



*The following information is provided as a service of the Human Services Division.*

## **Information for Senior Driving**

### Seven Senior Driving Safety Suggestions

- 1. Avoid Nighttime Driving**  
When the sun goes down, the roads get dark and the glare from other headlights can make it hard to see beyond your dash. Travel with an alert passenger to help you scan for driving hazards.
- 2. Take a Driver Course**  
A mature driver's course is geared toward seniors and usually covers topics like pedestrians, yielding, four-way stops, and lane changes. Read further about additional information pertaining to driver courses.
- 3. Skip Heavy Traffic**  
If possible, plan your driving patterns around non-rush hour times. If you must travel during heavy traffic periods, remember to be patient and give yourself the proper amount of time.
- 4. Do a Warm-Up**  
Gentle stretching will improve your range of motion, help fight off fatigue, and reduce tension. Stretch your neck, torso, shoulders, and back with various exercises.
- 5. Prepare to Share the Road**  
When you are focusing intently on your driving, it is easy to ignore others on the road. You can avoid accidents by watching for pedestrians, bicycles, and motorcycles.
- 6. Think When Selecting an Instrument Panel**  
When purchasing a car, choose an instrument panel that appeals to you, and don't be seduced by flashing LED's and talking dashboards.
- 7. Steer Clear of Distractions**  
When you catch your mind wandering, you need to refocus. For example, pull over and do some warm-up exercises to put your mind and muscles back on track.

## Should I Take a Mature Driver's Course?

If you are willing to take a mature driver's course you might just hold on to your license for years to come. These courses can update your knowledge of the current driving environment and equip you with valuable tools to navigate our ever growing roadway system. After completing a mature driver course, your insurance company may offer you a safe driver discount. Course topics are listed below.

### 1. **Basic Traffic Rules**

Since it has probably been several years since you have had to refresh yourself with basic traffic rules, a well designed class will go over and emphasize the basics of driving. Review of road signs, signals, and markings are an example.

### 2. **Driver Fitness and Aging**

In your mature driver's class, you will learn how to compensate for hearing loss, vision changes, and even slower reaction times. Once you have identified your limitations, it is up to you to practice the learned techniques such as scanning and using safety cushions. Furthermore, the course should discuss some warning signs that you should watch for. When you start to see these signs, it is up to yourself to remain diligent and honestly assess your driving skills.

### 3. **Driving in Traffic**

A portion of your mature driver's course will focus on highway driving, exiting, lane changes, and maneuvering around big trucks. If you don't feel comfortable driving in heavy amounts of traffic, don't do it. If possible, plan your day around the traffic patterns or ask someone else to drive you.

### 4. **Sharing the Road**

During the duration of your class, you will start to appreciate learning about aggressive drivers, tractor-trailers, motorcycles, and other driver distractions. You want to drive alongside these people, not into them.

### 5. **Safety Equipment**

While every vehicle has different features and mechanics, there generally is a basic format that is followed. In your class, you will learn how to use your car's safety equipment, like anti-lock brakes, to help you prevent crashes.

## Finding a Mature Driver's Course

Once you decide you want to take a mature drivers course to increase you skills or decrease your insurance premiums, there are several options available.

1. Individual lessons offer personal attention and often times, can be achieved in only a couple of hours.
2. Classroom courses are offered. These classroom classes should be able to cover most of the material in about four to eight hours.
3. Online classes are now available. The learning pace is determined by yourself and when sitting at your computer, you can repeat the lessons as many times as you need to commit the information to memory.

## When to Turn Over the Car Keys

Deciding when to turn over the car keys can be a difficult decision. It can be a life changing decision to both the individual and the family involved. The following are some suggestions in making this decision easier.

### 1. **Self Assessment**

Are you beginning to feel nervous or anxious when driving or merging with traffic?

Are you responding quickly enough when something unexpected happens or have you been close to hitting another car or animal on the road?

Studies show that as we age, our reaction time slows down. The sensation of reacting is one of the most important aspects of driving.

### 2. **Family Assessment**

If your family and friends keep telling you that your driving skills are diminishing, you might need to consider giving up your driver's license.

If a family member or friend has expressed concern, ask them for a specific example of what they consider bad driving.

### 3. **Professional Assessment**

If you are considering turning in your driver's license, find a professional driving instructor and ask for a professional assessment

## Other Transportation Options

While there may be people in your life that may willingly help you out with running errands or getting to important appointments, the fact is that they will not always be around or prepared to drive you. There are numerous solutions to this problem.

- Find an organized driving pool or forms of public transportation
- Find a resource for public transportation in your city. Often times, bus lines or subsidized transportation are available.
- For more information on transportation in Bloomington contact the Human Services Help Line at 952-563-4957 V/TTY.

**Source:** Department of Motor Vehicles (2007, October). *How to Guides, Safety and Driving*. Retrieved May, 2007, from <http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/commser/humserv/humserv.htm>

## State of Minnesota Licensing Requirements

### Visual acuity

- Each eye with/without correction 20/40
- Both eyes with/without correction 20/40
- If one eye blind-other with/without correction 20/40
  
- Absolute visual acuity minimum  
20/70 in better eye with speed limitations 20/80 referred to a driver evaluation 20/100 denied license

### Minimum field requirements

- 105 degrees

### Licensing Renewal Procedures

- Length of license validation 4 years
- Renewal options and conditions In-Person
- Vision testing required at time of renewal? Yes
- Written test required? License expired for more than 1 year
- Road test required? License expired for more than 5 years
- Age based renewal procedures None
- Restrictions may include:
  - daytime driving only,
  - area restrictions,
  - speed restrictions
  - no freeway driving

**Source:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2007, October). *Minnesota*. Retrieved May, 2007, from <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/OlderDriversBook/pages/Minnesota.html>