

## *Background information*

### Contents

Safe system approach.....	174
Understanding road crashes and risk factors.....	174
Consequences of road crashes .....	175
Crash involvement of young drivers.....	176
Road crash theory .....	177
Common errors and crash types.....	178
Risk factors .....	179
Skills and protective factors for safer driving.....	182
Benefits of safer driving .....	182
Skills for safer driving .....	182
Extensive supervised driving practice .....	183
Risk management strategies.....	184
WA licensing system .....	185
Road rules and enforcement .....	186
Safer vehicles .....	187
Insurance .....	188
Self-management skills and positive attitudes for safer driving .....	188
Planning and decision-making about alcohol use .....	190
Planning and goal setting .....	190
Communication .....	191
Values and attitudes for safer driving .....	191
References .....	194
Websites .....	194

## Safe system approach

Young people need to develop an understanding that:

- the State Government has adopted a systems approach to reduce the road toll in WA
- everyone in the community is responsible for reducing the road toll
- roads, roadsides and vehicles can be engineered to reduce the impact of a crash.

The current road safety strategy in Western Australia is based on a safe system approach and is titled, *Towards Zero: Getting there Together, Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia 2008-2020*.

The safe system approach is recognised internationally and in Australia as a strategy based on evidence, science, economic forecasts and principles.

The safe system matrix recognises that:

- the human body has limitations in a crash
- roads and vehicles need to be engineered to be tolerant of human limitations
- best practice and a shared responsibility is necessary across the board
- the WA road network has challenges relating to roadsides and extensive size.

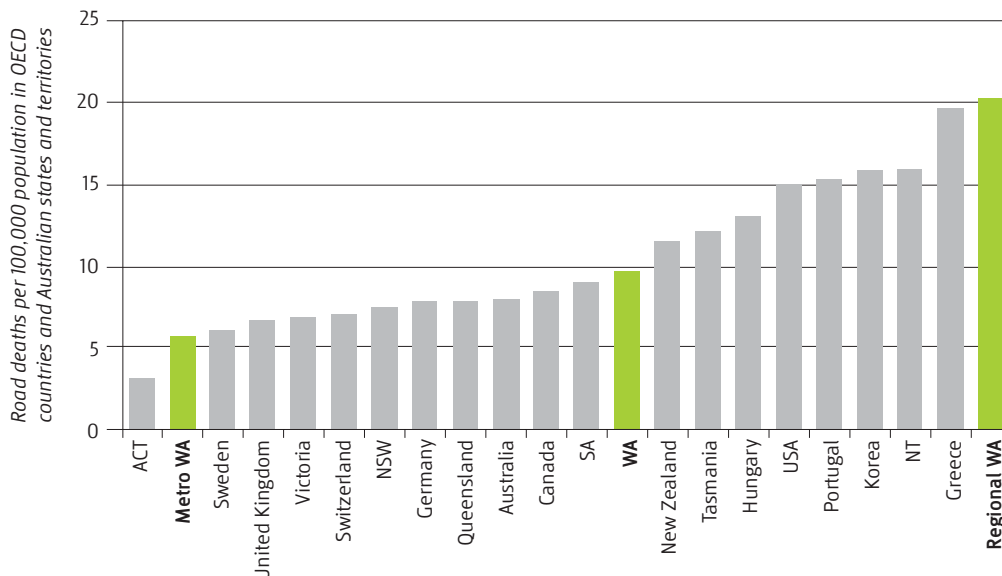
The WA strategy provides a framework for Government and communities to work together to achieve long-term elimination of road-related death and injury. The goals are addressed as a shared responsibility.

Details about where crashes occur in Western Australia (i.e. regional location and spread of road crashes) are available at the Office of Road Safety Website:

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=researchOtherResearch> (refer to *Maps – Where crashes occur in WA, 2002 – 2006*).

## Understanding road crashes and risk factors

The table below compares Western Australia’s road deaths (deaths per 100,000 population) to other Australian states and territories and a range of OECD countries in 2004. Compared to other countries WA as a whole is an average performer and WA’s performance in terms of road deaths per 100,000 population relative to other parts of Australia, has recently dropped.

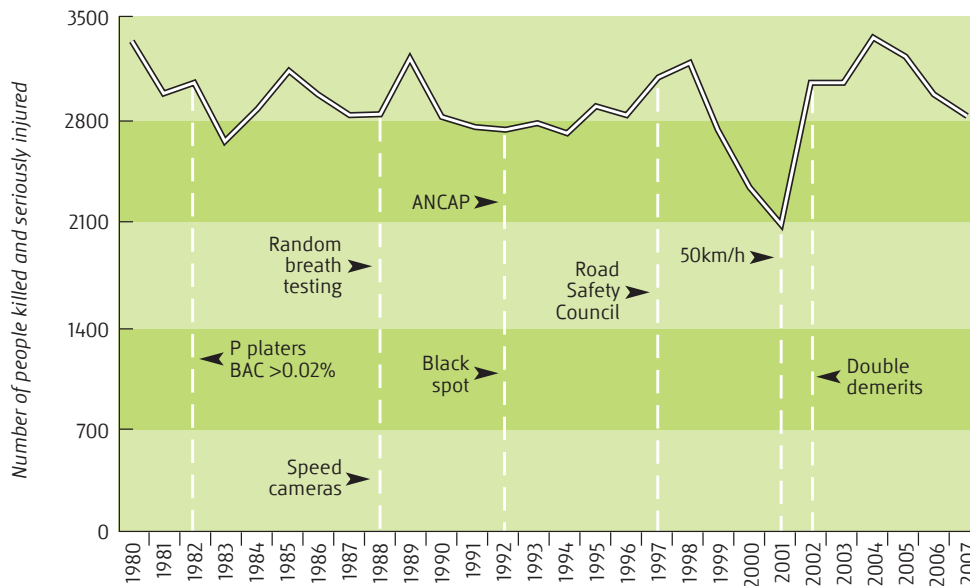


In 2008 the following crash statistics were noted for Western Australia:

- 14,472 crashes were reported (including minor injury, serious injury and death)
- 5,309 crashes were attended by an ambulance
- 4,082 personal injury claims were submitted to insurers
- 227 people were killed
- the total cost of crashes for the year was \$339,249,318 billion
- the 17 to 24 year age group were over represented
- 29% of 17 to 24 year olds were found to be liable for the crash
- the next largest group found to liable were the 30 to 39 year olds, at 18%

(Department for Planning and Infrastructure presentation, 2009)

In 2008, the total cost of crashes for the year in Western Australia was over \$339 billion (Department for Planning and Infrastructure, 2009) however, this does not take into account the enormous impact in terms of emotional stress.



