

Best Practice Guide

Town / City Driving



Gear Up For The City

Driving in towns and cities can be very different to driving on other roads. Urban roads can be very busy, especially at peak times. They are also used by many different types of road users including car drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

It is particularly important to be alert when driving in cities as there are often so many different things happening in all directions.

Although there are fewer fatal crashes on urban roads than rural roads, there are many more crashes involving injury or damage.

Cut Your Speed

Always drive slowly in residential areas, in towns, near schools or in any other areas where there are likely to be pedestrians around. Even if roads appear to be clear you could be faced with a sudden hazard at any time.

Think Tyres And Tarmac

Remember the phrase 'tyres and tarmac' to help make sure you leave a safe gap behind other vehicles and help prevent your vehicle from becoming 'squashed' if hit from behind.

When approaching a stationary vehicle:

- Slow down smoothly and gradually.
- Stop far enough behind the vehicle so you can see its rear tyres and where they touch the tarmac on the road.

Be A Scanner

Scanning is particularly important when driving in towns and cities as there can be a lot happening at once.

To scan effectively:

- Focus on different areas in turn.
- Never look at one particular point for a long time.
- Keep the process up continuously, trying to cover distant, mid range and close fields.
- Check your mirrors regularly.

Emerge With Caution

Junctions are dangerous and require effective observation. Never assume that other vehicles will give way.

Remember:

- Vehicles can emerge from concealed side roads.
- Pedestrians especially children can be hidden behind parked vehicles and may emerge suddenly.
- Cyclists can approach faster than you think and are often travelling faster than cars in heavy traffic.
- Motorcycles are more difficult to spot and could be approaching very fast.

Look Well Ahead

The layout of roads in town centres can be confusing, especially if you are in heavy traffic and need to think fast. Look out for signs well in advance of upcoming roundabouts, junctions or turnings so that you have plenty of time to position your vehicle in the correct lane.



Pass Buses With Care

Take extra care when passing a stationary bus or coach as there are likely to be pedestrians stepping into the road. There may also be people running across the road to catch the bus.

Consider that:

- Some pedestrians take risks by crossing in undesignated places.
- Disabled people, children and the elderly may not be able to identify the hazards of the road as well as other pedestrians.

Size Matters

When driving close to buses, trucks or vans in town you should be aware that you could be a driver's blind spot.

Always:

- Position yourself so that the other driver can see you, either slightly ahead of a vehicle or a safe distance behind.
- If you cannot see the vehicle's side-view mirrors then the driver cannot see you.
- Keep well back if a large vehicle indicates to turn as it may need to make a wide swing in order to turn safely.

Read The Clues

Effective observation in towns is about looking for things you can see as well as things you can't.

Expect the unexpected by looking for clues such as:

- If driving near schools, EXPECT children to run into the road.
- If driving past a bus, EXPECT someone to step out in front of it.
- If driving near pubs at night, EXPECT to encounter drunken pedestrians.

Don't Idle

If you are stuck in traffic or know that you are going to be stopping for more than 30 seconds you should turn your engine off, rather than 'idle' your vehicle.

Idling:

- Is bad for the engine.
- Uses more fuel.
- Costs more money.
- Emits global warming gases.
- Is bad for the health of passers-by.

Show Respect At Crossings

In most busy areas you are likely to encounter pedestrian crossings. Make sure you always drive at a speed which allows you to stop safely and always give way to anyone on the crossing or about to step onto the crossing.

Be A Clever Parker

Some parking areas are safer than others.

Consider that:

- If you park on a main road your vehicle is more likely to be hit or scraped by passing vehicles and you are more at risk of being hit when getting in and out of your vehicle.
- If you park on a side road in a quiet area you put yourself at greater risk of being attacked and put your vehicle at greater risk of being broken into.
- Parking in a designated car park is safer for both you and your vehicle as there will be more people around and the area may be monitored by CCTV and / or security.

- T** Take care when passing buses.
- O** Obey the tyres and tarmac rule.
- W** Watch out for pedestrians crossing the road.
- N** Never look at one particular point for a long time.

- D** Drive at a safe speed.
- R** Read clues up ahead.
- I** Idling should be avoided.
- V** Vehicles can emerge from concealed side roads or driveways.
- I** If possible park in a designated area with CCTV or security.
- N** Never assume others will give way.
- G** Get out of other drivers' blind spots.

WARNING

Another reason to be more cautious in town centres is that you are more likely to encounter uninsured drivers, according to the Motor Insurers' Bureau.

Apparently large cities all see cases of uninsured driving 'magnified' meaning other road users are put at greater risk.