

A Booklet by
Lothian and Borders Fire
and Rescue Service and
Brake - the Road
Safety Charity



Are you a safe driver?



Lothian and Borders
Fire and Rescue Service



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Introduction

This guide is prepared in consultation with Driving Standards Agency, Department for Transport, Department of Health, Motor Schools Association, RoSPA, LARSOA, BRAG, Learn+Live Direct Line and Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service. Brake is a registered charity No. 0193244 supported and funded by donations and its corporate partners.

Brake, The Road Safety Charity PO Box 548, Huddersfield HD1 2XZ. www.brake.org.uk

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service, Lauriston Place EH3 9DE. www.lbfire.org.uk

Disclaimer: Case studies in this guide do not necessarily relate to the topics discussed on the pages on which they appear.

In memory of Charlie Mitchell, 20, who died on 9 May 1995 when a lorry hit his moped from behind on the A1 near Cromwell in Nottinghamshire. The lorry driver had fallen asleep at the wheel after driving 600 miles in 15 hours without taking his legally-required breaks. Charlie was the youngest son of Ken and Christine, who are devastated at their loss.



Wake Up!

Tired drivers are lethal: it's very tempting to risk it, but research shows that if you drive when shattered, it's impossible to stop yourself eventually nodding off at the wheel.

- > **Never drive if you feel shattered.**
- > **Get enough sleep before a long drive.**
- > **Take a break every two hours. Account for these breaks when planning your journey time.**
- > **Stop sooner if you feel tired.**
- > **Winding down the window or turning up music may help in the short term while finding a safe place to pull up.**
- > **When You Stop:**

Stop for at least 15 minutes. If you're worried about personal security while you snooze, park in a busy, well-lit area, such as near the main doors of motorway services. Lock doors and hide valuables. When you feel alert again, drive on. If not, stay put. If you feel tired when you stop, academics recommend you drink coffee or an energy drink with caffeine in it. Then try to snooze for ten minutes or so in your vehicle. Set an alarm clock. By the time you wake up, the caffeine will have kicked-in.

- *Loughborough University*

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In memory of Karen Thomason, 31, who died from severe head injuries following a crash on London's north circular road near Edmonton on 10 December 1986. The driver of a van crashed through the central reservation and killed Karen, a passenger in the van, who was thrown head-first through the windscreen. She was not wearing a seat belt. Karen's children, Nicola and Steven, were 12 and 5 when she died.



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Belt Up!

Most of us belt up in the front: make sure you do, even on short trips. Fewer of us belt up in the back: if you don't, you could kill someone in the front as well as yourself.

Babies must be in a correctly-fitted Baby seat and young children must be in a correctly-fitted child seat. Seats must be right for your child's size and weight, and right for your vehicle.

- > **Always 'try before you buy' and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Never use a 'rear facing' child seat in a seat with an airbag.**
- > **Never use a second hand seat. It may have been damaged in a crash.**
- > **Never let a passenger just hold a child. In a crash, the child would be thrown forward or crushed by the person holding them.**
- > **Check everyone is restrained before setting off**



In memory of Ben Brown, 31, who was killed on 30 July 1997 when a drunk driver, on a pub crawl, lost control on a winding road and crashed into the Brown family's car. The driver ran away, but was found six hours later and was still over the limit. Ben's wife, Jackie, injured in the crash, is left to cope with bringing up their two sons, Alfie and Noah (pictured with their dad), who were aged just one and two when Ben died. They were also injured in the crash.

Sober Up!

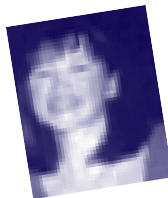
If you've drunk five pints, how long until you're safe to drive?

It depends (on the strength of the beer, your weight, sex, metabolism and other factors). If you're an 11-Stone man and finished drinking at midnight, you might be under the limit by midday. However, you're still likely to have alcohol in your system that could affect your driving.

- > **Drinking coffee, sleeping, or having a shower don't work. Only time.**
- > **Never drive if there's even a slim chance you are still 'under the influence'. That means medicinal and illegal drugs as well as alcohol.**
- > **Illegal drugs can stay in your system for a month.**
- > **Never drive on medicinal drugs if it says you shouldn't on the packet. Check with your GP or pharmacist if you're not sure.**
- > **Never drive on illegal drugs. Their effects are unpredictable and just as lethal. The Police can test for them.**

Hard fact: It takes at least one hour for every half pint of beer, glass of wine or measure of spirits to get out your system. You should count the hours from the time you finished your last drink. It could take much longer - everyone's metabolism is different.