Source: Road Safety Council's Recommendations to Government to Reduce Road Trauma in Western Australia 2008-2020 (refer <http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/documents/TowardsZeroRecommendationFinal.pdf>)

The graph above illustrates the trend in WA road deaths between 1996 and 2006 alongside road safety initiatives during that same period.

### Consequences of road crashes

It is estimated that approximately 100 million families around the world cope with the death or disability of a family member involved in a road crash (World Health Organisation 2004, reported in the Road Safety Council's Towards Zero recommended strategy, 2008), the consequences of which can be grouped under physical, social, emotional, financial and legislative costs (refer table on page 176).

Financial	Social	Legal	Emotional	Physical
property damage	travel delay	loss of licence	mental trauma	pain
loss of income	use of community funds	criminal record	guilt	suffering
ambulance fees	loss of freedom	demerit points	remorse	disability
funeral expenses	loss of licence	loss of vehicle	depression	death
repair costs	loss of job	legal fees	family trauma	hospitalisation
increased insurance premiums	loss of, or reduced income	imprisonment	reliance on friends, family	harm to others
			impact on relationships	recovery
				rehabilitation costs

Consequences can have short-term and long-term effects and are not only borne by the individuals involved in the crash, but witnesses of the crash, emergency workers, families, friends, work colleagues and the broader community.

Specific messages about the consequences of road crashes that have been shown to have a greater impact with young people are:

- loss of life or serious permanent injury to their passengers and other road users
- motor vehicle damage
- loss of life or serious, permanent injury to themselves
- loss of licence and the implications of this to their welfare and job
- increased insurance premiums and excesses
- driving convictions and penalties (e.g. fines, vehicle confiscation, loss of licence).

### Crash involvement of young road users

Young people need to develop an understanding that:

- driver behaviour is the predominant cause of crashing in most road crashes
- death and serious injury are the extreme consequences of a road crash
- a preventive and defensive approach to driving is paramount to safety
- young drivers have more crashes than more experienced drivers
- young driver crashes are often caused by risk taking, overconfidence and inexperience
- there are three common crash types in which young drivers are typically involved
- it is important to gain extensive and varied driving practice as a learner driver
- it is important to apply risk management strategies to be a safer road user.

Young road users are significantly over-represented in serious injury and fatal road crashes. Young drivers are at their greatest risk of crashing within the first six months of gaining a licence (*Palamara et al, 2001*). This is a pattern repeated in jurisdictions around the world.

Young novice drivers are over represented in road crashes and injury statistics compared to more experienced drivers worldwide (*Senserrick, 2004*). Whilst 17 to 24 year olds make up only 14 per cent of licence holders in WA, they make up 30 per cent of fatalities. They also account for 31 per cent of drivers admitted to hospital and 29 per cent of drivers requiring medical attention (*Palamara, unpublished*).

Young males living in rural and remote areas are particularly at risk. Per population, young Indigenous Australian people also have higher rates of death and hospitalisation from road crashes compared with young non-Indigenous Australian people (*Cercarelli, 1999*).

Research shows that provisional drivers are up to 20 times more likely to crash than learner drivers. Young novice drivers (17 to 18 years old) are 5 times more likely to crash than older novices and this is mainly due to inexperience (*Forsyth, 1995*). It is recognised that it usually takes about 5 years of driving experience to develop skills in a variety of conditions to reduce crash risk (Road Safety Council, 2005).

Research also highlights that novice drivers are 30 per cent more likely to crash in the first 6 months of driving compared to the second 6 months. They are also 2.4 times more likely to crash in the first year of driving compared to the fifth year (*Palamara, 2008*).

A passenger is 13 times more likely to be injured with a driver that has been licensed for 12 months or less, than a driver licensed for more than 12 months (*Adams, 2003*).

While little WA data is available that highlights learner drivers' crash risk, it is clear from data elsewhere in Australia that the crash rate for learner drivers is much closer to zero than for provisional drivers. Learner drivers are at a very low crash risk because they are driving under supervision.

A thorough description of Western Australian and young driver crash statistics is available at the Office of Road Safety website and includes annual road crash statistics, regional crash statistics and ten-year trend data (ranging from 1996 to 2008):

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=researchFactsStatistics>

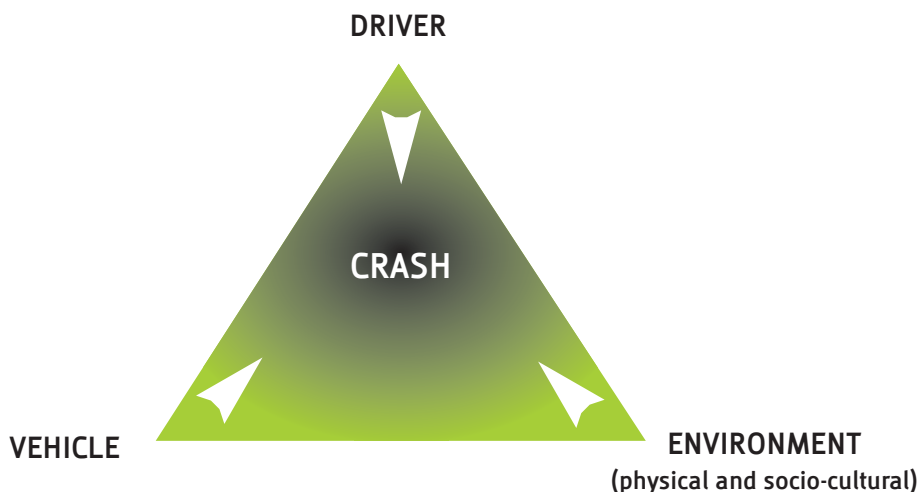
Road crash statistics are also listed at the Insurance Commission of Western Australia website:

[http://www.icwa.wa.gov.au/mvpi/mvpi\\_crash\\_claims\\_statistics.shtml](http://www.icwa.wa.gov.au/mvpi/mvpi_crash_claims_statistics.shtml).

