

PART B - First steps to safe driving

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Seat belts and child restraints

Seat belts

Seat belts have two purposes:

1. Seat belts prevent the occupant hitting the dashboard/ windscreen or from being thrown from the vehicle in the event of a collision (injuries to the head and chest are the most lethal in car collisions).
2. Seat belts spread the shock of a crash over larger and stronger body areas, reducing the shock to safer levels.

Most front seat belts have “inertia locking” devices. Under normal driving conditions belted occupants can move easily but in an emergency, such as a panic stop or collision, the belt automatically locks to hold the occupant in position.



Photograph courtesy of Safe-in-Sound

Wearing your seat belt correctly

Some of the earlier seat belt designs need to be adjusted to suit the user to provide adequate protection.

Make sure that:

- the belt is done up tightly so that both the lap and sash sections hold you firmly;
- the lap section of the belt is across your hips, not across your abdomen;
- the belt is flat and without twists; and
- the buckle is at your side, not across your body.

Seat belts and other restraints must be used whenever they are available. If a seat belt is not fitted to a seat occupied by a passenger but one is available alongside, then the passenger is required to move to that position and use the seat belt.

Unrestrained animals within the vehicle and loose objects such as groceries can be dangerous during a collision. Animals should be securely restrained and loose objects should be placed in the boot.

You may not have to use a seat belt in the following circumstances:

- If you have a medical or physical condition, which stops you wearing a seat belt and have a certificate from a medical practitioner.
- If you are doing delivery work that does not entail travelling at more than 25 km/h between stops.

Seat belt use by pregnant women

The medical profession supports the use of seat belts by pregnant women since the most frequent cause of death in vehicle accidents for an unborn child is the death of the mother.

Child restraints

The driver of a vehicle is legally responsible to ensure that any child travelling in that vehicle is restrained in an approved child restraint or seatbelt.

Children are especially vulnerable if they are not protected by the use of a seat belt or an approved child restraint. During a crash or even sudden braking, unrestrained children may be hurled around the interior of the vehicle.

The Australian Road Rules legislation requires all children under 7 years old to be restrained in a suitable approved child restraint that is properly fastened and adjusted.

All passengers who are at least 7 years old or older but under 16 years old must be restrained in a suitable approved child restraint which is properly fastened and adjusted or occupy a seating position that is fitted with a suitable seat belt and wear the seat belt properly fastened and adjusted.

Refer to the New Child Restraint Rules page 18 and Australian Road Rule 266.

Child restraint standards

Child restraints must meet Australian Standards and must display an AS/NZS 1754 symbol.

Infant Restraints



Photograph courtesy of Safe-n-Sound

For babies up to 9kg, from birth to 6 months approximately and 700mm maximum length.

Convertible Restraints



Photograph courtesy of Safe-n-Sound

For babies up to 12kg rearward facing (refer restraint baby weight specifications) and children 8 to 18kg forward facing.

Child Car Seats



Photograph courtesy of Safe-n-Sound

For children 8 to 18kg. From about 6 months old to 4 years old.

Child Harness



Photograph courtesy of Safe-n-Sound

Suitable for children 14 to 32kg. From about 4 years old to 10 years old.

Booster Seats



Photograph courtesy of Safe-n-Sound

Suitable for children from 14 to 26kg. Approximately 4 to 7 years. A booster seat can be used in conjunction with a child harness or a properly adjusted lap sash seat belt.

Carrying passengers

The carrying of unrestrained passengers of any age in the load area (eg station wagons) is prohibited.

The carrying of additional unrestrained passengers of any age after all seating positions with a seat belt are occupied is prohibited.

Drivers are responsible for making sure all passengers are using a seat belt or child restraint.

Technical advice

If you need advice on fitting restraints to your vehicle, you may contact the Technical Standards Office of Road User Services, or the Infant Restraint Loan Service.

