



# The Driver's Manual



flourish 

supporting driver independence in later life







# flourish

## *Welcome*

Driving is a pretty risky business. Whether it is youthful inexperience or factors affecting our health and mobility in later life, we all face challenges to staying safe on the road.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that more mature drivers are among the safest behind the wheel but they are also more prone to serious injury or worse when involved in a road traffic crash than younger motorists.

Many of us have been quite thorough in planning for retirement, ensuring that we have the means and the health to make great use of the years ahead, unencumbered by the need to turn out for work each day. Ensuring that your retirement is the best it could be has taken a good deal of preparation; it would be a great shame to have it spoiled by something you might easily have avoided.

Invest a bit of time for your safety and security.

We are working with charities, health professionals, local authority road safety teams and the emergency services to ensure older drivers feel they have a positive driving future.

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# Your health

## Eyesight



Most of us recognise that our eyesight isn't quite as sharp as it used to be, but because the change is extremely gradual we may not be aware by just how much it has deteriorated. We are only aware of the degree to which our eyesight has changed when we can compare it with healthy eyesight which means that it is vitally important to have our eyesight checked regularly.

The Highway Code expects drivers to be able to read a number plate from 20 metres away (66 feet), which is a test you can easily try out for yourself and remember: always wear prescription glasses when advised to use them for driving.

Research has shown that there are other age related changes in how we see and respond to traffic. Driving at night, recovering from the glare of bright lights and judging the speed of approaching vehicles all become more challenging for more mature drivers.



## Hearing



Hearing loss can be an issue, for example, we are less sensitive to the sounds of other traffic, or perhaps we fail to notice the siren of an approaching ambulance if our windows are closed.

While we tend to use our sense of hearing less than our eyesight, it remains an important sense for the driver who wants to be alert to everything around them.

If you are worried that your hearing is not quite what it used to be, please consult with your doctor and if you wear a hearing aid keep it switched on when driving.

## Medication



Many medicines can affect your alertness or concentration and therefore your ability to drive so it is vital to take care if you are taking medication. It is true that a majority of people would never contemplate driving under the influence of alcohol, however, we can be less discerning about the effect of medication on our bodies.

Whether it is an over-the-counter product like cough medicine or a hay fever remedy, up to a course of treatment prescribed by your GP, all drugs should come with a warning if they have any adverse side effects.

If the medicine is likely to lead to you feeling, drowsy, nauseous, dizzy or fatigued you should exercise great care about driving. If you have any concerns speak to your local pharmacist or consult with your GP.

## Mobility



We tend not to think of driving as a physical activity, but the requirements for steering, changing gear, using foot pedals or applying the handbrake require a good range of movement and strength in much of the body.

If you are experiencing stiff joints, limited head movement, arthritis or muscle pain, these can significantly reduce our ability to move in ways that are necessary for safe driving. Simple exercise and keep fit programmes tailored for your needs are often available through your local leisure centre. You may benefit from talking to your doctor about options to help with maintaining your mobility.

A driving instructor may also be able to tell you about accessories and aids which can make driving easier, such as mirror extensions.



## Fatigue



Long journeys are tiring for anyone and driver fatigue is a factor in around one in five crashes on the motorway.

Tiredness at the wheel can reduce your reaction time, a critical element of safe driving. It can reduce vigilance, alertness and concentration so that the ability and skill needed to drive is impaired. The speed at which information is processed and the quality of decision-making is also reduced by lack of sleep.

A strong coffee and a short 15 minute power nap can make a difference, but the only real solution is sleep.

There are ways you can help yourself:

- ☞ Look for an alternative - jump on a train or a bus
- ☞ Get a good night's sleep before you travel
- ☞ Avoid making long overnight trips
- ☞ Plan your journey making sure you have got time for breaks



## Your comfort



Your safety is influenced by your comfort. If you are experiencing discomfort whilst driving you are likely to have more trouble concentrating on the road around you. Sitting in the correct position also affects your ability to have control over the vehicle and how the safety systems (seatbelts, airbags etc.) will work to protect you in case of an incident. Here are some tips:

- ✔ Do you have a clear line of sight over your steering wheel?
- ✔ Your eyes should be at least 8cms (3ins) above the wheel
- ✔ There should be at least 25cms (10ins) between your chest and the front airbag or steering wheel
- ✔ Make sure your seats are adjusted properly
- ✔ Ask a friend to help you adjust the head restraint so that the cushion is at the centre of the back of your head – not against your neck
- ✔ You should be able to reach the pedals without having to stretch too far and you must be able to push the brake pedal down as far as it can go
- ✔ Your seat belt should hold you firmly and comfortably and you should easily be able to buckle and unbuckle it
- ✔ You should be able to turn your head to look over your shoulders when changing lanes or reversing
- ✔ You should be able to sit comfortably without stiffness or pain in your body
- ✔ You should be able to get in and out of the car easily.