- *Department for Transport*



In memory of Julia Wickenden, 22, a medical student at Liverpool University, who was killed by a speeding car driver going at nearly twice the speed limit, while cycling home on 5 September 1995. The driver was sent to prison for five years for 'causing death by dangerous driving'. Her father, Roy, says: "Julia is so sadly missed by all of us".

Slow Up!

In Towns and Villages

Most drivers break speed limits in towns and villages. We don't notice our speed creeping up, we feel pressured by other drivers to go faster, we're in a rush, or we think it doesn't matter.

- > **Breaking limits by only a little can be fatal. It's crucial to obey speed limits and drive appropriately in built-up areas.**
- > **Watch for limits. Check your speedo.**
- > **Never rush. Ring ahead if you're late and take it easy.**

On many derestricted rural roads, the 60mph limit is far too fast for safety. Fatal high-speed collisions with other vehicles, and single vehicle collisions with trees and walls, are often caused by taking bends too fast or by overtaking in dangerous places. Drivers also kill cyclists, horse riders and walkers on rural roads. These road users are particularly vulnerable when hidden round bends, or at night.

On Rural Roads

- > **Go very slow for sharp bends. Presume a bend is sharp if you don't know. Never 'straight line' a bend. If you can't follow the shape of the bend you may well be driving too fast.**
- > **Only overtake if you are 100% certain the road is clear and you can overtake within that distance without going too fast for the conditions or breaking the limit.**

In memory of Aaron Turner, 12, from Grimsby, Lincolnshire, who was killed by a speeding driver on 15 June 1999. Aaron was crossing the road outside his school to buy a can of coke during his lunch break. The driver was convicted of death by dangerous driving. Aaron's mum Sara says his family were shattered and broken by his death. Aaron leaves behind three sisters.



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Look Up! for Pedestrians and Cyclists

No matter how tightly a parent holds onto a child's hand, there is always a risk that the child will break away and run in front of your vehicle.

> In towns and villages, obey the speed limit and be aware of your surroundings.

Hard fact: the UK has one of the worst child pedestrian fatality rates in the whole of Europe - Department for Transport

In towns, cyclists are often killed waiting to turn left at junctions - they are crushed against railings or under the wheels of vehicles also turning left.

> Check your left wing mirror (nearside) before turning left. The larger your vehicle, the more careful you need to be.

> On rural roads, cyclists, horse riders and walkers are killed by drivers taking bends too fast and too tight.

> Slow down for bends – you don't know what's round them.

> Cyclists are more vulnerable at night. Take extra care.

In memory of Nicholas 'Jeff' Parish, 37, who was killed in London on his motorbike after six months in South America.

He was killed by a lorry pulling out from a side road. His mother Pamela says: "He was a handsome, intelligent man and an awesome snowboarder. He loved life." Nicholas leaves behind a 13 year old son Thomas, mother, family and friends, who are inconsolable at their loss.



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Look up! for Bikers

One of the biggest killers of motorbikers is drivers failing to spot them and pulling out on them. The biker is either killed in the impact or killed when they are thrown into the path of another vehicle.

- > **Particularly at junctions, look twice for bikers. 'Think once, think twice, think bike.'**
- > **Remember they are harder to spot because they are narrow and often wear dark colours.**
- > **Never presume that it will be safe to emerge from a junction after an approaching vehicle has passed. A biker could be hidden behind that vehicle.**
- > **Never set off from the side of a road or change lanes without checking your mirrors and looking over your shoulder for bikers.**
- > **Give bikers plenty of space. They may veer unexpectedly to avoid skidding on manhole covers or litter.**

In memory of Lisa Dodson, 21, who was killed on 10 March 1997 when her car was struck from the rear in thick fog by a lorry after she had stopped behind stationary traffic on the M42 in Worcestershire. Lisa was in no way to blame for the crash. The lorry driver pleaded guilty to dangerous driving. Lisa's parents have found it very hard to come to terms with her untimely and avoidable death.



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Wise Up

Be aware of dangerous road conditions that plague the UK – rain, ice, snow, fog, darkness and occasionally glaring sunshine. In these conditions it's harder to see. And when roads are slippery, it takes longer to stop.