Technical Standards Office Ph: 6207 7010

KIDSAFE Infant Restraint Loan Service
Ph: 6290 2244

Remember:

- ALWAYS use a restraint, even for short trips.
- NEVER put a child into a seat belt with an adult. In a crash the weight of an adult's body will crush the child.
- NEVER put two children into one seat belt.

Child restraint rules

A child less than 6 months old must be restrained in a suitable approved rearward facing child restraint or capsule that is properly fastened and adjusted.

A child who is at least 6 months old but less than 4 years old must be restrained in either a suitable approved rearward facing or forward facing child restraint that is properly fastened and adjusted.

A child who is at least 4 years old but less than 7 years old must be restrained in either a suitable approved forward facing child restraint which is properly fastened and adjusted or a suitable approved booster seat.

A child who is less than 4 years old must not be placed in the front row of seats of a vehicle with two or more rows of seats.

A child who is at least 4 years old but less than 7 years old must not be placed in the

front row of seats of a vehicle with two or more rows of seats unless all other seating positions are occupied by a passenger who is also less than 7 years old.

The risks of alcohol and drugs on driving

Alcohol, drugs and driving do NOT mix. Any driver who combines alcohol, drugs and driving runs the risk of:

- injury and even death;
- damage to his/her vehicle and other property;
- loss of income (and perhaps his/her job); and
- loss of insurance cover since most insurance companies have a disclaimer clause - if you are involved in an accident and convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the insurance company may not pay for any damage or injury.

Legal penalties

Legal penalties for driving over the prescribed alcohol concentration (BAC) limit and/or for taking drugs include:

- possible fine or imprisonment; and
- immediate licence suspension even for a first time offender.

In summary, drivers who drink or take drugs are liable to Court imposed penalties, and also run the risk of personal financial ruin, injury and even death.

**SO – DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE
DO NOT TAKE DRUGS AND DRIVE**

The legal limit

A zero alcohol concentration (BAC) applies to a person who holds a

- learner driver licence;
- provisional driver licence;
- probationary driver licence;
- restricted driver licence; or
- foreign driver licence that is not recognised as corresponding to an ACT driver licence.

Or a driver of a:

- public passenger vehicle including a taxi, bus, hire car and restricted hire car;
- dangerous goods vehicle;
- heavy motor vehicle, that has a GVM or GCM of more than 15 tonnes.

Or a person:

- who is learning to drive a heavy vehicle over 4.5 tonnes GVM;
- who is a driving instructor providing driving instruction or assessment to the driver of a vehicle;
- who is a heavy vehicle driver assessor providing driver assessment to the driver of a vehicle over 4.5 tonnes GVM;
- who is a driving supervisor of a learner driver.

In any other case, the legal limit is UNDER 0.05.

The higher the BAC level, the greater the likelihood of being involved in a crash, and of that crash resulting in serious injury or death.

Mixing alcohol, drugs and medication

Driving under the influence of drugs is dangerous, and is an offence.

Tranquillisers and sedatives, antihistamines, marijuana, amphetamines, heroin and LSD can all affect driving skills for considerable periods (eg. at least 6 hours after a marijuana high). Keep in mind that drugs such as marijuana, heroin and LSD are illegal.

The effect of drugs is multiplied when combined with alcohol and the potential for being involved in a crash is sharply increased. The effect of marijuana on the nervous system has much in common with alcohol. For example, research clearly shows that marijuana affects both the distance you can see, and your ability to react quickly.

In the case of legal drugs, you should check the label on the medication container to see if the medication is likely to cause drowsiness, OR ask your doctor or pharmacist about your medication before drinking alcohol or driving.

Warning signs after taking medication

You should not be driving if you are taking a medication and you feel:

- drowsy;
- dizzy, light headed, faint or shaky;
- aggressive;
- nauseous; or
- have blurred or double vision.

Effects of alcohol on the body

Alcohol in the body is not easily removed.

It takes the body about one hour to get rid of the alcohol in one standard drink and this rate of elimination cannot be sped up.

This means that once a person has reached the legal limit (under 0.05) it only requires one standard drink per hour thereafter to stay at that level.

