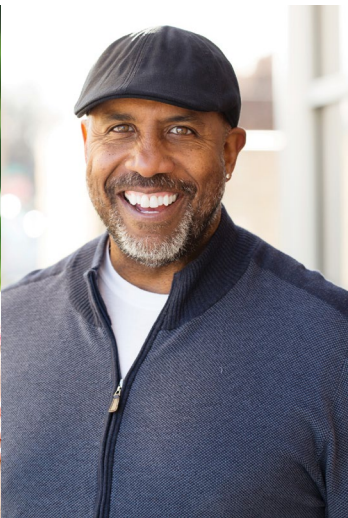




Older, Wiser, Safer:

A Senior Driver's Guide



Introduction

As the years go by, our abilities change. Some things improve, as we learn from experience. Others don't come as easily as they used to. Our eyes aren't as sharp, our reactions aren't as quick, and we can't concentrate as well as we once could.

We know it's because we're getting older, and that's natural. But it's frustrating when something affects our ability to do something we really need to do. Like driving our car.

We want to be able to drive when we want to, and do it safely. Since we can't expect other drivers to keep out of our way, we must be able to handle any traffic situation, or stay away from those we can't. In other words, we need to learn what our limitations are and then adjust how, when, and where we drive.

This guide will show you how to test the abilities that determine how well you drive, and suggest ways to deal with any limitations. There are also tips for using the new safety features in today's cars, plus other information that can help you to keep driving safely.

Recognizing the Signs of Change

Our ability to do things changes so gradually that we hardly notice it. Each day seems pretty much like the last – until something makes us realize that our abilities aren't as sharp as they once were. Jar tops are harder to twist off. Stairs leave us out of breath. We become more forgetful. Everything we do seems to take longer.

Not all the changes are bad. Over many years of driving, we have gained wisdom. We have encountered many road situations. We're less likely to take risks, speed or drive aggressively.

Still, driving a car uses a lot of different skills, and when you first learned how to drive, those skills were at their peak. But in recent years, you – or those who drive with you – may have noticed a change in how you handle the car or react to traffic situations.

Below is a list of statements that describe feelings or situations you may experience when you drive. Make a check mark next to those that apply to you, even if it's just occasionally. This will give you a good idea of how you may have changed.

- I have trouble looking at all the signs, signals, and traffic at a busy intersection.
- Left-hand turns across traffic make me nervous.
- It's hard to decide when to merge onto a busy highway.
- I sometimes get confused or distracted when I'm driving.
- I find myself driving slower, so I have more time to react.
- The glare from oncoming headlights bothers me.
- It's hard to turn my head to see traffic coming up behind me or from other roads.
- I have trouble reading traffic signs at a distance.
- My medication makes me dizzy or drowsy.
- I seem to be surprised more often by cars slowing down ahead of me.
- It's harder to turn the steering wheel.
- I'm finding it harder to move my right foot from the gas pedal to the brake.
- I've been passed by an ambulance and didn't hear the siren.
- Family or friends are worried about my driving.
- The police have stopped me for poor driving.
- I was in a collision that was probably my fault.

Even if you've checked only a few of these statements, you should read through the following pages. You'll learn how to measure some of your abilities that relate to driving, plus you will find some suggestions on how to compensate for any problems.

Testing Your Ability to Drive Safely

The following section contains six simple tests to help you be aware of changes in your physical or mental abilities that are likely to increase your risks when driving. They are quick and easy to do by yourself or, in some cases, with the help of another person. Simply follow the step-by-step instructions provided to test your:

1. Vision
2. Response Time
3. General Fitness
4. Foot Movement
5. Arm Movement
6. Head and Neck Flexibility

The results of each test will tell you if you might have a problem in that area. If you do, you'll find some tips on how to compensate for that limitation and whether you should see a professional for further evaluation or to remedy the problem.

Problems other than those dealt with here – such as the effect of medications and your ability to hear horns, sirens and train whistles – require a visit to your doctor, who can advise you on how to correct or compensate for these difficulties.

1. TESTING YOUR VISION

Almost all the information we need to drive is received through the eyes. So if we can't see clearly, we may not be able to respond safely to signals, signs, traffic and road features. As we get older, our vision also changes in a way that makes it harder to see well at night and when there's less light, such as at dusk or when the weather is cloudy. That's because there's less contrast between an object and its background.

This vision test measures and compares your ability to see in normal light and under reduced contrast conditions.

How to Take the Test

Read all the steps first. If you wear glasses or contacts for driving, be sure to wear them for the test. You'll need paper and a pencil.