- > **Be the first to switch on your headlights in gloomy conditions. Keep them on dipped beam unless you are on a rural road and you can't see anything coming towards you. Use your fog lights in fog.**
- > **Be the first to slow down. You must be able to spot other road users, such as pedestrians, and to stop within the distance you can see. At night, never assume there is no-one around.**
- > **Never hang on to someone else's tail lights.**
- > **In the wet, leave four seconds between you and the vehicle in front. In ice or snow, leave even more space and don't brake or steer sharply. Avoid driving if at all possible.**
- > **Keep your vehicle stocked with cloths, washer fluid, glass cleaner, de-icer, ice scraper and anti-freeze. Never drive with just a peep-hole to peer through. Clear all windows and mirrors.**

In memory of Livia Galli-Atkinson, 16, who was walking on a pavement near her home in Enfield on 12 January 1998 when a car mounted the pavement and drove along it without braking. It demolished a road sign and injured another pedestrian before hitting Livia, and dragging her to her death. The fact that Livia's death occurred on a pedestrian right of way has made it even more difficult for Livia's parents, George and Giulietta, and sister Bianca, to come to terms with her death.



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Buck Up

Deaths are caused by lapses of attention, such as answering a phone, reaching for a sweet or changing a CD. Driving is the most dangerous thing most of us do. It requires full concentration.

- > **Focus on your driving and the hazards ahead. Tell passengers to 'shhh' if necessary.**
- > **Drive calmly, and try not to get 'worked up' by other drivers. Stress is an illness and can damage your health.**
- > **If you feel distracted, or need to reach for something in the vehicle, you probably need a break. Stop.**
- > **If a medical condition, for example, pregnancy, a neurological condition, or flu, affects your concentration, don't drive.**

In memory of 12-year-old twins Jayne and Jodie Scrivens who were killed by a car while on their new bicycles on 11 September 1998. They were cycling home in single file along an unlit country lane near Featherstone in Staffordshire just as dusk was falling. The driver claimed not to have seen them and failed to stop. Jodie was killed at the scene and Jayne died later from her injuries. The girls left behind their parents Raymond and Jayne and brothers Jonathan and Kristian.



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Sharpen Up

Your eyesight can deteriorate without you knowing it. When did you last have your eyes tested? Get a test at least every two years, even if you think you have perfect eyesight. This applies to all ages, but is particularly important if you are over 50.

> If you wear glasses or lenses, never drive without them and keep a spare pair in your vehicle if you're forgetful.

Hard fact: One in ten drivers' eyesight is below the legal minimum standard. (By law, you must be able to read a number plate at 20.5 metres.) Specific eyesight problems can also affect your ability to see at night, or out of the corners of your eyes.

- Eyecare Information Service

In memory of Stephen Halliwell, 49, who died on 26 February 1997. Steve, who was in no way to blame for the crash, was driving along the A43 between Stamford and Corby. A speeding lorry travelling in the opposite direction swerved to avoid a car waiting at a junction and crashed into Steve's car, killing him instantly. Steve's death left his wife Janet devastated.



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Back Up

Give yourself braking space. You need it in a crisis. Count the seconds between you and the vehicle in front.

- > **Watch when the vehicle in front passes a static object (eg. a tree) and see how long it takes for you to drive past it. If you're any closer than 2 seconds, drop back.**
- > **Dropping back helps you to spot hazards and drive more smoothly.**
- > **When other drivers cut in front, drop back again.**
- > **The rule works at all speeds, not just on motorways. 'Only a fool breaks the two-second rule.'**

In memory of Arthur Smith, 79, who was killed in a head-on collision on the A16 near Boston, Lincolnshire on 26 March 1998. The driver of the other car was a business woman talking on her mobile phone. She moved out to overtake while driving at 70mph and smashed into Arthur's car. Arthur left behind a son and daughter and six grandchildren.



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Shut Up

Never use a mobile phone or pager while driving. Put your phone or pager on to message service. No conversation is more important than a life.

- > **Stop for messages and a break at least every two hours on long journeys.**
- > **Don't be tempted to use a hands-free set while driving. It can be just as distracting as hand-held.**

Hard fact: Research has found that hands-free phones can be as dangerous as hand-held phones. They distract your attention from the road. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

In memory of Dennis Pretlove, 66, killed on 22 November 1995 when his car was hit by a lorry with defective brakes. He was taking two disabled children to school when the crash happened at Newlands Corner, Surrey. He was killed instantly and one of the children was badly injured, as was the driver in the car behind. The grief felt by Dennis's wife Angela, and other members of his family, is immense.



Check Up

Defects such as worn tyres and blown light bulbs are common and can kill. To ensure your vehicle is always safe, you can't rely on the annual MOT. You must carry out essential, regular and easy checks yourself.