## Road crash theory

Road crashes are a result of the interaction between three factors:

- the driver (host),
- the vehicle (agent) and
- the environment.



*The driving triangle*

It is estimated that in most crashes (approximately 90% of crashes) the driver is the predominant causal factor.

The interaction between three factors - driver, vehicle and environment - is known as the social interaction theory. This theory is illustrated as a 'driving triangle' and can be used to demonstrate ways in which a potential road crash can be avoided and harm reduced. It can also be used to demonstrate ways to stay safer as a passenger or driver.

## Common errors and crash types

Drivers of all ages are involved in crashes however young drivers have more crashes than others and are more likely to be involved in the same types of crashes.

Errors made by new drivers are often a result of:

- being overconfident
- speeding or travelling too fast, for the road conditions and level of experience
- not scanning the road environment well
- misjudging the speed of other vehicles, particularly oncoming cars
- travelling too close to other vehicles
- inattentiveness
- distraction
- fatigue.

## Common crash types for young drivers and information about how to avoid them

### *Vehicles turning across another driver's path, or driving straight ahead at an intersection*

The following safety tips will help drivers avoid these types of crashes:

- slow down before entering intersections and look out for turning vehicles
- make eye contact with other drivers
- avoid changing lanes near intersections and never assume that another driver will give way.

### *Running into the back of another vehicle (i.e. rear end crashes)*

The following safety tips will help drivers avoid these types of crashes:

- concentrate and be fully attentive at all times
- avoid being distracted
- never travel too closely to the car in front even when driving slowly
- do not lose concentration even if the traffic is slow and not moving.

### *Single vehicle crashes, or veering off the road to the left*

The following safety tips will help drivers avoid these types of crashes:

- take note of and respond to advisory signs that alert drivers to dangers or hazards
- stay on the road - don't drive off the main part of the road
- do not drive tired or when becoming tired
- be aware of the warning signs of fatigue
- travel at speeds suitable for traffic conditions and slow right down on unfamiliar roads and areas, at night and in bad weather.

### *Impact with pedestrians*

The following safety tips will help drivers avoid these types of crashes:

- drive defensively and be tolerant of all road users
- remember pedestrians have no protection and are vulnerable on the road
- do not ignore pedestrian crossings just because it's quiet
- never drive through a red light
- don't go through pedestrian crossings without looking each way even if legally you have the right of way
- reduce speed and slow down near shopping centres, schools and other busy pedestrian areas and look for pedestrians between parked cars.

### Crashing when another driver does something unexpected

The following safety tips will help drivers avoid these types of crashes:

- drive defensively and be tolerant of all road users
- do not assume other drivers will always follow the law
- do not assume other drivers will give way when they should
- assume other drivers will do the wrong thing and be prepared to drive defensively.

### Risk factors

Young drivers are over-represented in crashes due to:

- inexperience resulting in less developed driving skills
- overconfidence in their own driving ability
- risk taking tendencies while driving.

*(Catchpole et al, 1994; Mayhew, 1995)*

#### Inexperience

Young drivers who lack driving experience devote a greater proportion of their available attention to conscious decision-making and monitoring of their driving. This leaves less time to devote to the cognitive and hazard perception skills required for safer driving.

Young drivers also have distinct skill deficits resulting from a lack of driving experience, particularly in the areas of:

- hazard perception and hazard management skills
- perception and interpretation of information, such as curvature and gradient of the road
- braking
- steering
- adjusting speed to compensate for changing conditions and circumstances
- maintaining proper lane position, accelerating and decelerating smoothly and changing speed.

*(Catchpole et al, 1994)*

Students need to develop an understanding of how inexperience affects their safety as drivers and how supervised driving practice provides the opportunity for them to gain experience to safely develop their driving skills.

#### Overconfidence

Young drivers often fail to appreciate that there is more to driving than just vehicle control.

This can result in an over estimation of driving abilities and over confidence in their approach (*WA Police Road Safety Section, 2002*). They often have an inflated view of their own driving ability, which can result in them misjudging situations with inaccurate assessments of their own ability and of the risks present in the driving situation. If learner drivers do not receive enough diverse, supervised driving experience, the 'safe mistakes' they make early in their learning to drive process, may result in a perception of their own ability being inaccurate. *(Newman et al, 2001)*

#### Risk taking behaviour

Adolescence and early adulthood are times of conflicting emotions where risk taking can be a way to gain new experiences. Risk taking while driving, for example speeding, is extremely dangerous and many young people fail to perceive this. Being inexperienced also makes young drivers less able to anticipate hazards and manage the consequences of their risk taking.

There are several major risks associated with road crashes for all drivers, however, young drivers tend to engage in risk taking behaviour more often than experienced drivers.

The risk taking behaviour associated with most road crashes are speed, alcohol (and other drugs), fatigue, non-use of restraints (seat belts) and distractions. There are other risks specifically associated with young drivers, which include:

- driving with peer-age passengers and overloading vehicles
- night and weekend driving
- vehicle condition and overloading
- environmental conditions.

### Speed

While some young drivers perceive speed as socially acceptable and consider there to be 'safe' levels of speeding, it is clearly a major contributor to road crashes involving young drivers. It is imperative that young people receive road safety messages about the inherent dangers of speeding even 5 km/h over the posted speed limit.