Once alcohol is in the bloodstream its effect on the brain cannot be prevented or controlled.

Black coffee, sleep, cold showers and exercise may alter the way you feel but cannot change your BAC.

Generally people will exceed 0.05 if they drink more than:

- two standard drinks in the first hour.

OR

- three standard drinks spread over two hours;

OR

- four standard drinks spread over three hours;

and so on.

A 50 kg person will take fewer drinks to exceed the limit than a 100 kg person.

Standard Drinks

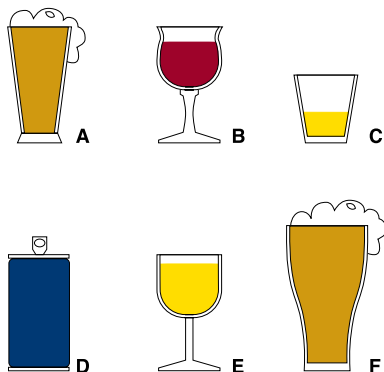
Standard drinks all contain about the same amount of alcohol. Be aware that 'low alcohol' and 'boutique beers' vary in alcoholic content. Most low alcohol beers and wines are about $\frac{2}{3}$ the strength of ordinary beers and wines.

MEN – think about your 3rd drink.

WOMEN – think about your 2nd drink.

Examples of Standard Drinks

(containing 10 grams of alcohol)



- A one middy of full strength beer (285ml)
- B approx one port glass of fortified wine (60ml)
- C approx one nip of spirits (30ml)
- D one can of low alcohol beer (375ml)
- E Approx one small glass of table wine (100ml)
- F Approx one schooner of low alcohol beer (425ml)

Alcohol can impair driving and riding skills even when the blood alcohol content is less than the legal limit.

Alcohol affects skills in the following ways:

- a false sense of security develops;
- the driver/rider remains unaware of the level of driving/riding impairment;
- concentration deteriorates;
- speed is underestimated;
- reactions become slower;

- distances become harder to judge;
- range and breadth of vision are reduced;
- coping with bright lights becomes increasingly difficult; and
- steering errors are corrected more slowly, and less competently.

Alcohol impairment varies

The level of impairment from person to person depends on:

- the metabolism and size of the individual;
- the rate of consumption and type of alcoholic drink consumed;
- whether food has been eaten before or during the period of alcohol consumption;
- tiredness, mood, health;
- ingestion of other drugs; and
- many other factors.

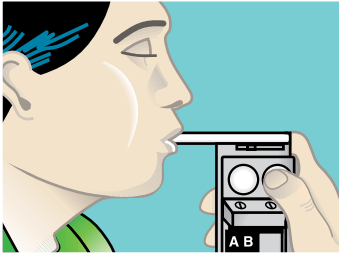
What is Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

Alcohol concentration (BAC) is a measurement of the amount of alcohol in a person's blood or breath. It is measured in grams of alcohol per 100mL of blood if the analysis is based on a sample of blood or grams of alcohol in 210L of breath if the analysis is based on a sample of breath measured by a breath analysis instrument.

Different alcohol concentration (BAC) restrictions may apply in other jurisdictions. ACT Learner and Provisional drivers must ensure that they comply with the restrictions applicable in the state or territory in which they are driving.

Random breath testing (RBT) and drug testing

Random breath testing and drug testing are used in the ACT to help reduce deaths and injuries on our roads by discouraging people from drinking and/or taking drugs and driving.



Random breath testing

Police randomly screen test drivers for both alcohol and drugs at the roadside. If you fail a screening test, you will be taken into custody by a Police Officer for a test on a breath or drug analysis instrument. Undertaking a police breath test requires you to provide a sample of your breath by blowing into a breath analysis instrument. A drug test requires you to provide a sample of your saliva for testing using a drug analysis instrument. If you fail a drug or alcohol test, or refuse to take a test, you will be prosecuted for a drink or drug driving offence and must complete an alcohol and drug awareness course.

If you have been drinking or taking drugs - DO NOT DRIVE.

