

An Actual Driving Lesson

Learning to drive an automatic car



Where are the controls that I might have to use in my driving:

Knowing where the controls are, and being able to locate and use them without looking away from the road is important.

Remember in each vehicle these controls could be in different places:

- Washer and wiper, front and back
- Head lights, high and low beam
- Hand brake
- Demisters, front and back
- Horn
- Hazard lights
- Indicators

How to adjust the seat:

When adjusting the seat, your right leg should be able to reach the accelerator and brake pedals comfortable and have a slight bend in it (about 15 degrees). **The leg should not be fully extended.**

Push your shoulder into the back of the seat, and put your arms out in front of you at the top of the steering wheel, now adjust the back of the seat so your wrists are on top of the steering wheel rim (not your hand or arm but your wrist).

Most cars now can adjust the height of the steering wheel. Move the steering wheel up or down so you can see the speedo clearly.

How to adjust your mirrors:

The mirrors should be adjusted so when you look into them, you are only moving your eyes not your head.

The centre mirror:

The top of your mirror should run along the top of your back window, you should be able to see the whole back window.

The side mirrors:

On a flat road, you should see road from the middle of the mirror to the bottom of the mirror, and from the middle of the mirror to the top of the mirror you should see houses, trees, sky etc.

The bottom corner near the door of the mirror you should be able to see the back door handle

Stage 1

BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION

In this part of learning you do it until you get it right. You will do lots of driving and hopefully turn action into habits, fix your mistakes. Repetition after repetition, do the same thing hundreds of times of the correct repetition. (Sounds like fun doesn't it).

Learning the **basic** driving skills

During this stage the focus is on stopping and starting, acceleration and slowing down and steering (this is the frustrating stage of driving).

Get the licensed driver to drive the car to a clear open road. We need a quiet road with few vehicles - a long straight road is perfect, no intersections.

The safe way to get started

Once a quiet road is found pull over to the side of the road, make the car safe (hand brake on, switch off the car). Change seats so the learner is in the driver's seat and adjust the seat, mirror and steering wheel as demonstrated in that chapter.



What are these pedals on the floor for?

Look down at your feet - you will see two pedals. The pedal on the left is the **brake** (which stops or slows down the car). That pedal is used by the right leg only. The pedal on the right is the **accelerator** (which makes the car gather speed, or give it more power) that is also used by the right leg.

Your left leg is for balance only, not to operate any of the pedals. It should be on the floor or on the foot rest if your car has one.



How do I work the gear shift

Different automatic cars have different type of gear panels , but most common is this panel.

- P - PARK.** This locks the transmission. Use this when stationary. Some cars require stepping on the brake pedal before you can push into another gear.
- R - REVERSE.** To make the car go backward.
- N - Neutral.** No gear. This can be selected when stationary at an intersection / traffic lights but make sure you have your foot on the brake because in this position the car can roll forwards or backwards if you are on a slope.
- D - Drive.** To make the car go forward.
- 1 - First Gear.** The car is locked in 1st gear. Used for when you need high rev driving. In sand, mud, going up or down steep hills. Bad weather conditions.
- 2 - Second Gear .** The car will move between 1st and 2nd gear. Used for when you need more power. E.G. Use when over taking a car. Bad weather conditions like snow.

Starting the car.

Make sure you follow this procedure or else the car will more likely take off without warning. *“We don’t want any mishaps yet because at this stage we are doing well”.*

- Make sure the gear shift is in “P”
- Make sure the hand brake is fully on.
- Foot on the brake pedal.
- Turn the ignition key clockwise.
- As soon as the engine revs up let the key go. (The key will spring back in to position.)

Congratulations! you have now started the car.

Make sure the gear shift is still in “P” and hand brake is on; relax for a minute or two. The car should be idling along (there is no hurry).

Let's get the car moving

At this stage we only going to get the car to roll forward a few metres. We are not driving off yet.