1. **On the next page** are two charts with six lines of letters. Place the open booklet with Chart 1 at the bottom in a brightly lit location, making sure there are no shadows on the chart. Avoid looking at the page too closely so you don't memorize the letters.
2. Stand or sit about 10 feet away from the chart. With both eyes open, write down all the letters you can see on Chart 1 line-by-line, starting with the largest letters. If you aren't sure of a letter, write down your guess.
3. Now turn the booklet over so that Chart 2 is right side up. Again, from about 10 feet away, write down the letters you can see on this chart.
4. Compare the charts with what you wrote down. Your score for each chart is the lowest line with no mistakes. For example, if you were able to see all the letters down through the fourth line, your score for that chart is 4.

R Z N
K V S
Z R H
N K S
H N V
R H K

Chart 2

Chart 1

O R S
Z H N
H S R
S Z K
V R N
Z S H

Interpreting the Results

If your score for Chart 1 was 5 or 6, your vision is “normal.” Of course, your glasses or contacts are working to bring your sight into the normal range. Your score for Chart 2 will probably be lower; since these letters have less contrast. The greater the difference between the two scores, the more difficult it is for you to see when there’s less light outside.

If you were able to see only the largest or second line on Chart 1, you may have a problem with your vision that might be limiting your ability to drive safely.

What You Can Do

- Schedule a complete examination with an eye care professional to see if the problem can be corrected.
- If you need corrective lenses, always wear a current prescription. If you lose or break them, don’t rely on an old pair – get them replaced right away.
- Don’t wear sunglasses or tinted lenses at night or in low light situations such as fog, rain, dusk, dawn, etc. This reduces the amount of light that reaches your eyes so that you can’t see as well.
- Adjust your seat so that it’s high enough that you can see some of the street within 10 feet in front of your car. This will help reduce the glare from oncoming headlights at night.
- Keep your windshield and headlights clean.
- When your car is inspected, be sure they check and correct the aim of your headlights.

2. TESTING YOUR RESPONSE TIME

Driving requires continuous visual scanning and quick reactions. We have to shift our attention between traffic signs, signals and pavement markings; watch what's happening on the road ahead; and be aware of vehicles, motorcycles, cyclists and pedestrians to the sides and rear. What we see may require us to brake, accelerate, steer left or right, or execute a combination of actions.

As we grow older, it becomes more difficult to divide our attention between all these sources of information and respond quickly and appropriately.

This simple test will help you measure how quickly you can respond to what's happening around you. Since this ability changes with age, the results show how you compare to other people in your age range.

How to Take the Test

The photograph **on the next page** shows a typical driving situation where you have to observe the traffic light, watch for pedestrians and look out for other vehicles. The object of this test is to identify as many numbers in order as possible within 10 seconds. Read all the steps before beginning.

1. Find a timer in your house that you can set for 10 seconds, such as a stove timer or smartphone, or ask someone to time the 10 seconds for you.
2. First, do a practice run. Find the number 1 in the upper left corner of the picture and start timing. Then, with your finger, touch the other numbers in order (2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) as quickly as you can. Stop when the 10 seconds are up.
3. Now for the actual test. Look away from the test picture, and reset the timer or stopwatch. When you're ready, start timing and begin the test again, starting at number one. Quickly touch each number in order. Stop after 10 seconds. The last number you touched will be your score.



START 1

14

6

12

5

8

7

9

2

11

3

10

4

13

Interpreting the Results

Find your age range across the top of the chart below. Then find your score in the column below your age.

Since it's normal to react more slowly as we grow older, the scores go down as age increases. But if you scored "below average," you'll need to pay attention to when, where and how you drive to compensate for your slower response time.

AGE	17 & under	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 & over
Above Average	14	14	14	13-14	13-14	12-14	10-14
Average	12-13	11-13	11-13	10-12	9-12	8-11	6-9
Below Average	1-11	1-10	1-10	1-9	1-8	1-7	1-5

What You Can Do

- Drive only when you feel comfortable, which may mean avoiding driving at night and during rush hour.
- Try to stick to roads where you know the traffic flow.
- Be aware of cars and pedestrians coming from the side and what's happening beyond the car just ahead.
- Drive with a passenger who can be a "second pair of eyes." (But don't get distracted by conversation!)
- Blend in with the speed and gaps of the other traffic. If you're too close to the car ahead, you can't stop in time if that driver brakes suddenly. If you're too far away, others may cut abruptly in front of you.
- When conditions allow, a following distance of at least four seconds is safest. Judge this distance by choosing a landmark along the road such as a tree or pole. When the car ahead passes this point, count "one-one thousand, two-one thousand" and so forth. You're at the desired following distance when you can count to "four-one thousand" or higher before you pass the same point.