- > **To check your tyre tread, look for 'tread wear indicator bars' on your tyres. These are small bumps set into the main grooves which indicate the minimum legal tread. Change your tyres before your tread gets this low. The minimum legal tread is 1.6mm, but any less than about 3mm may be a problem in wet or icy conditions.**
- > **Buy a hand-held tyre pressure gauge from a motor-parts store and check your tyres' pressure every week when tyres are cold. The correct pressure will be written in your vehicle's hand book and sometimes on the inside of your vehicle's door.**
- > **Check tyres for cracks, worn patches and bulges. If you find any, consult your garage immediately. Also regularly check your lights are clean and bulbs aren't blown (ask a friend to help), your oil and water levels are ok, and your wiper blades aren't worn.**
- > **A pair of worn wiper blades could be fatal on a rainy day.**

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In memory of Leah Giles, 19, killed in a head-on collision on 9 September 1997 by a driver overtaking another car on the brow of a hill. Leah, driving back from her waitressing job, died immediately. The other driver later died in hospital. Leah leaves behind her parents, brother Matthew and both sets of grandparents



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Check up - Talk To Your Garage

As well as passing its MOT, it is essential to have your vehicle serviced at the frequency recommended by the manufacturer. However, be wary that your vehicle may run into trouble between services. For this reason, it is particularly important to ask your garage about the state of safety-critical components on your vehicle when it is being serviced. For example, if your garage notices that your brake pads are slightly worn, but not worn out, there's a chance they won't mention it to you even if your pads might need replacing before your next service.

If you ask the right questions, you will know the facts and can take appropriate action to be safe.

Hard fact: Incorrect tyre pressure can cost you cash. A tyre that is under-inflated by 20% uses up to 3% more fuel and wears out 25% quicker. In surveys, a quarter of car tyres are found to be dangerously worn or damaged - Tyre Industry Council

Useful Information

www.getinlane.com

Essential information for all new drivers.

www.thinkroadsafety.com

A UK Department for Transport site. Very informative, giving details of a wide variety of road safety issues. “Think” campaigns are designed to make people think about road safety and take on board any key messages.

www.dft.gov.uk

The detailed Department for Transport website is useful for statistics and research purposes.

www.rospa.co.uk/roadsafety

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents – information and advice on the prevention of accidents in all areas of life.

www.road-safety.org.uk

Road Safety Scotland – funded by the Scottish Government, designed to develop and co-ordinate Scotland-wide road safety initiatives and campaigns.

www.passplus.org.uk

Become a better driver, get cheaper insurance, SAVE MONEY!

www.iam.org.uk

Institute of Advanced Motorists – develop advanced skills that help make driving and riding a more enjoyable and rewarding experience.

www.roadsafetywestscotland.com

Essential information for all road users.

www.highwaycode.gov.uk

Stay up to date with the highway code.

www.brake.org

Road safety charity.

www.lbfire.org.uk

The website of Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service.

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service

The Scottish Government and road safety partners are committed to the outcome of safer road travel in Scotland and this vision is set out in the document ***Go Safe on Scotland's Roads - It's Everyone's Responsibility*** - *Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020*, published 2009, Scottish Government.

As set out in this Framework, Scotland's road safety vision is that there will be:

"A steady reduction in the numbers of those killed and those seriously injured, with the ultimate vision of a future where no-one is killed on Scotland's roads, and the injury rate is much reduced".

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service fully supports the aims and vision of the Scottish Government in relation to significantly reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on Scotland's roads.

The Service provides free road safety education to the communities it serves. This involves our Fire Crews visiting their local Secondary Schools to provide advice and instruction on the consequences of unsafe and irresponsible driving. This advice is predominantly aimed at S6 level as they are the closest to new/novice driver age. Other age groups ie S5/S4 Leavers are also targeted if required. Success of this approach is down to Secondary Schools embedding this education within their educational plans on an annual basis.

In addition to this, the Service will visit Independent Schools at Senior Level and Colleges of Further Education. Other age groups are also targeted based upon local risks.

The Service is fully committed to this and to continued partnership working with other road safety agencies to ensure that Scotland's road users are safer on Scotland's roads.

For more information in respect of road safety education, please contact:

Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service

Community Safety (Residential/Education)

Education Services

76-78 Lauriston Place

Edinburgh EH3 9DE

Tel: 0131 228 2401

Web: www.lbfire.org.uk



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