# See for yourself

Over time we can develop bad habits and also experience a deterioration in our driving performance. Often changes occur very gradually, and it is not until we stop and reflect on our recent driving experience that we are able to identify where we might have witnessed a change.

An easy step can be to ask family or friends who travel with you regularly if they have noticed you doing any of the following:

- Not indicating adequately
- Lane jumping
- Pulling out too close to oncoming traffic
- Finding it hard to concentrate or driving while tired
- Map reading and driving at the same time
- Struggling to read road signs sufficiently in advance

Another option is to have a go with our free self assessment tool, that will ask you a number of questions about your driving and give you feedback in the form of a short report. Please visit [www.saferroads.org/flourish/](http://www.saferroads.org/flourish/)





## Time to stop?

As you get older it is vitally important for your emotional life to keep doing things you enjoy – going out, visiting friends, the library or shopping.

There will come a point when you start to think about stopping driving – a decision which will take a great deal of courage.

It is never too early to start planning for this moment – painful though it might be, planning for the change will make the decision less painful.

All research shows that people who take a realistic long-term view adjust to the change in their life far more smoothly than those who make, or are forced to make, a sudden decision.

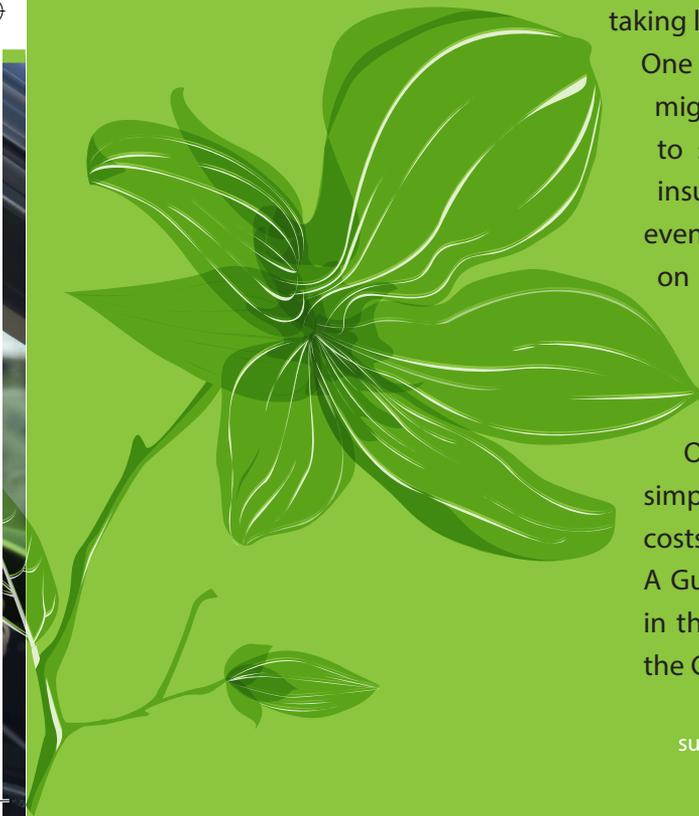
As you get older you may find that you are already cutting down on the number of miles you drive per week, driving less at night and keeping to familiar roads. You might also be starting to use public transport more or taking lifts from family and friends.

One aspect of giving up driving might be that you are able to save money. High costs of insurance and fuel mean that even if you have to spend out on taxis and public transport you end up with more cash in your pocket than you might expect.

On the next page there is a simple form to help you work out costs of owning a car.

A Guide to Alternatives is found in the section called 'Away from the Car'

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# Vehicle costs



Is it often more expensive than you think to own and drive a car and for many people it is the financial burden of keeping a car that causes them to consider a change.

If you haven't thought about your vehicle costs recently, the table below is designed to help you consider whether there are alternatives that would leave you better off financially.

Write down how much you spend and get some idea of the cost of owning a car.

For items changed less frequently (like tyres) estimate the cost of new ones and divide by the number of years between changing.

Once you have added everything up you can see how much it costs you to get around.

<b>Cost of Ownership</b>	
Purchase Cost / Loan Payments / Depreciation	£
Car Insurance	£
Breakdown Cover	£
Road Tax (Vehicle Excise Licence)	£
<b>Regular Operating Expenses</b>	
Petrol	£
Regular Parking Fees	£
<b>Maintenance and Servicing</b>	
Annual Service	£
MOT	£
Oil	£
Tyres and Brakes	£
Wiper Blades	£
Cleaning	£
<b>Total</b>	£

If you are uncertain about the costs of some of these items, here are some guideline prices:

- MOT Fee = £55
- 1 litre of car engine oil = £10
- 1 bottle of washer fluid = £4
- 1 replacement headlight bulb = £7
- 1 new (mid-range) car tyre = £80
- 1 new wiper blade = £10
- 1 bottle car polish = £8
- 1 bottle car shampoo = £5







## *Away from the car*

Of course there are plenty of options away from the car with many turning back to cycling after years away from the bike, while others prefer to walk or take public transport.