Further information about speeding and driving and reducing travel speeds is available at:

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsSpeeding>

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsReducingTravelSpeeds>

Young drivers perceive the outcomes of speeding less negatively than older drivers and are more likely to speed if they:

- are male
- engage in risky health behaviours such as frequent and excessive alcohol use and illicit drug use
- tend to be impulsive and sensation seeking
- tend to violate formal and informal road rules.

### Alcohol and other drugs

Driving whilst under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs is a major contributor to road crashes in Western Australia. The combination of alcohol/drugs and driving is risky for any driver and for young and inexperienced drivers the risks are even greater.

Studies have shown that drivers are twice as likely to crash with a BAC of 0.05% and seven times as likely to crash with a BAC of 0.08% (Roads and Traffic Authority, 2000).

Another issue for young drivers is that of polydrug use. It greatly increases a person's chance of having a crash. Polydrug use occurs when two or more drugs (including alcohol) are used at the same time. Young people need to be made aware that the combined use and effect a number of drugs, including over the counter medicines will increase their crash risk.

Further information about drink driving is available at:

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsDrinkDriving>

### Fatigue

Crashes where the driver falls asleep occur predominantly in young people. Assessments of the contribution of driver fatigue to road crashes are generally underestimated due to the difficulty of detecting driver fatigue. Fatigue results from lack of sleep and length and type of driving task. Young people need to be made aware that their lifestyle patterns such as staying out late, not having much sleep and driving late at night contribute to them being over-represented in fatigue related crashes.

Another important message for young people is that the physical signs of tiredness such as yawning and blinking are considered late warning signs. They need to pay attention to the early mental warning signs of tiredness such as being in a daze and 'hypnotised' and experiencing a feeling of lost time.

Further information about fatigue and driving is available at:

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsFatigue>

### Non-use of restraints

Seat belts offer significant protection against injury in the event of a crash. In a serious crash, seat belts



increase the chances of survival. Seat belts are most effective if they are worn properly. A properly fitting seat belt is firm fitting and worn flat (without any twists). The sash section of a seat belt should cross the sternum (or bony section) of the chest. A lap belt should be positioned across the hips (below the abdomen). Passengers should not travel in parts of the vehicle that do not have seat belts (e.g. back of a utility truck or 'ute').

Further information about non-use of seat belts and driving is available at:  
<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsSeatBelts>

### Driving with passengers including overloading vehicles

While some passengers such as family members and small children, can be a positive influence on drivers (Newman et al, 2001), other passengers will increase the risk of crashing as they can distract drivers and/or encourage them to take risks.

The presence of passengers lowers the driver's concentration and takes their attention from the road and what is happening ahead. Young drivers with passengers are slower to detect and act on hazard than more experienced drivers. This decreased hazard detection in combination with peer pressure and risky driving behaviour increases the possibility of a crash for young drivers (Adams, 2003).

### Night and weekend driving

Many young people drive at night for work, study and leisure purposes. There is a need for young drivers to be acutely aware of the significant dangers night and weekend driving present and consider this in their trip planning and decision making.

### Distractions

Young drivers need to be aware that distractions, both inside the vehicle (e.g. eating, drinking, changing a CD, pets or passengers) and outside the vehicle (e.g. advertising signs, behaviour of other road users, poor road and weather conditions) can impair their driving ability. Drivers who use a mobile phone (i.e. text messaging and speaking) while driving are more at risk of crashing. Young drivers may be more at risk than the general population due to frequent phone use.

### Vehicle condition and overloading

Young people need to be made aware that driving safer vehicles with seat belts and vehicle protection devices has been shown to lessen the severity of road crash injuries. Worn tyres, poor brakes and worn suspension all contribute to making a vehicle more difficult to control, especially for a new driver. Overloading makes vehicles much more difficult to control (for example when steering and braking) and also more unstable and likely to roll over. Inexperienced drivers will find overloaded vehicles particularly difficult to control.

Further information about safer cars is available at:  
<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsSaferCars>

### Environmental conditions

Adjusting and lowering speed is one of the most important factors to consider in relation to different driving conditions. The weather, traffic, time of day and road conditions can vary greatly and will impact on the driver's ability to detect and react to hazards.

## Skills and benefits of safer driving

Young people need to develop an understanding that:

- driving is a privilege and there are many benefits to be gained from driving
- driving is a complex task
- anticipating and handling hazards can be improved with extensive hours of practice

### Benefits of driving

Driving gives young people independence, freedom and greater control of their lives. It is important for young people to understand that by driving safely they can enjoy the benefits, privileges and freedom of having a driver's licence. Gaining a licence can also assist young people to find or secure employment and enables them to socialise in a manner that is diverse and more independent.

### Skills for safer driving

Young people need to understand that driving is a complex activity involving a combination of cognitive and perceptual motor skills.

The process of becoming a safer driver involves recognising and practising a range of skills including:

- **Vehicle control skills**  
Vehicle control skills involve controlling and handling the vehicle safely.
- **Traffic skills**  
Traffic skills involve reading traffic and concentrating on what other road users are doing while still maintaining control of the vehicle.
- **Safety skills**  
Safety skills involve recognising hazards, changing road conditions, traffic patterns, the way other drivers behave and responding to a wide variety of driving situations.
- **Advanced safety skills**  
Advanced safety skills or hazard management skills involve avoiding, minimising and managing hazards and risk. This includes slowing down when approaching a potential hazard, planning not to drink and drive, taking a break from driving every two hours and checking vehicle for roadworthiness. The ability to assess traffic situations and make safer driving decisions is a skill that comes with experience. Slowing down and being ready to stop when approaching a potential hazard is an important skill that young drivers need to understand and be able to apply.

Some of the other perceptual motor skills that need to be practiced and mastered for safer driving, include:

- **Peripheral vision**  
Drivers need to notice what is happening in front of the car, to the sides as well as taking notice of signs and markings.
- **Stopping distance rule and keeping a safe distance**  
Drivers need to recognise the importance of keeping a safe distance between their vehicle and the vehicle in front and understand the two-second stopping distance rule (below).