3. TESTING YOUR GENERAL FITNESS

The object of this test is to see how fast you can walk a short distance, which is an easy way to measure the overall fitness of your leg muscles and joints. Read all the steps before you begin.

How to Take the Test

1. Go to a room that's more than 10 feet long with a clear floor area.
2. You also need to be able to see a watch or clock that tells time in seconds or ask someone to time you.
3. Measure a straight 10-foot path and mark both ends.
4. Take a practice walk from the start of the path to the 10-foot mark and then back to the start.
5. Now get ready to take the walk again. This time you'll time how many seconds it takes.
6. Again, walk to the 10-foot mark and back – this time moving as fast as you feel safe and comfortable. Begin timing as soon as you pick up your foot to take the first step. Stop timing when you've crossed the start line again with both feet. Your score is the total number of seconds it took you to complete the walk.

Interpreting the Results

If it took more than seven seconds to complete this walk, your general fitness level may have declined to the point that it may affect your driving. Research has shown a relationship between very slow walkers and involvement in collisions and traffic violations.

What You Can Do

To be physically fit, you need to keep using all your muscles and joints. And that means getting enough regular exercise to help keep them strong and flexible. Talk with your doctor about a recommended exercise program.

- A simple way to keep in shape is to do stretching exercises every day, with emphasis on the legs and knees.
- Start a regular walking program. If there are sidewalks where you live, take walks around the block. Or walk in an indoor shopping mall, which can be done in any weather and with greater security.
- Check with nearby health clubs to see if they have fitness programs geared toward the needs of older people.



4. TESTING YOUR FOOT MOVEMENT

Safe practice requires you to operate the foot controls in a car with your right foot only. This test tells you how well you can move this foot from the accelerator to the brake pedal and back, which is something we do constantly when driving.

How to Take the Test

Read through all of the steps before you begin.

1. Sit in a straight-backed chair with your feet on the floor about 12 inches apart.
2. Put temporary marks on the floor where your feet were and place a brick or similar-sized object midway between these marks.
3. Practice lifting your right foot over the object to touch the left spot on the floor and then returning it, without touching the object. Do this a few times, back and forth.
4. You're now ready to begin the test. You'll need to be able to see a watch or clock that tells time in seconds or ask someone to time you.
5. Start with your right foot on the right mark. As soon as you start timing, lift this foot over the object and tap the left mark. Then immediately move it back to tap the right mark, without hitting the object in between. Do this five times, alternating and touching each mark for a total of 10 taps. The number of seconds it took to complete these actions is your score.

Interpreting the Results

How long did it take? If it was more than eight seconds, your ability to move your leg and foot from the gas pedal to brake pedal is too slow to respond to emergency situations.

What You Can Do

If you feel your performance on this test may have been affected by pain or stiffness in your hip, knee or ankle joints, or if you experience pain or swelling in your feet, you might want to consult with your doctor.

5. TESTING YOUR ARM MOVEMENT

This test measures how well you can move your arms, which can affect your ability to steer the car effectively, even with power steering.

How to Take the Test

1. Sit in a straight-backed chair, with your back against the back of the chair.
2. Extend your right arm out at your side, keeping your elbow straight.
3. Lift this arm as high as you can.
4. Repeat with your left arm. Take note of whether you have enough strength and range of motion in your shoulders to permit these movements, and how far you can reach.

Interpreting the Results

If you were unable to reach over shoulder height, with either arm, you will have difficulty operating your car safely.

What You Can Do

Check with your doctor for appropriate medication and/or exercises to improve your flexibility and bring back some of the strength in your arms.

6. TESTING YOUR HEAD AND NECK FLEXIBILITY

When you're going to change lanes, merge with traffic or turn into a sharply-angled intersection, you have to be able to turn your head to see other cars. This test determines how well you can do this.