### **ON YOUR BIKE**

Getting out on the bike brings with it many benefits; improving strength, balance and heart health. If you think that cycling could offer a good alternative for you there are a number of things that might be worth considering:

# Driver Assessments

Experienced Driver Assessments are aimed at helping motorists think about driving issues and provide drivers with some advice and techniques which might help them. These courses are inexpensive and the sessions are delivered by a specially selected and fully qualified Approved Driving Instructor (ADI). They consist of an on-road assessment, lasting about 45 minutes, in the driver's own car on roads they are familiar with.

During the session the driver will get the chance to talk through any driving issues that concern them. Disabled drivers are welcome as long as they have a suitably adapted car.

Following the session drivers will receive a verbal report from the ADI and, within a short time, a written one. If the instructor has any specific concerns they will raise them with the driver. At this point he or she may decide to share them with family, friends or their GP, but they will not be reported to the DVLA. For further help and advice the patient can be referred to Age UK for counselling.

On the day:

- ☛ you will need to show a valid UK driving licence
- ☛ you will need proof that the car is taxed, insured and roadworthy
- ☛ you will be asked to read a vehicle number plate from 66ft (20 metres)

**The right bike** – you might have an old bike in the shed from years gone by, but is that the best bike for you right now? Bike design has changed a great deal in recent years with a wider choice of light weight frames, gearing options and even electrically assisted bikes now on the market; and some great value offers too. Thinking about the sort of journeys you might make, the kind of terrain you will cycle on and what is a comfortable position to ride in will all inform you about the best choice of bike for you. A good bike shop will be more than happy to help you think through the options.

**The right training** – if you are a little unsure about returning to cycling, the option to attend an adult cycle training session can provide a huge confidence boost. Many local authorities offer these sessions, contact your local road safety team for more information.



## WALKING

Walking may seem like an inconvenience compared to hopping in the car, but according to AgeUK "Regular exercise not only keeps you fit, but also increases flexibility, boosts your mood and safeguards your health." Here's a rundown of 8 health reasons why walking might just be a better option for you:

**1. It strengthens your heart**

*Regular walking has been shown to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke, lowering cholesterol levels and providing a workout for your heart.*

**2. It reduces risk of disease**

*The Textbook of Diabetes says that regular activities, such as walking, can reduce the risk by 26% and physical activity is associated with a reduction in risk of some cancers.*

**3. It keeps weight in check**

*As we get older and our metabolism slows down, we are more likely to put on weight. Putting one foot in front of the other is one of the easiest ways to burn off some of those calories.*

**4. It's good for your brain...**

*Dementia affects one in 14 people over 65. We know being active has a protective effect on brain function and regular exercise reduces dementia risk by up to 40 per cent.*

**5. ...And your bones**

*Walking stimulates and strengthens bones, increasing their density. It also helps maintain healthy joints staving off conditions such as arthritis.*

**6. It boosts your vitamin D levels**

*Vitamin D is a nutrient that plays a big role in everything from bone health to immunity. Walking outside in daylight boosts your body's stores of vitamin D.*

**7. It gives you energy**

*A brisk walk is one of the best natural energizers around; boosting circulation and increasing oxygen supply to each and every cell in your body, helping you to feel more alert and alive.*

**8. It makes you happy**

*Getting active releases feel-good endorphins into the bloodstream, reducing stress and anxiety.*



## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Many parts of the county are well served with public transport routes; whether bus or rail. If you are eligible for a free bus pass then this also means that you can travel free of charge after 9.30am on weekdays and on all weekends and bank holidays.

If taking the train is the preferred option for you, then don't forget that a senior railcard is available to anyone over the age of 60 and will give you one third off the majority of rail fares. These can be purchased from [www.senior-railcard.co.uk](http://www.senior-railcard.co.uk)

Whether looking to travel by bus or train, you might want to use an online journey planner to make life easier. [www.travelfor.co.uk/Berkshire/](http://www.travelfor.co.uk/Berkshire/) is a single website that will give you information on local buses and trains; including timetables from your nearest bus stop.

## LIFT SHARING

Even when using the car, think about sharing lifts or sharing the driving on longer journeys, it's a great way to save money, make the journey more sociable and less tiring.

# More information

For more information on road safety related issues, the **Safer Roads** team are working with your local authority to help you get access to the support and training that you need.

Please visit [www.saferroads.org](http://www.saferroads.org) for more information or contact [information@saferroads.org](mailto:information@saferroads.org)

If it some time since your refreshed you understanding on the rules of the road, you can take a look at the highway code online, or purchase a copy from most good news agents and booksellers ([www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code](http://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code)).