The 'two second rule' describes how to judge an adequate following distance in good road and weather conditions. The total stopping distance for a vehicle is the sum of the reaction distance and the braking distance. The reaction distance is the distance travelled by the vehicle from the time a hazard registers with the driver, to the time the driver begins to apply the brakes. The braking distance is the distance travelled by the vehicle from the time the braking begins until the vehicle comes to a stop.

- **Routine speed checking**

Drivers need to understand that a safe speed means travelling at the posted speed limit and travelling at a speed that suits the prevailing conditions. For example, slowing down for poor road and weather conditions or poor visibility. Young drivers should develop the habit of always checking their speed and adjusting it to suit the prevailing conditions.

- **Tolerance and courtesy**

Drivers need to be alert, careful and considerate as they move through traffic. Although moods and emotions can change a driver needs to remain calm and tolerant even when other drivers are acting aggressively.

## Extensive supervised driving practice

Learner drivers require practice in all driving skills in a variety of road, traffic, weather and time of day conditions. Although vehicle control skills are learnt quickly, traffic and safety skills take longer to master, which is why it is particularly important to emphasise the importance of extensive driving practice in a variety of conditions (weather, time of day and road conditions) with an instructor or experienced driver (supervisor).

Learner drivers need to be encouraged to undertake more than the minimum 25 hours of supervised driving practice (up to 120 hours) in order to develop these skills and reduce their likelihood of crash involvement.

Based on research by Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), best practice for reducing the crash risk for young drivers was recommended in three key areas:

- build experience under supervision so young drivers learn to identify and avoid hazards
- gradually introduce young drivers to the full driving task by managing risks as driving experience grows
- avoid developing reckless and risky behaviour through early intervention and penalties.

(MUARC report for WA Road Safety Council 2005 *Review of Literature Regarding National and International Young Driver Training, Licensing and Regulatory Systems*)

Accumulating 100 to 120 hours of practice across a wide variety of road, traffic, weather and time-of-day conditions is regarded as optimal for learner drivers in reducing their crash risk during their first 24 months of driving solo (Gregerson, 1996).

Research shows that learner drivers can become confident in their driving ability after only 20 hours of driving practice yet they do not begin to refine their driving skills sufficiently until they have had 100 to 120 hours of supervised driving experience.

The licensing system in Western Australia (Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System or GDT&L) supports supervised driving and accumulating a minimum of 25 hours of driving practice by providing a structure that is built on extended and recorded practice time.

Young people who have obtained their Learner's Permit and are ready to commence supervised driving need to identify a suitable person (or people) to act as a supervisor for their driving practice.

Suitable supervisors include people who:

- have held a Driver's Licence of the same class (as shown in Learner's Permit) for four years
- have a safe driving history
- have a good knowledge of the road rules
- have time to supervise the learner at different times of the day and week (e.g. at night, on weekends, in peak traffic times)
- can supervise in a calm, stress-free way
- have good listening skills

- are able to provide positive feedback
- can plan the driving session and suggest tasks and skills to practise
- keep a record of what has been achieved to date.

Young people can accomplish their driving practice by working with a combination of professional driving instructor/s and driving supervisor/s. Professional driving instructors need to be considered early in the learner period to ensure good driving habits are developed.

In conjunction with their supervisor and/or professional driving instructor, young drivers need to negotiate a driving plan. This can be done by establishing some common goals which the young person and supervisor agree upon.

A 'typical' driving plan would outline:

- practice days and times
- vehicle/s to be used
- an order of skills to be taught
- the range of weather, time of day and traffic conditions in which practice should occur.

It is useful to try to integrate the supervised driving practice into normal daily activities such as travelling to and from school, shopping or sporting events.

Young people need to be encouraged and motivated to undertake more than the minimum number of supervised driving hours. They also require planning, communication and negotiation skills to interact successfully with their supervisor/s to ensure effective practice.

Further information about supervised driving practice and novice drivers is available at:  
<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsNoviceDrivers>

## *Risk management strategies*

Young people and new drivers need to be aware of the risk management strategies they can use to remain safer as drivers and passengers. They require information and support to identify strategies and develop the self-management and interpersonal skills to implement these strategies successfully.

There are many strategies young people can utilise in order to manage risks associated with driving, including:

- undertaking supervised driving practice in a range of driving conditions
- travelling at the posted speed limit and adapting speed to suit the weather, road and time-of-day conditions
- avoiding driving while impaired due to alcohol, other drugs or fatigue
- wearing seat belts
- trip planning
- complying with road rules and restrictions on provisional drivers
- limiting distractions and the number of passengers
- avoiding late night driving and extensive weekend driving
- recognising and managing the effect of emotions on driving
- purchasing safer vehicles and maintaining safe vehicle condition
- developing strategies to get home safely from planned and impromptu events
- anticipating hazards and adopting strategies to avoid them
- being patient, and when in doubt, not proceeding
- planning driving moves well in advance and slowing down to an approaching hazard
- giving correct signals

- being alert at intersections.
- maintaining appropriate following distances.

## WA Licensing System

The licensing system in Western Australia is a graduated system and is referred to as the Graduated Driver Training and Licensing System (or GDT&L System). It was developed to ensure that new drivers get a wide range of supervised driving experience over a longer period of time before driving solo.

A graduated licensing system allows new drivers to shift from driving in lower risk situations to higher risk situations as their driving experience and maturity increases. Many OECD countries and Australia have adopted a graduated licensing system.

A complete summary of the licensing system is available at:

<http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/learnerdrivers/1476.asp>

<http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/yourlicence/15641.asp#sixmonths>

The WA Licensing System is based on research that shows the longer the period of supervised learning, the safer the driver. It includes the following three phases and conditions to prepare new drivers for driving solo:

### Learner Phase 1 (driving with an instructor and / or supervisor)

The person can be no younger than 16 years of age when applying for a Learner's Permit. After passing the Learner's Permit Theory Test and obtaining L plates the learner driver learns the skills of driving a vehicle.