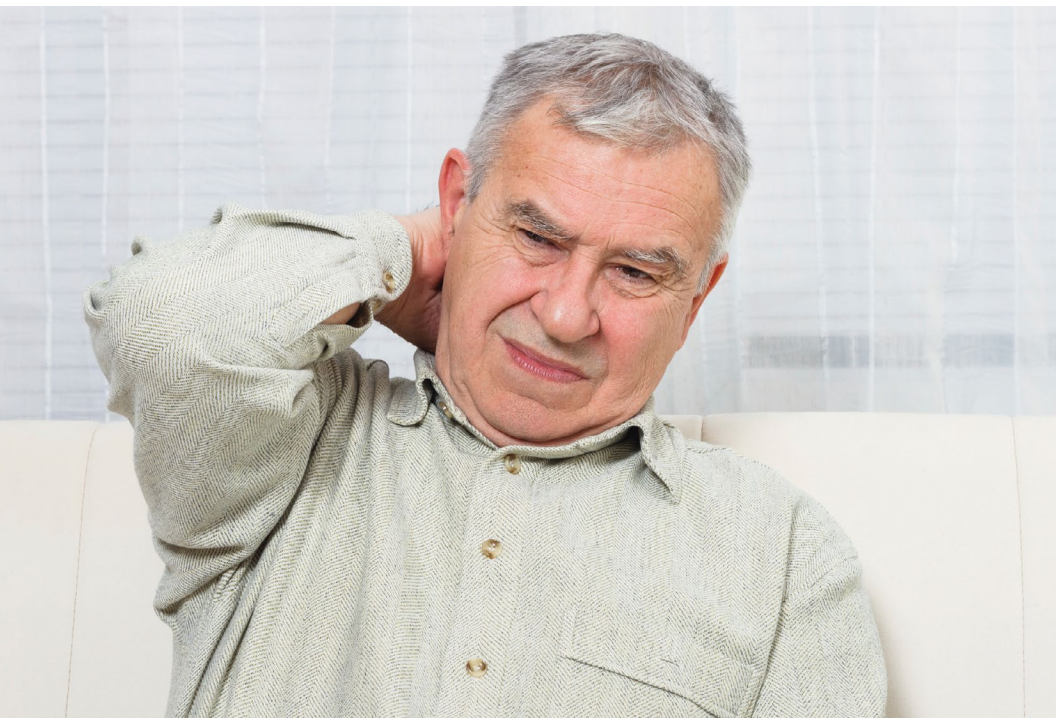
How to Take the Test

1. Place a straight-backed chair about 10 feet away from an easy-to-read clock.
2. Sit in the chair, facing away from the clock.
3. While keeping your lower back against the chair, try to turn, look behind you, and read the clock. It's alright to move your upper back to do this.

4. Note whether or not you can read the clock without moving your lower back away from contact with the chair.

Interpreting the Results

If you can't read the clock without moving your lower back away from the chair, you probably can't see other cars to the side and rear readily enough to avoid collisions.



What You Can Do

- Ask your doctor to recommend medication or exercises to improve flexibility in your neck.
- Wide-angle mirrors are available, which can help eliminate blind spots. These can distort the image you see, however, so be sure to allow lots of practice before using them in traffic.
- Another tactic is to re-aim your existing side view mirror (on the driver's side) to minimize the left side blind spot.

Here's how to do this:

1. Sitting in the driver's seat, lean your head against the left side window.
2. Adjust the side view mirror outward, so that when you look at the inside edge you can barely see the side of the car.
3. When you return to a normal driving position, the mirror will reveal passing vehicles that used to be hidden from view.

This change may seem uncomfortable at first, but, as you gain experience, you'll see that it protects you from crashes or near misses with vehicles in your blind spot when changing lanes or merging.

Other Things You Can Do to Keep Driving Safely

The tests and tips you've read about here will make you more aware of any limitations in your ability to drive safely and help you compensate as much as possible.

Keep Talking, Keep Learning

Beyond this evaluation, it's important to follow up with your physician or other health care professional. Talk with them about your concerns, and have conversations with adult children and friends to discuss your driving and be open to their perspectives. There are many older drivers just like you, so you're not alone in wondering what's best.

Many organizations in Pennsylvania offer driving refresher courses, both online and in the classroom, as well as information and tips for mature drivers to stay mobile and safe. Taking a refresher course may even get you a discount on your auto insurance premium. A number of these resources are provided at the back of this guide.

Medications and Driving

Medications that can affect your driving include: tranquilizers, narcotic pain pills, sleep medicines, some antidepressants, cough medicines, antihistamines and decongestants.