- Right foot depressed on the brake pedal.
(This will stop the car moving forward unexpectedly)
- Move the gear shift into "D" position.
(The car is now in gear)
- Release the hand brake.
- Slow release your foot from the brake pedal.
(As you release the foot brake the car will start moving forward).
- After few metres smoothly bring the car to a stop with your brake pedal.
- Put gear shift in "P" position.
- Hand brake on.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat until you feel confident.

Common errors may occur.

- If you cannot move the gear shift to "D" position press down on the brake pedal a bit harder.
- Have not properly selected the "D" position (The "N" position is the common error)
- If you are on an up slope, it may need a slight accelerator to get the car moving.

We are really doing it for real for the first time

("Watch out everybody I'm coming")

We are going to drive on the road now. We will only take the car up to about 60km/h and hold it there to get the feel of the car moving. Let's do it.

- Right foot on the brake pedal.
- Move the gear shift to "D"
- Hand brake off.
- Check to see if it is safe to merge onto the road. (If it's not safe, wait until it is).
- Slowly release your foot off the brake pedal.
- Very slowly accelerate and steer onto the road
Keep it slow until you are on the road
- Gently accelerate until you reach about 60km/h.
- When you reach that speed keep the speed steady.
Just practice holding the car steady for a few minutes. Its takes practise to do this. It looks easy when another driver does it, but this takes practise too do it. You will find the speed will be going up and down like a yoyo.

We did it for the first time, yippee!!!!!!

Calm down! Remember we're driving on the road. Keep our concentration on the road shall we. Let's pull over to the side of the road and start again.

- Check your mirrors for cars behind you.
- Indicate to show you going to pull over.
- Gently start to brake.
- When you got to about 40 km/h gently steer the car off the road.
Before you steer off the road it's really important to get the speed off the car first.
- When off the road gently bring the car to a stop.
- Select "P" (remember you need your foot on the brake)
- Hand brake on.
- Repeat, repeat until you are confident with the Acceleration, steering and braking.

Stopping the car where we need it to stop.

While we are on the quiet road let's practise stopping the car where we need the car to stop.

Just imagine we are coming to an intersection with a stop sign. The object is to stop the car close as possible to the stop line without going over the stop line. If we can't do that we are in big trouble, so let's practise this where there are no cars around. What I do is to have an imaginary white line across the road, or better still look at the white guide posts along the side of the road - have an imaginary white line between the white posts. What we've got to do is to stop the car as close as possible, at least within 1 metre of the imaginary line without going over. Can you see why I said start off in the quietest road you can find?

We need to have a smooth stop. Not brake-accelerate-brake situation. Do the bulk of your braking first, then release the pressure on the brake pedals as you get closer. It should feel like if you are rolling in. You are only releasing the pressure on the brake not releasing it fully, if you do that the car will gather speed. It takes practice to know how much pressure to put on the brake pedal and how much pressure to release from the brake pedals.

Common errors to look out for.

- Braking too hard, if you do that then you will stop short of your line and you will have to accelerate again to reach the correct position.

- Braking too soft, if you do that you will have to brake harder at the end or you finish up in the intersection. That's dangerous. This will be unpleasant for the passengers and dangerous.

*How's that. Hopefully you will be able to take control of your driving. This is the most dangerous part of your driving because you need to stop and start a lot. Always make sure it's safe before you do something. **I wish you good luck and safe driving.** We still have a long way to go yet. Basic car control may take up to 15 to 20 hours of experience before you are ready for the next stage.*

At this stage it's only open road driving. Everyone learns at a different pace. Driving instructors can push you a little bit harder because they should have dual control in their car you don't. The next stage will be light traffic driving in residential.

Task Requirements	Full Assistance	Some Assistance	No Assistance
Adjust mirrors correctly			
Adjust seat correctly			
Able to identify and operate the car controls			
Start the car safely			
Stop the car safely			
Shut down the car safely			
Steady steering			
Smooth accelerating			
Able to keep a steady speed			
Smooth braking			
When no assistance are needed in all requirements we are ready for the 2 nd stage			