The other conditions associated with Learner Phase 1 include:

- Learner's Permit is valid for 3 years with no extra fee
- freeway driving is allowed with a 100 km/h speed limit
- a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit whilst driving
- L plates must be displayed whilst driving.

### Learner Phase 2 (driving with an instructor and / or supervisor)

The learner driver can be no young than 16 years and 6 months when attempting the practical driving assessment to enter this phase. Once passed, the learner driver accumulates as much driving practice as possible under supervision (minimum of 25 hours) in a range of different conditions (weather, road, time of day) and records this in a log book.

The other conditions associated with learner phase 2 include:

- remain in Learner Phase 2 for a minimum of six months
- Learner's Permit is valid for 3 years with no extra fee
- freeway driving is allowed with a 100 km/h speed limit
- a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit whilst driving
- L plates must be displayed whilst driving.

### Provisional Phase (solo driving)

The learner driver cannot attempt the Hazard Perception Test until they have reached 17 years of age, have completed and recorded a minimum of 25 hours supervised driving and a mandatory six month period has elapsed since passing the practical driving assessment.

The other conditions associated with the Provisional Phase include:

- P plates must be displayed; red P plates for the first 6 months and green P plates for the final 18 months
- night time driving restrictions (between midnight and 5am) for the first 6 months on red P plates, unless travelling to or from work, studying or if seeking urgent medical attention
- driving at the posted speed limit including speed limits of 110 km/h
- zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit whilst driving.

It is important for learner drivers to get as much supervised driving practice as possible in both Learner Phase 1 and 2, even though recording the number of supervised driving hours is only legally required in Learner Phase 2.

The graduated demerit point system is described below and in the diagram. It will be introduced in 2010, along with warning letters with each infringement.

- Drivers who accrue four or more demerit points in the time between getting their Learner's permit and completing 12 months on P plates, will be disqualified from driving for a period of three months.
- Drivers who accrue eight or more demerit points in the time between getting their Learner's permit and completing 2 years on P plates, will be disqualified from driving for a period of three months.

## Road rules and enforcement

In Western Australia the road rules are governed by the Road Traffic Act 1974 and its subordinate legislation, most notably the Road Traffic Code 2000. The Western Australian Police enforce this legislation.

Enforcement strategies for non-compliance with the road rules include:

- random breath testing (RBT)
- speed and red light cameras (hand-held radar and vehicle-based radar)
- random vehicle checks
- monitoring drivers for compliance with road rules.

Full details of traffic offences and penalties are contained in the Road Traffic Code 2000. Copies can be viewed at the Library and Information Service of Western Australia and online at [www.slp.wa.gov.au](http://www.slp.wa.gov.au)

Penalties for some common road rules are also available in the appendices of the Drive Safe book available at <http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/learnerdrivers/1476.asp>. Note that one Penalty Unit (PU) is equivalent to a \$50 fine.

Specific information about traffic convictions and penalties is also available at the Office of Road Safety website: <http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsPenalties>  
<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsSpeeding#penalties>

Young drivers need a sound knowledge of the road rules in order to pass the computerised theory test (CTT or Learner's Permit Theory Test) and to become safer road users. They also need to be aware of the consequences of not complying with the road rules including the increased risk of crashing, penalties and insurance implications.

Knowledge of, the road rules, enforcement strategies and penalties will contribute to young people being safer drivers.

For a current listing of all road rules in Western Australia (Drive Safe book, Department for Planning and Infrastructure, 2008) refer to <http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/learnerdrivers/1464.asp>

## Safer vehicles

### High powered vehicles

There has been a great deal of community concern surrounding the issue of high powered vehicles. A study by the University of Western Australia in 2005 found, contrary to popular belief, young drivers are no more at risk of death or serious injury by driving powerful cars than other drivers. The research shows that vehicle performance is unrelated to a novice driver's risk of being killed or seriously injured in the first two years of holding a licence (Palamara P. G., 2005).

For more information refer to  
<http://www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsPowerfulCars>.

Although many cars on the road are capable of extreme speeds, the research highlighted the fact that it is the way people drive their vehicles, rather than the capabilities of the vehicle itself that leads to involvement in crashes. Even small cars have the ability to accelerate fast and travel at speeds high enough to cause serious injury or even death, particularly on urban streets where about 60 per cent of all serious crashes occur (Palamara P. G., 2005).

WA research shows that between 1999 and 2000, only 3% of young driver crashes involved vehicles with a high power to weight ratio (PWR). The PWR is the power the engine generates divided by the vehicle's (or engine's) weight. Even small cars with a low PWR\* can easily achieve speeds high enough to kill or seriously injure a driver, their passenger or other road users.

During 2006, 50% of drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes where speed was a factor were aged between 17 and 24 years of age.

### Buying safer cars

Buying a new or used car is an investment that should not be taken lightly and buying safer cars are part of a safe systems approach to road safety.

For more information refer to:  
<http://www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au/index.cfm?event=topicsSaferCars>.

Buying a car with a high safety rating (i.e. a minimum of four stars) is recommended by road safety experts. The star rating indicates how well a vehicle protects its occupants in a crash.

The higher the star rating the less likely the driver's errors will result in serious injury or death.

The following points should be considered when starting the car-buying process.

- Decide the type of car needed, e.g. four or six cylinder, wagon or sedan, manual or automatic etc.
- Set a budget limit and include:
  - what is affordable for the car purchase
  - stamp duty and transfer fees
  - running costs such as petrol, insurance, registration, servicing and maintenance.
- Do some research by looking through the classified ads in newspapers and other publications to get an idea of what to expect to pay for a car, and a likely trade-in value for a car.
- Find out about the availability and cost of spare parts, particularly for imported and older cars.
- If a loan is required, get quotes for the best possible deal, and have the loan approved before starting to look for a car.
- Make arrangements for a qualified mechanic to be on stand-by to inspect the car, or ensure that at least a current independent mechanical report is available for inspection.