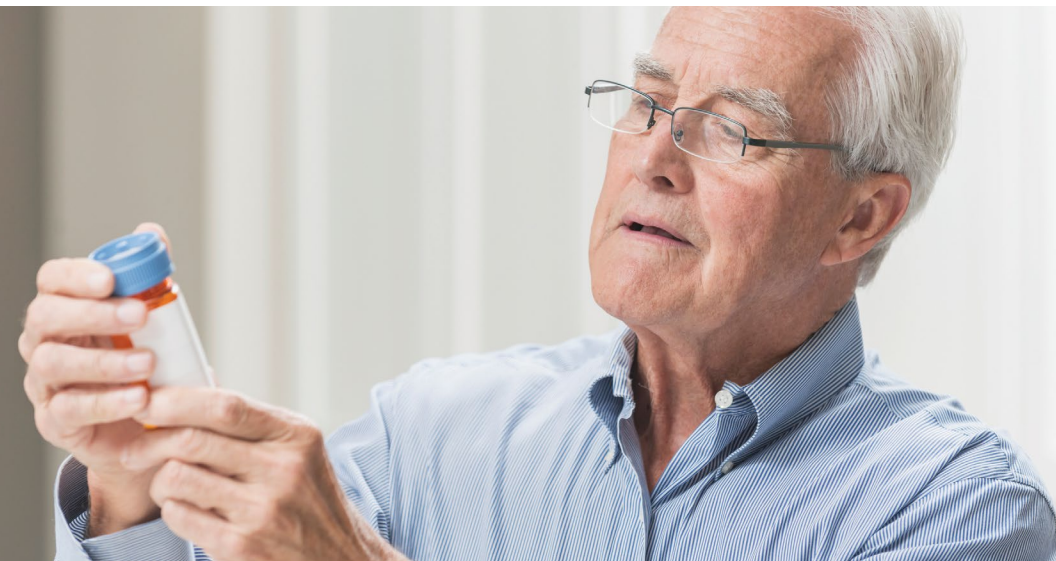
In addition, side effects for an individual drug can change when combined with other medications, especially new prescriptions.

It's a good idea to make sure your doctor is aware of any over-the-counter medications you are taking in addition to your prescriptions. If you are seeing more than one doctor, make sure they're all aware of what the other is prescribing. You might want to consider bringing along all medication you are taking to each visit.

If you've just started on a new medication, you might want to avoid driving for a few days until your body adjusts and it becomes clear if you are experiencing side effects. And of course, NEVER drink and drive – alcohol is a depressant and combined with other drugs can make side effects worse.

Remember: If the warning label states “Don't operate heavy machinery” - your vehicle is considered heavy machinery!

AAA offers Roadwise RX – a free, confidential online tool that adults can use to explore how medications may affect safe driving. Visit www.roadwiserox.com.



Safety Belts and Air Bags

Always buckle up! Make sure everyone in the car, including infants and children, has the right kind of occupant protection device and safety belt restraint in place. For more information about passenger safety, visit the Traffic Safety and Driver Topics section of www.penndot.gov/safety.

Earlier, we suggested that you raise the front seat to sit higher, which reduces the glare of oncoming headlights. This will also make your shoulder belt fit better so that it's more comfortable and will do a better job of restraining you in an accident. Special "sleeves" are available to reduce rubbing from the shoulder harness.

In newer cars, the driver and often the front seat passenger have the added protection of air bags. But air bags alone will not protect you in a crash. They must be combined with safety belts to be most effective in preventing death and reducing injury.

Safety belts keep you from being thrown into the steering wheel or windshield. Air bags help by distributing the force of the impact over your upper body and stopping you more gradually. After an air bag inflates, it quickly deflates, so that it doesn't keep the driver from seeing or being able to steer the vehicle, and won't get in the way of leaving the car.

Air bags do have a physical impact, and to minimize the risk of injury, the front seats should be moved back and reclined as far as is practical while still fully supporting your back. The driver should be at least 10 inches away from a steering wheel with an air bag. At this distance, shorter people may have trouble reaching the gas and brake pedals. If so, pedal extenders are available and can be installed by an auto mechanic.



Anti-lock Brakes

Most new cars now come with an anti-lock braking system (ABS), which automatically pumps the brakes faster than a person can. In an emergency stop, this keeps you from losing traction and brings you to a safe, smooth stop – often in half the distance of conventional brakes.

For the system to work properly, you must always apply steady pressure. Do not “pump” the brakes. You may notice a noise and vibration in the brakes when the system is operating; this is normal.



Daytime Lights

The idea of driving with the lights on during the day is still somewhat new, but it does increase safety by allowing other drivers to see you better. If you have a newer car equipped with daytime running lights, they will come on automatically when you start the engine. If you have an older car, turn on your headlights in the daytime or when the sky is overcast. (Don't worry about running down the battery, your lights run on a generator when the motor's running.)

Remember that when you are driving in a work zone, even if you do have daytime running lights, you must also turn on your headlights in order to activate your tail lights. State law requires all motorists to travel with their headlights turned on in all posted work zones, not just active work zones. And if you are stopped or traveling slowly, use your four-way flashers.

State law also requires you to turn on your headlights anytime your vehicle's wipers are in continuous or intermittent use due to weather conditions.

Remember, it could be the other driver who has a vision or attention problem – so the more visible you make yourself and your vehicle, the safer you are.

