



Department of
Transport



Driving Techniques for Safer Drivers

A Senior's Guide to the Practical Driving Assessment

Senior's Practical Driving Assessment

There is no mandatory requirement for drivers aged 85 years and over who hold a car (C class) or motorcycle (R class) licence to complete an annual Practical Driving Assessment (PDA), unless one is recommended by a medical practitioner or required by Department of Transport (DoT).

Drivers aged 85 years and over who want to continue driving vehicles of a light rigid (LR) class or above, must complete a PDA in a vehicle of the highest class they wish to continue driving before they are able to renew their licence.

If a medical practitioner has concerns about a person's medical fitness to drive a motor vehicle and recommends undertaking a PDA, then preparing for that assessment will assist in ensuring a successful outcome. Whether you need to complete a PDA or not, you should find the following information useful.

Understand the road rules

All drivers must follow the same legal requirements, including abiding by the speed limit, obeying road signs and markings, signalling and giving way. The Drive Safe booklet provides information on Western Australia's road rules and therefore an understanding of this booklet is beneficial for all drivers.

Assess your level of skill

All drivers, regardless of age, need to regularly and honestly assess their own driving skills to keep themselves and others safe. Drivers who accurately assess their driving skills are more likely to adjust their driving habits and stay safe on the road for longer.

Assessing your own driving regularly will help you determine how safe you are on the road, and if there may be any issues affecting your driving.

You should regularly ask yourself these questions:

- Are you having trouble seeing signs, road markings, kerbs, medians, other vehicles, motor cyclists, cyclists and/or pedestrians, especially at night?
- Is it getting harder to judge gaps in the traffic when merging or turning at intersections?
- Does your mind sometimes wander when you drive?
- Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the traffic environment, particularly when turning at intersections?
- Are you sometimes confused as to who should give way?
- Have you found yourself driving too slowly and holding up the traffic flow?
- Are you often being 'honked' at by other motorists?
- Are you missing (or reacting more slowly to) unexpected hazards, such as pedestrians crossing the road?
- Are you feeling more tired while driving, even on short trips?
- Are you having trouble judging distance, resulting in a small collision in the car park or with stationary objects?
- Have you had a near miss or actual crash in the last three years where you were at fault?
- Has a friend or family member recently said they are worried about your driving?
- Do you sometimes get lost whilst driving on familiar routes?
- Has your doctor suggested you limit your driving or think about stopping driving altogether?

If you answered 'yes' to some of these questions it may indicate you may be at risk when driving.

You should consider talking to your doctor if you're concerned about your driving, to rule out any medical issues. Your doctor may also be able to discuss ideas for regulating your driving so you feel safer, such as not driving at night or during busy times of the day.

Consider private tuition

You might decide to get some more help from a professional driving instructor. They will let you know how your driving compares to the assessment standard.

When choosing a professional driving instructor or driving school, remember to consider more than just the price of lessons.

Ask the following questions to find out whether you will receive quality training:

- Each time you try something, will the instructor let you know how you are going and give you tips for correcting errors?
- If you keep making the same errors, will the instructor give you new ways of correcting it?

If you do not get this type of instruction, look around for another instructor who will provide you with a higher quality of training.

The assessment if required to do one.

What vehicle is used for the assessment?

You need to make your own arrangements for a suitable vehicle to complete the PDA in. The vehicle must be licensed and roadworthy, and must meet the minimum standard for the class you are being assessed for.

Light vehicles (C class only) must have a centrally mounted hand brake.

If you are required to undertake a motorcycle PDA, you must wear appropriate attire that consists of enclosed footwear, approved helmet, long trousers and a long-sleeved shirt or fully-sleeved jacket. Gloves and eye protection are also highly recommended.

What happens during the assessment?

During the assessment you will be asked to follow the directions given by the assessor and therefore may encounter a number of different traffic environments and situation. You should be familiar and confident with operating a vehicle approaching:

- traffic lights;
- GIVE WAY signs;
- STOP signs;
- right turns at intersections; and
- roundabouts.

You may not experience every one of these features during the assessment however, it is important that you understand the road rules that apply in each of these situations and act accordingly.

How does the Assessor judge?

During the assessment, the assessor will look at the components of good driving skills and at how well you put the components together. The assessor makes these checks while you are doing every day driving tasks as part of your assessment.

They will look at how well you:

- operate and guide the motor vehicle;
- put the road rules into practice;
- fit in with other traffic; and
- see and respond to hazards.

Scoring of the assessment is based on a matrix of 'fair' and 'poor' points, depending on the circumstances in which an error occurs, and takes into consideration, among other items:

- Steering (maintaining an accurate course)
- Gears (appropriate gear for speed)
- Observation (being aware of and acting appropriately to signs, markings and potential hazards)
- Turns (not cutting corners or over kerbs)
- Lane driving (signals, observation on lane changes)
- Intersections (approaches, stopping, giving way, traffic lights)
- Right of way (not hindering or interfering with traffic)
- Signals (appropriate and correct signal used)
- Railway crossings (checking, stopping correctly)

What will the Assessor look for?

As you would expect, there are some serious faults that can cause you to fail. They include all of the offences for which you can incur fines and/or demerit points, together with things that clearly indicate you may not be competent to drive unaccompanied.

You will automatically fail the PDA if any of the following things occur:

- your assessor has to intervene or give you assistance to avoid a potentially dangerous situation;
- you disobey a regulatory sign;
- you speed;
- you disobey any traffic regulation that immediately or potentially threatens safety;
- you drive without wearing your seat belt;
- you fail to respond to a crisis or potential crisis that would normally be anticipated by an experienced driver;
- you cause a crisis or potential crisis;
- you refuse to attempt any part of the assessment; or
- you refuse to follow a reasonable direction given by the assessor.

The assessor will not proceed with an assessment or stop an assessment if:

- in the judgment of the assessor, you are not mentally or physically fit for the assessment;
- your vehicle is not roadworthy;
- your vehicle is not appropriate for the class or type of licence assessment;
- the vehicle does not have a centrally positioned handbrake, or dual controls;
- your vehicle breaks down during the assessment;
- you offer a bribe or inducement; or
- in the judgment of the assessor, something that would not normally be present during a test adversely affects the authenticity, fairness, reliability or validity of the assessment.

How long does it take?

The driving part of the assessment for a car (C class) will take around 20 minutes. Assessments for other classes will take longer, approximately 35 minutes.

When you return to the assessment site your assessor will give you feedback on how you went.

What happens at the end of the assessment?

When you arrive back at the assessment site the assessor will tally up your score to see if you have passed the assessment.

If you PASS

The assessor will note that you have passed the assessment on the form and give you a copy. The assessor will also tell you any areas of your driving where you did not meet the standard.

If you don't PASS

The assessor will note that you have not passed the assessment on the form and give you a copy. The assessor will explain to you which areas of your driving did not meet the standard. The assessment form will clearly show you and your supervisor where your performance needs to improve.

The assessor will also give you some specific information on how you can improve your driving before you take the assessment again.

More information, including steps on booking and taking a practical driving assessment can be found at www.transport.wa.gov.au/dvs

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