Remember, whether buying a new or used car, it is the purchaser's responsibility to ensure that an approved immobiliser is fitted.

### Buying from a dealer

- Visit as many dealers as possible and satisfy yourself that you are getting the best deal.
- Check the details of the car on the pink form, usually found on the dashboard (except on new cars). While dealers are obliged to guarantee title, a Registration of Encumbered Vehicles (REVS) check is still a worthwhile precaution, as it may forewarn of theft or financial encumbrance.

### Insurance

In Australia, there are four (4) types of motor vehicle insurance options available. These are:

- compulsory third party
- third party property damage
- third party property damage - fire and theft
- full cover (comprehensive insurance).

In Western Australia, all owners of registered vehicles must pay Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance. This is combined with every Motor Vehicle Registration Licence invoice.

The Insurance Commission of Western Australia (ICWA) is the sole CTP insurer for motor vehicle personal injury in Western Australia. ICWA deals with all personal and fatal injury claims resulting from motor vehicle crashes that involve Western Australian registered vehicles.

The other three motor vehicle insurance options listed above are supplied and administered by various private insurance companies.

Young people need to be aware that unsafe driver or passenger behaviour (such as speeding, drink driving, not wearing a seat belt, driving an unregistered vehicle or driving without a current licence) may result in negative implications for private and CTP insurance, such as a personal liability, increased excesses or premiums and refusal or reduction of claims.

Another important insurance issue for young people to be aware of is that any vehicle occupant injured in a crash and not wearing a seat belt can lose up to 25% of their injury claim.

### Self-management skills and positive attitudes for safer driving

Young people need to be provided with:

- relevant information about how to make informed decisions, plan and communicate effectively
- opportunities to clarify their beliefs, values and attitudes and develop an understanding of positive attitudes that contribute to safer driving
- opportunities to practise self-management skills in order to carry out safer actions and plans and convey them to others.

### Decision-making

Young people will need to make many decisions about their own and others' safety on the road. Examples of some decisions young drivers may be required to make include selecting a suitable supervisor to assist with driving practice and deciding whether to travel with a driver who has been consuming alcohol.

In social situations, these decisions will often be more complex because of the impact of influences such as passengers, peers and the use of alcohol and other drugs. Equipped with relevant facts and positive attitudes, young people are more likely to make informed and safer decisions about their road user behaviour.



In order to make informed decisions, young people need to understand how a decision is made and be provided with opportunities to practise the decision-making process. The process involves:

- stating the problem or issue
- gathering the necessary information
- examining the options
- considering the consequences of each option
- deciding and evaluating the decision.

Self-efficacy will impact the decisions young people make, their ability to communicate assertively and their beliefs and attitudes. Self-efficacy can be described as a person's feelings of self worth and esteem. A young person with a strong sense of self worth and self-efficacy is more likely to value safety and make decisions that will promote safety for themselves and others.

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>1</b> Define the problem  | ➔ | <i>Identify the decision to be made in the particular situation.</i>   |
| <b>2</b> Gather the necessary information                            | ➔ | <i>Identifying who and what are contributing to potential risk and the effects of risk-taking on individuals.</i>  |
| <b>3</b> Examine all possible options                                | ➔ | <i>Identifying a range of alternative actions in a situation.</i>  |
| <b>4</b> Consider the consequences/risks and benefits of each option | ➔ | <i>Evaluating options according to the outcome sought. This involves predicting and reflecting on the impact of decisions on oneself, others and wider community.<br/>Identifying 'safety nets' and harm reduction strategies.</i> |
| <b>5</b> Decide and communicate the decision                         | ➔ | <i>Identify strategies for communicating the decision and dealing with negative peer (or other) influence (e.g. humour, assertiveness and redirection).</i>  |
| <b>6</b> Evaluate the outcome of the decision upon self and others   | ➔ | <i>Evaluate the decision.</i>  |

## Planning and decision-making about alcohol use

In many situations young people will be required to make decisions about driving or travelling with someone after they have been drinking alcohol.

There are seven 'decision points' that can influence the decision to drink and drive (*McKnight et al, 1995*).

1. Planning for the social event.
2. Deciding on proposed transport.
3. Planning to drink or not.
4. Deciding to drink or not.
5. Activities during the social event.
6. Deciding when to leave.
7. Deciding whether to drive.

Young people need to be encouraged to plan and make decisions prior to leaving home about strategies to avoid drink driving and for getting home safely (i.e. planning for the event and deciding on proposed transport).

One of the safest strategies for young drivers that are socialising at events that involve alcohol and other drugs, is to leave their car at home. It is also important for young people to understand that although they may consider drink driving to be unacceptable and intend not to drink and drive, situations can arise where they may be involved in a drink driving situation as a driver or passenger.

Factors that can influence young people's decisions about alcohol and driving, include:

- the type of occasion (which is thought to have the greatest influence in the decision to drink or not)
- prior planning and the role this has in actual drinking behaviour
- social and environmental influences such as travelling together, socialising and the proximity of the event to home
- personal influences such as the personal value in being there and being relaxed
- availability of alcohol and the economics of its use
- usual behaviour and a continuation of what a person normally does.

## Planning and goal setting

Planning involves being able to set realistic, specific and measurable goals in the short, medium and long term. Young drivers will need to develop skills to plan to get home safely from celebrations, go on long journeys, pass the Learner's Permit Theory Test and obtain supervised driving practice in a range of conditions.

Students need to be aware of the process of planning, which includes determining:

- the goal to be achieved
- the timeframe for achievement
- the people who can help to achieve the goal
- the sequence of steps required to achieve the goal
- the costs (money, time, effort)
- how the costs will be met
- whether or not the plan has been successful.

## Communication

Successful communication involves a variety of skills, in particular the skills of assertiveness and active listening and the ability to manage pressure from friends, peers, family and acquaintances.