New Technologies

Many new technologies now exist to enhance driver safety and the experience of driving. As these technologies become more widely available, older drivers in particular have a lot to gain by learning how they work and how to use them. You may have heard of some of them; many are becoming standard in new cars. These include:

- Smart headlights (also called adaptive headlights) reduce glare and improve night vision.
- Blind-spot warning systems alert you to objects in blind spots while changing lanes or parking.
- Lane departure warning systems warn you if your vehicle is traveling outside your lane.
- Back up cameras help you back up safely by allowing you to see if there are objects behind your vehicle. This tool is helpful to drivers with reduced flexibility.
- Assistive parking systems enable cars to park on their own or indicate distance to other parked cars to make parking easier.

If you are buying a new car, be sure to ask about what safety features come with the car. It may take a while for you to become comfortable using a new device. Ask a family member or friend to join you in the car and walk through the buttons again as needed.

The National Safety Council site www.mycardoeswhat.org is an excellent, easy-to-use guide to the latest safety features.

Check for Vehicle Recalls Regularly and Get Them Fixed

It is important to stay on top of any recalls issued on your vehicle and get them fixed as soon as possible. An open recall on your vehicle that is neglected could lead to costly vehicle damage and could put you and your passenger at risk while you are driving that vehicle. Did you know that dealerships will fix open recalls for free? The National Safety Council has established a free website that you can check to determine if your vehicle has any open recalls by just entering your vehicle's VIN number at www.checktoprotect.org.

Vehicle Safety Inspections

Vehicle safety inspections help keep you and our roadways safer by ensuring vehicle safety components are functioning properly. As a vehicle owner it is important to conduct routine maintenance on your vehicle to ensure you the safest drive possible. If left unchecked, problems lurking under the hood between safety inspections can cause an unsafe situation for any driver.

We suggest that you conduct maintenance using the following checklist to regularly troubleshoot your vehicle:

Suggested Weekly Checks

(During fill up at gas station or make it a weekend project):

- Check tire pressure to ensure it is within the pressure range listed on the tire.
- Ensure tires have adequate tread - at least 1/16 of an inch depth between all treads. You can measure tread depth using the penny test. Here's how:
 1. Take a penny, Lincoln side up, and hold it between your thumb and forefinger.
 2. Select a point on your tire where the tread appears to be lowest and place Lincoln's head into one of the grooves.
 3. If any part of Lincoln's head is covered by the tread, you're driving with a safe amount of tread. If your tread is below it, your car's ability to grip the road in adverse conditions is greatly reduced.
- Ensure tire wear is even on all tires and check for dry rot (cracking), bumps, buldges and separation of the tread from the tire.
- Make sure oil level is within the vehicle's operating range listed on the dipstick.
- Check battery for corrosion on terminals or leakage.
- Check engine compartment for fluid leaks.
- Make sure the radiator level is within operating level on the overflow tank.

- Make sure there are no cracks in lenses for headlights, tail lights and turn signals and make sure they are operating properly.
- Make sure the horn operates properly.
- Make sure fuel cap is present and fits properly.
- Inspect seat belts for unusual wear or malfunctioning parts.

Suggested Monthly Checks (Start or end-of-the-month project):

- Check mirrors and windows for cracks and check windshield for cracks in the wiper operating area.
- Check condition of license plate for readability and reflective properties, and damage or scratches, which would affect the appearance of the plate.
- Ensure brake lights and emergency flashers are working.
- Ensure power steering, brake, transmission, engine oil and battery (if applicable) fluid levels are within operating ranges. Check the vehicle owner's manual for their location and proper levels.
- Ensure wiper blades are not streaking and are cleaning the windshield properly.
- Check spare tire, jack and emergency equipment for serviceability.

As with all projects, think safety first. Make sure your vehicle's engine has cooled down before checking under the hood and ensure the parking brake is applied while making all suggested checks.

Troubleshooting your vehicle using a checklist should not be considered a replacement for scheduled maintenance. It is a good idea to always consult your vehicle's owner's manual for the manufacturer's recommended schedule of maintenance for your vehicle.

Avoiding Aggressive Drivers

Aggressive drivers are out there, weaving in traffic, tailgating and generally making roadways less safe and pleasant for other drivers. If you encounter an aggressive driver:

- Get out of their way and don't engage with them.
- Stay relaxed, look straight ahead avoiding eye contact and ignoring rude gestures.
- Don't block the passing lane if you are driving slower than most traffic.

Sharing the Road with Other Types of Vehicles

Motorcycles, bicycles, commercial trucks – they are out there, how do you deal with them safely?

Bicycles and Motorcycles

Be on the lookout for bicycles and motorcycles and anticipate sudden and unexpected moves from them. Bicycles and motorcycles are smaller, harder to see, and can stop faster than expected. Always use extra caution when driving around either and increase your following distance.