- **Get a lift with a driver who has not been drinking or taking drugs**
- **Catch a taxi or bus**
- **Stay the night**

If you consumed a large amount of alcohol the night before, you will probably still be over the legal limit to drive the following morning.

Using a mobile telephone

It is an offence to use a mobile phone which is held in the hand while driving a vehicle. This includes sending or reading text messages, video messages and emails. You can only use a mobile phone to make or receive phone calls if your phone has a hands free connection or is secured in a commercially designed cradle. If your phone is not fitted with a hands free connection or secured in a cradle, you must stop and park the vehicle before answering or making a phone call.

Vehicle Security

Before leaving a vehicle, you must turn off the engine, apply the parking brake and leave it in gear or in the 'park' position. Unless the vehicle is occupied by a person 16 years or older, you must remove the key from the ignition. This rule applies regardless of whether you are leaving the vehicle for a few moments or for an extended period of time.

Demerit points scheme

Drivers within the ACT who are guilty of a traffic offence will incur a traffic fine and possible demerit points.

With the introduction of a *National Points Demerit Exchange Scheme*, points incurred interstate will accumulate against your licence in your home State or Territory.

- The holder of a learner driver licence, who incurs 12 or more demerit points within a three year period, will have his or her learner driver licence suspended for three months.

- The holder of a provisional driver licence, who incurs four or more demerit points within a three year period, will have his or her provisional driver licence suspended for three months.
- A provisional licence holder, who has held their licence for at least six months and who has completed the *Road Ready Plus (P-Off) Course* will have their provisional driver licence suspended for three months if they incur eight or more demerit points.
- The holder of a full or heavy vehicle driver licence, who incurs 12 to 15 demerit points within a three year period, will attract a three months suspension. Incurring 16 to 19 demerit points results in a four months suspension, and 20 or more demerit points results in a five months suspension. The licensee may elect for a good behaviour period of 12 months instead. A driver who incurs two or more demerit points during a good behaviour period is suspended for twice the period of the original suspension.
- The holder of a probationary driver licence, who incurs two or more demerit points, will attract cancellation of that licence and will be disqualified from holding a licence for six months.
- The holder of a restricted driver licence who incurs two or more demerit points, will attract cancellation of that licence.

Remember, your licence is a privilege – not a right.

ACT Points Demerit Schedule

OFFENCE	PENALTY POINTS
Exceeding the speed limit by 45 km/h or more	6 Points
Exceeding the speed limit by more than 30 km/h but not more than 45 km/h	4 Points
Exceeding the speed limit by more than 15 km/h but not more than 30 km/h	3 Points
Exceeding the speed limit by 15 km/h or less	1 Point
Using a handheld mobile phone while driving	3 Points
Disobeying a traffic signal	3 Points
Disobeying major regulatory traffic control sign or Police directing traffic	3 Points
Failing to give way	3 Points
Failing to stop and/or give way at pedestrian, school or level crossing	3 Points
Driving with unrestrained passengers under legal age including children and infants	3 Points
Driving on wrong side of double lines or divided highway	3 Points
Driving without seat belt	3 Points
Motorcyclists not wearing a helmet	3 Points
Careless/negligent driving	3 Points
Improper overtaking and passing	2 Points
Turning or stopping without signalling	2 Points
Turning improperly	2 Points
Failing to keep left	2 Points
Failure to dip headlamps	1 Point
Following too closely	1 Point
Driving at night without headlamps on	1 Point

FATIGUE

What is driver fatigue?

Fatigue is a term used to describe the feeling of being 'sleepy', 'tired' or 'exhausted'. It affects everyone no matter how experienced a driver you are.

This is your body's way of telling you that you need to stop and rest or sleep.

The best way to avoid driver fatigue is to make sure you have plenty of sleep before you set off. The only way to treat driver fatigue once you have already started driving is to stop and rest until you are refreshed.

Facts about fatigue

Fatigue is associated with the hours when you would normally be asleep. The risk of having a fatal fatigue crash is four times greater between the hours of 10pm and 6am because this is when your body is programmed to sleep.

