

Best Practice Guide

Steering



Get A Grip On Your Steering

Steering is one of the basic elements of driving, but also one of the most important. Your method of steering can affect the overall level of control you have over your vehicle.

Make Sure You Are Sitting Comfortably

The way you sit in your vehicle affects how close you are to the steering wheel and the way in which you can hold the wheel.

You should be seated:

- Upright, with your back straight.
- Close enough to reach the pedals without stretching.



Position The Steering Wheel

- Adjust the steering wheel so that you can rest your wrists on it without stretching.
- Make sure it is not positioned too close to your legs and knees as this could obstruct your movement when operating the pedals.

Place Your Hands

Many drivers develop bad habits when it comes to holding the steering wheel.

The correct way to position your hands is:

- Always use both hands.
- Position your left hand at approximately '9 o'clock' on the steering wheel and your right hand at approximately '3 o'clock'. This position should feel comfortable and should also allow you to make most turns without removing your hands from the steering wheel.
- Grip the wheel securely but not too firmly.

Push And Pull

In many countries the push-pull method of steering is taught as standard. This method prevents the hands from crossing over which is not allowed in some parts of the world.

To use the push-pull method:

- Keep the left hand at 10 o'clock and the right hand at 2 o'clock.
- When turning right use the right hand to pull the steering wheel down then slide the left hand down and take over by pushing the wheel up. Do the opposite to turn left.

Look Ahead

It is important to look well ahead when driving to help you anticipate upcoming hazards. Knowing what the road ahead has in store can also help you to steer safely and can help prevent any sudden and last-minute steering movements.

You should:

- Look 12 seconds ahead.
- Look for 'clues' such as streetlamps and tall bushes which could indicate the direction the road will take - helping you plan ahead for bends.
- Pay attention to road signs which alert you to sharp bends.

Watch Your Speed

The faster you go the faster you need to respond to problems such as upcoming roadworks, a broken down vehicle or a child running into the road - and the faster you need to steer to avoid the problem.

Travelling at a safe speed, appropriate to the conditions, will give you more time to react in such a situation and is more likely to result in you successfully steering away from a problem and avoiding a potential collision.

Steering Is Crucial In A Skid

You should be able to prevent skids from occurring by steering lightly and following the three S's: SLOWLY, SMOOTHLY and STEADILY. However, skids are more difficult to avoid when roads are wet, snowy or icy.

If you start to skid:

- Ease off the accelerator.
- Steer gently in the direction you want the front of your car to go. This should bring the back end of your car in line with the front.
- Do not brake or steer suddenly as this will only make things worse.

Look After Your Tyres

Poorly maintained tyres are a danger as they provide less grip on the road and can affect your car's steering.

Make sure:

- The tread is not worn.
- There are no lumps or bumps in the rubber.
- There are no cracks.
- They are inflated correctly.



Don't Forget The Fluid Levels

If your vehicle is equipped with a power steering system you should check fluid levels weekly. Low fluid levels can result in bubbles entering the system which can affect how the system responds. Your vehicle manual will contain instructions on maintaining the power steering system.

- S** Sit comfortably.
- T** The position of the steering wheel is important.
- E** Each hand must be used - do not steer with one hand!
- E** Every clue in the road can help make steering safer.
- R** Remember the push-pull method.
- I** If you steer too suddenly you might lose control.
- N** Never speed.
- G** Grip is essential, so look after your tyres.

WARNING

Power steering systems are designed to make steering easier so require much less leverage than non-power steering systems. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the steering system when driving a new vehicle.