You may pass a bicycle, even when there is a double yellow line, but you must do so safely and provide four (4) feet of distance between you and the bicyclist. Be aware that bicycles may occupy either the shoulder or the right-most travel lane as needed. Motorcycles are entitled to the same full lane width as other vehicles.

When making a right turn with bicycles nearby, be sure that you do not cut off a bicyclist's line of travel. Slow down and pull behind them, then make your turn safely. You may cross into a marked bike lane in order to make your turn, but check for bicyclists as you do so.

Take extra care when opening your car door, as you can injure a bicyclist or motorcyclist by impeding their path. If you have trouble turning your head to check for bicyclists or motorcyclists, try opening the door with your right hand: this turns your body and allows for a better view.

Bicyclists and motorcyclists are required to follow the same rules of the road you are, but be aware that they may need to make quick movements to avoid hazards and debris in the roadway (such as potholes or gravel) and may not have time to signal the change of lane. It is always important to give them plenty of space.

Trucks and Buses

If you cut in front of another vehicle, you may create an emergency-braking situation for the vehicles around you, especially in heavy traffic. Trucks and buses take much longer to stop in comparison to cars.

When passing, look for the front of the truck in your rearview mirror before pulling in front, and avoid braking situations.

Large trucks have blind spots, or “no-zones,” around the front, back, and sides of the vehicle. Avoid being caught in a truck’s no-zone. If you can’t see the truck driver in the truck’s mirror, the truck driver can’t see you.

Be careful of trucks making wide right turns. If you try to get in between the truck and the curb, you’ll be caught in a “squeeze” crash. Truck drivers sometimes need to swing wide to the left in order to safely negotiate a right turn. They can’t see cars directly behind or beside them. Cutting in between the truck and the curb increases the possibility of a crash. So pay attention to truck signals, and give them lots of room to maneuver.



Left-Hand Turns

Turning left across oncoming traffic, or when cars are coming from your right, can be challenging for older drivers. It can be difficult to judge how far away oncoming cars are and how fast they are traveling. In fact, misjudgments in these situations often contribute to collisions.

To avoid left-hand turns, consider planning your route so you can make a series of right-hand turns instead. Or there may be another intersection a few blocks ahead that only allows protected left turns on a green arrow signal. These precautions may add a little extra time to your journey, but they allow you to avoid challenging situations.

Using Circular Intersections (Roundabouts)

Roundabouts are becoming more common in the U.S. because they provide safer and more efficient traffic flow than standard intersections. But the rules are different.

How to drive a roundabout safely:

- Slow down. Obey traffic signs and pavement markings.
- Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Yield to traffic on your left already in the roundabout.
- Enter the roundabout when there is a safe gap in traffic.
- Keep your speed low within the roundabout.
- As you approach your exit, use your right turn signal.
- Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists as you exit.
- In multi-lane roundabouts, do not pass large vehicles such as trucks and farm equipment as they may require the use of more than one lane within the roundabout.

When there are emergency vehicles, always yield to them. If you have not entered the roundabout, pull over and allow emergency vehicles to pass. If you have entered the roundabout, continue to your exit, then pull over and allow emergency vehicles to pass. Avoid stopping in the roundabout.

Watch for Pedestrians

Pedestrians have the right-of-way at crosswalks and intersections whether the crosswalks are marked or not. Always reduce speed when you see them, and use extra caution when children are in the vicinity.

Before backing up, always check for pedestrians in your path.

When approaching a stopped vehicle from behind, slow down and do not pass until you are sure there are no pedestrians crossing in front of it.

When making a right turn (especially a right on red) be aware of pedestrians on the right side of your vehicle as they have the right of way to cross the street you are on.

Getting There Safely

Driving safely – at any age – is really a matter of having the right information and attitude. By taking the tests in this guide, you'll have a more realistic understanding of your driving limitations. By following the suggestions, you'll be able to get behind the wheel and have more confidence that you'll arrive safely at your destination.

The most important thing to keep in mind is simply to be more aware of situations that can lead to a collision and adjust to them accordingly.

Remember, keep distractions to a minimum. Driving a car is a very complex and demanding activity that requires concentration on many things at once. Avoid any activity that will take your eyes off the road, especially in heavy traffic. Concentrate your attention on what's happening on the road.

Mature Driver Improvement Courses

Under PA law individuals may be entitled to at least a 5 percent discount on their entire automobile insurance policy if they are 55 or older and successfully complete a driver improvement course approved by PennDOT. Those interested should check with their insurance carrier for the specifics of their program.

There are four state-approved courses that are held at various locations throughout the commonwealth as well as online including AAA, AARP, Seniors for Safe Driving, and Safe2Drive. (Please see the following contact information below and on the next page.)