Your circadian rhythms (natural sleep pattern) cause this type of fatigue and there is nothing you can do to stop it. So if you drive at night or early in the morning your risk of driver fatigue is increased.

The average person needs about eight hours of sleep each night to function normally, while teenagers need even more.

Fatigue is caused by the length of time you have been awake. After being awake for 17 hours the risk of driver fatigue is greatly increased.

The risk of driver fatigue increases with the amount of time you have spent driving. To reduce fatigue you should aim to stop for 15 minutes every two hours.

But remember, the only cure for fatigue is a good night's sleep.

Signs of driver fatigue

Driver fatigue severely impairs your concentration and judgement; it slows your reaction time. In fact, some of the effects of fatigue are as dangerous as the effects of alcohol on your driving. Twenty four hours without sleep has the same effect on your driving ability as having a BAC of .1 which is twice the legal limit for a fully licensed driver.

As you drive, watch for the early warning signs of driver fatigue:

- Yawning
- Eyes feeling sore or heavy
- Poor concentration
- Vision starting to blur
- Restlessness
- Drowsiness
- Starting to 'see things'
- Slow reactions
- Boredom
- Feeling irritable
- Making fewer and larger steering corrections
- Failing to see road signs
- Feeling stiff or cramped
- Cannot maintain constant speed
- Having difficulty staying within the lane.

If you feel tired and you notice these signs it is time to STOP. REVIVE. SURVIVE.

Regular breaks every two hours will help avoid fatigue.

Some of the 'signs' of driver fatigue are very dangerous and you should stop before you are unable to avoid wandering over lane lines or seeing things. The only cure is a good night's sleep.

Being part of the Safe System means only driving when you are in full control of your vehicle. Sometimes it is not easy to choose not to drive. You might not have a passenger to take over, your passenger may be just as tired, it might not feel like a safe place to stop, you might have important commitments to meet. In short, you may feel like you have no choice but to drive.

The best thing you can do is allow time in your schedule for a good night's sleep and plenty of rest breaks on long drives. If you find that you have developed a pattern of driving while fatigued, think about how you could improve your routine or whether you have alternative ways of travelling to where you are going.

Tips on avoiding driver fatigue

- Get plenty of sleep before starting off.
- Avoid starting a long drive at the end of the day.
- Avoid driving between 10 pm and 6 am or when you would normally be asleep.
- Share the driving if you can.

- Aim to stop for 15 minutes every two hours.
- Pull over and stop when you notice the warning signs of fatigue.
- Have light snacks rather than fatty foods.
- Avoid too much coffee or sweet soft drinks.
- Drink plenty of water – dehydration can cause fatigue.
- Stay away from alcohol at all costs.
- Stop before you're tired.

Microsleep

A microsleep is a brief and unintended loss of consciousness.

It is characterised by head snapping, nodding or closing your eyes for more than a couple of seconds. Microsleeps occur when you try to stay awake to perform a monotonous task such as driving and can last from a few seconds to a few minutes. During a four second microsleep a car travelling at 100 km/h will travel more than 110 metres while completely out of the driver's control.

Community Driver Reviver

During peak holiday travel periods, such as Christmas, Easter and holiday long weekends, Community Driver Reviver sites operate in other states.

These are places where drivers should take a break during a long journey.

Roadside rest areas

Rest areas are places where you can park safely and refresh yourself before continuing your journey. They are available 24 hours a day, all year round and are clearly signposted. Service centres, petrol stations, parks and country towns are other places you can stop and take a break from driving.

DISTRACTIONS

Distractions which can result in road crashes and trauma include playing loud music, adjusting the radio, inserting CDs in the player or talking on the phone (Refer Page 22).

Other distractions which are high risk behaviour are failing to concentrate on the driving task, failing to watch the road and even talking to passengers.

Driving is a complex task and requires a driver's full concentration. All drivers need to be aware of the limitations of their driving experience and the consequences of being distracted while they are driving a motor vehicle.