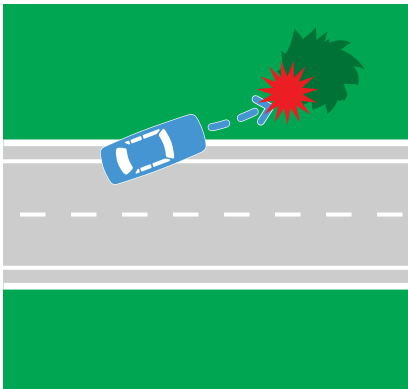
### Operating the controls

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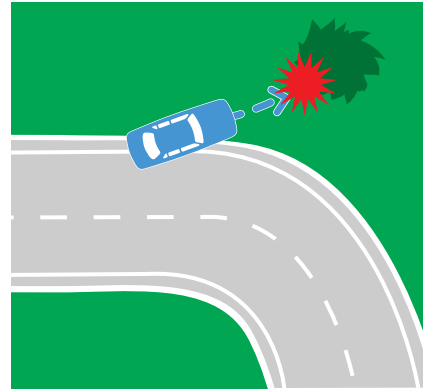
Some of the driving tasks that will be observed and recorded are listed here:

- Effective operation of the accelerator and brakes.
- Coordination of the clutch and gear lever to make smooth gear changes.
- Effective steering with both hands on the steering wheel (except when using another control). You may use either 'hand-over-hand' or 'push-pull' method with hands on the outside of the steering wheel.

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 in your use of all controls and be able to operate them 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**

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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.

## **What happens after a driving assessment from home?**

When you pass an assessment with an accredited assessor they will give you a signed assessment result form. Take the assessment result form to a motor registry for recording of the result. If the pass result is not recorded with the RTA by the required date your driver licence will be suspended and you will not be allowed to drive until the 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 an RTA driving test?**

When you return to the motor registry the testing officer will ask you to wait inside while your result is recorded. Your testing officer will call you to the counter to tell you your result.

You will be given a test report that shows where you did well and where you may need to improve. Testing officers will only provide general comments and are not permitted to discuss specific situations or events. Remember, testing officers are not driving instructors and it is not their job to give you a driving lesson.

## **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 motor registry.

## **Serious Fail**

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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

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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 roadworthy.

Use this checklist to make sure your car is roadworthy:

- Indicators and brake lights work.
- Vehicle is registered with current registration label attached.
- 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

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The RTA tries to make sure that your test will be conducted fairly and courteously. If you are genuinely not satisfied with the way an RTA test was conducted after you get the results, please contact the manager at the registry where you took the test. The manager will look into your complaint and discuss the matter with you.

If you are not satisfied with the service provided by an accredited assessor, please contact the manager of the driving school to further discuss the matter.

## Glossary

**Accredited assessor** – A licensed driving instructor accredited by the RTA 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. See also driving test.

**Driving instructor** – A person licensed by the RTA to provide driving instruction for fee or reward.

**Driving test** – An on-road assessment of driving competency performed by an RTA testing officer, conducted from an RTA testing centre. See also driving assessment.

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

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

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

**Practical driving assessment** – A term to cover both the RTA driving test and a driving assessment performed by an accredited assessor. See also driving assessment and driving test.

**RTA testing centre** – Locations where driving tests are conducted including, RTA motor registries, Council Agencies, Government Access Centres (GACs) and itinerant testing locations.

**RTA testing officer** – A person employed by the RTA to conduct driving tests.

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





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**For further enquiries:**

**[www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au)**

**13 22 13**

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## **Roads and Traffic Authority**

The information in this handbook is intended as a guide only and is subject to change at any time without notice. It does not replace the legislation.