All approved courses specifically address the safety needs of the mature driver. There are no written or practical driving tests required. The course fees are moderate, but vary with each organization.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)



1-888-227-7669 (1-800-AARP-NOW)

30 North 3rd Street, Suite 750 • Harrisburg, PA 17101

www.aarpdriversafety.org

AARP's Driver Safety website includes information on courses, auto insurance discounts, adapting automobiles, new technology as well as online seminars.

American Automobile Association (AAA)

1-800-723-7021 | Locations Nationwide



www.aaa.com

AAA offers multiple online resources for mature drivers – find your local AAA office to check on mature driver improvement course availability in your area.

www.seniordriving.aaa.com

Visit this AAA website to find mature driver evaluation tools, ways to improve on essential driving skills and tips for maintaining mobility and independence longer.

www.aaafoundation.org/senior-drivers

Discover more AAA information on topics affecting safety such as automobile technologies as well as self-assessments to screen for potential driving risk factors.

Seniors For Safe Driving

1-800-559-4880

www.seniorsforsafedriving.com

Mature drivers can find one or two-day classes at a location near them or online.



Safe2Drive

1-800-763-1297

SAFE2DRIVE

www.safe2drive.com

Here mature drivers can choose from either a Basic Course or a Refresher Course where, once completed, they will receive a Certificate of Completion when they pass a final exam.

More Safety Resources for Senior Drivers

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)



717-412-5300 • 1101 S. Front Street • Harrisburg, PA 17104

www.penndot.gov/safety

The Traffic Safety and Driver Topics section of this website contains an array of information pertaining to safely operating a motor vehicle.

www.dmv.pa.gov/Driver-Services/Mature-Drivers

The Mature Driver section of PennDOT's website offers resources for drivers including safety tips, improvement courses and licensing laws as well as information for the health care community and medical reporting tools.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)



1-888-327-4236

www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Older+Drivers

NHTSA offers guides, research reports and toolkits for mature drivers and those around them, including family and friends, medical professionals and law enforcement officers.

Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA)



717-783-1550 • 555 Walnut Street, 5th Fl. • Harrisburg, PA 17101

www.aging.pa.gov/aging-services/transportation

The Aging Services/ Transportation section of this website provides details on the PA Free Transit Program for individuals 65+, the Shared Ride Program, and also offers additional resources and links.

CarFit

www.car-fit.org

CarFit is an educational program that offers older adults the opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles “fit” them.

The CarFit program also provides information and materials on community- specific resources that could enhance their safety as drivers, and/or increase their mobility in the community.



The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED)

Driver Rehabilitation Specialists work with people of all ages and abilities, exploring alternative transportation solutions for drivers with special needs or who may need



to use special equipment to continue to drive. This includes helping older drivers and their families master the challenges of diminishing driving skills. Please visit www.aded.net and click on Directory & Services, then click on DRS or CDRS Provider Search.

PA Yellow Dot

www.pennidot.gov/TravelInPA/Pages/Yellow-Dot.aspx

This program assists citizens in the “golden hour” of emergency care following a traffic accident when they may not be able to communicate their needs themselves. Placing a Yellow Dot decal in your vehicle’s rear window alerts first responders to check your glove compartment for vital information to ensure you receive the medical attention you need. The program is a cooperative effort between PennDOT, the Department of Health and Aging, the State Police, the Turnpike Commission, first responders and local law enforcement.



The Emergency Contact Information Program

The Emergency Contact Information Program was developed to allow your emergency contact information to be quickly available to law enforcement through a secure online database. Just



Upload Emergency Contact Information

visit www.dmv.pa.gov and click on the icon you see to the right to use your Pennsylvania Driver’s License or ID information to enter emergency contacts to speak for you if ever you can’t speak for yourself.

About PennDOT and our Seniors Driving Safely Series

PennDOT oversees a breadth of programs and policies that ensure that the movement of people and goods within the state is safe, reliable, and efficient. We oversee an ongoing investment in the integrity of Pennsylvania's highway and bridge infrastructure.

PennDOT is directly responsible for nearly 40,000 miles of highway and roughly 25,000 bridges. We also administer the state's more than 11 million vehicle registrations and 8.9 million driver's licenses and oversee safety and emission inspection programs.

While PennDOT strives to set the standard for an organized transportation structure and maintain a reliable infrastructure throughout Pennsylvania, our mission cannot be completed without the compliance and cooperation of those who utilize and operate within our state's roadways and multimodal systems. Our *Seniors Driving Safely Series* is one facet of our effort to help educate, guide, remind, assist, and protect all Pennsylvanians in getting wherever they need to go – safely.