### Assertive communication

Being able to communicate assertively involves telling someone directly what you want or prefer, in a way that is neither aggressive nor submissive. Assertive communication can help young people make decisions based on their values and reject negative influences and pressure. It also provides an opportunity for them to enhance their self-image and self-efficacy.

In developing assertive communication, students should be encouraged to use 'I' statements to express their feelings. For example, 'I feel unsafe when this happens'. 'I' statements are assertive messages as they directly convey feelings or intent. When communicating assertively, students should also be encouraged to make eye contact, stand up straight, speak in a firm voice and stay calm. Apologising, whispering, looking scared and becoming angry are all actions to avoid.

### Active listening

Active listening involves following what is being said, as opposed to guessing or interrupting. In developing active listening students aim to repeat what the person has just said, be aware of body language and maintain eye contact.

Young drivers require effective communication skills in a range of situations including expressing opinions about the need to plan regular supervised driving trips, articulating clearly and firmly to distracting passengers or refusing to accept a lift with a driver who has been consuming alcohol. They also require the ability to listen to feedback from a supervised driver or driving instructor and the needs of passengers and drivers.

### Negotiation

Negotiation involves maintaining effective communication to resolve problems and preserve relationships. It requires skills such as active listening, responding without aggression, demonstrating empathy, expressing own opinions/needs and finding common ground.

Young drivers require effective negotiation skills in order to manage a variety of interactions where there may be conflicting opinions and contentious situations such as negotiating supervised driving practice with supervisor or negotiating safer road use with driver/passenger.

## Values and attitudes for safer driving

In considering the beliefs and attitudes about road safety issues that impact on drivers, students develop understandings relevant to:

- the influences on road safety attitudes
- the relationship between road user attitudes and behaviours
- the importance of supervised driving
- the rights and responsibilities of drivers
- personal safety and the safety of other road users.

### Influences on road safety attitudes

Prior to becoming a driver, a variety of factors influence individuals' attitudes towards road safety, both positively and negatively. These factors also influence an individual's personal norms, which is what they consider 'normal' and acceptable.

The factors include:

- knowledge
- personal experience
- personality traits
- family
- media
- peers
- society and culture

When reflecting on their attitudes towards road safety, students need to be aware of the factors that influence their attitudes. This will enable them to understand clearly why they possess certain values and recognise and respond to negative influences.

### Attitudes, intentions and behaviour

Young people need to be aware that despite their best intentions, the way they choose to drive can be influenced by the situation in which they are faced.

An individual intending to drive safely will generally have attitudes that support safe driving practices. There are times, however, when actions and attitudes are inconsistent and contradictory. An individual having a firm belief about a particular road safety issue may not consistently reflect this with their driving practices.

For example, a driver might speed in an emergency, on an open road or if running late. This could be in conflict with their firm belief that driving over the speed limit is unsafe, unacceptable and morally irresponsible.

### A positive attitude about the importance of supervised driving

Young people need to understand that developing:

- developing a positive attitude about the importance of gaining extensive and quality supervised driving practice has clear road safety benefits for P plate drivers
- developing a positive attitude about supervised driving practice has clear road safety benefits for P plate drivers
- developing the motivation and intention to gain extensive and quality supervised driving practice has clear road safety benefits for P plate drivers
- developing the motivation and intention to gain more supervised driving practice than the required 25 hours of log book practice has clear road safety benefits for P plate drivers
- developing a positive attitude about talking with a potential supervisor will lead to important road safety outcomes for learner drivers

Although young people in Western Australia are currently required by law to complete a minimum of 25 hours of supervised driving, research suggests that 100 to 120 hours is the optimal number of hours that will benefit young, novice drivers. For young people to engage in more than the minimum number of supervised driving hours, they will need to develop a positive attitude towards supervised driving.

### Personal safety and the safety of other road users

An inherent belief in the safety of self and others contributes towards a young person becoming a safer driver. Developing attitudes of respect and tolerance towards other road users and a commitment to personal safety and the safety of others while driving or travelling as a passenger are key aspects of being a safer road user.

By valuing safety for all, a young driver is more likely to be tolerant of other road users, a courteous driver, participate in supervised driving practice, avoid risk and comply with road rules.

Safer driving habits include being knowledgeable, competent, unimpaired, courteous and responsible. Drivers should strive to continually improve their driving skills. Encouraging and motivating young people to engage in safer driving habits is the focus of the *Keys for Life: Pre-driver education* program (School Drug Education and Road Aware, 2004).

Research has indicated that the following messages may be effective in helping young people to develop positive attitudes towards safer driving (Styles, 2004):

- emphasise the potential consequences of risky driving such as, impairing or incapacitating others
- raise awareness about enforcement measures
- provide realistic information about crash risk to avoid personal overconfidence
- emphasise avoiding dangerous driving situations due to driving skill limitations
- encourage drivers to switch off their mobile phones
- avoid 'blaming' young drivers.

### Rights and responsibilities of drivers

Whilst being a licensed driver is a privilege, it is critical that young people understand that being in charge of a motor vehicle is an enormous responsibility (*Drive Safe, 2001*). Some of the responsibilities of being a licensed driver include not driving while impaired due to alcohol, other drugs or fatigue; ensuring compliance with road rules; developing driving skills in a range of different conditions and implementing strategies for minimising risk.

By understanding, accepting and appreciating these responsibilities, young people are more likely to adopt safer driving behaviours.

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## Websites

[www.ors.wa.gov.au](http://www.ors.wa.gov.au) – Office of Road Safety, Western Australia

[www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au) – Department of Transport, Western Australia

<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/> – Victorian Roads Corporation, Victoria

[http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/hubpages/hub\\_youngdrivers.html?hlid=youngdrivers](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/hubpages/hub_youngdrivers.html?hlid=youngdrivers) – Roads and Traffic Authority, New South Wales

For more information visit  
[www.sdera.wa.edu.au](http://www.sdera.wa.edu.au)



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