If you have reached the point at which you need to renew your driving licence, you can visit [www.gov.uk/renew-driving-licence-at-70](http://www.gov.uk/renew-driving-licence-at-70) for more information on how to proceed.

If you are interested in further training with an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI), you can start by searching the register here: [www.gov.uk/find-driving-schools-and-lessons](http://www.gov.uk/find-driving-schools-and-lessons)

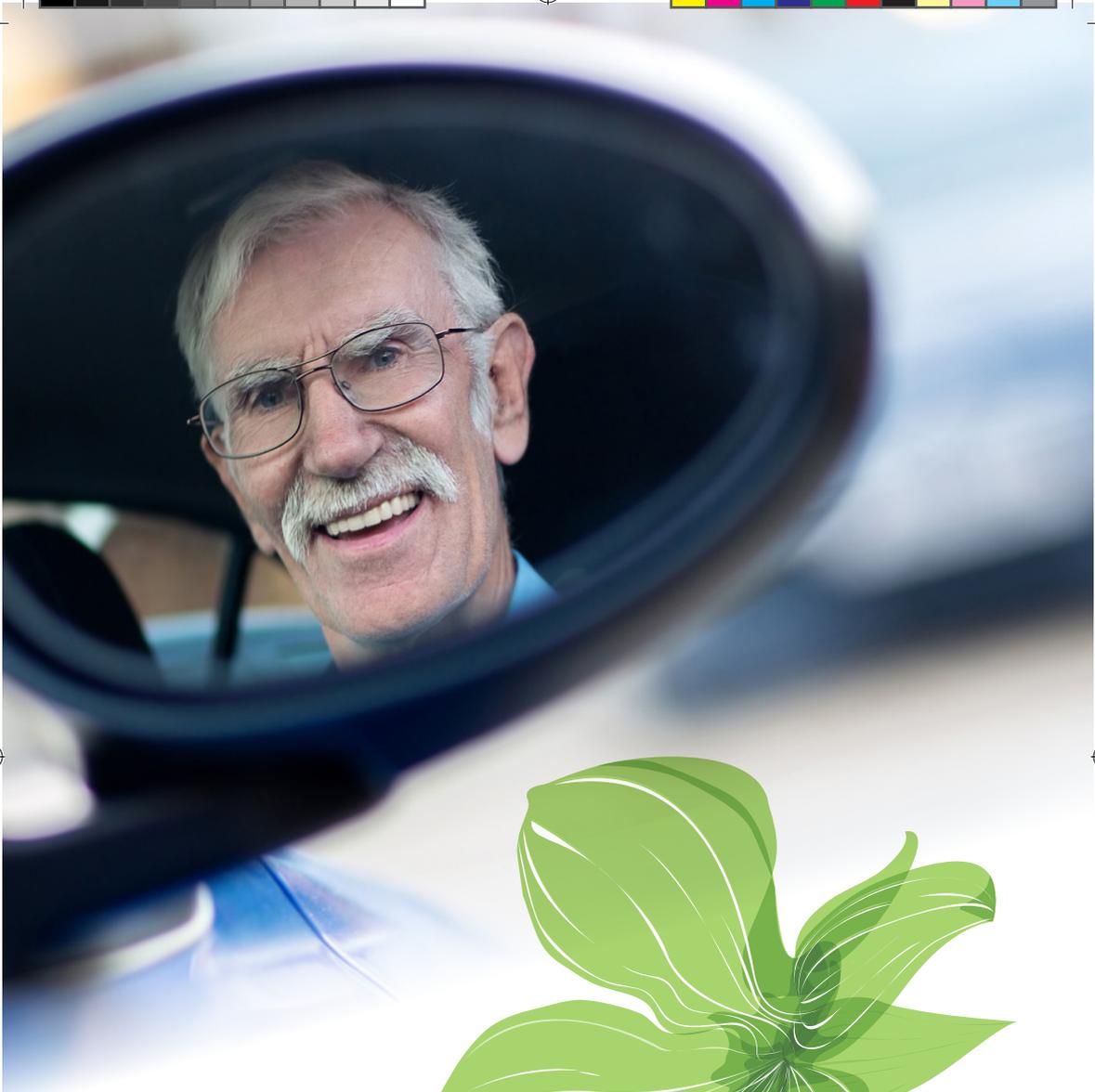
For more information on age related issues, including health and wellbeing, travel, finance and care support, as well as driving, please visit AgeUK ([www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)).

Walking for Health is an organisation that helps you to get walking and stay walking in later life ([www.walkingforhealth.org.uk](http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk)).

Advice on vehicle aids to assist with transfers and mobility, as well as advice on specialist training can be found at [www.mobility-centres.org.uk](http://www.mobility-centres.org.uk)

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