

Guide for Learners



March 2023



Learner Kit

Graduated Licensing System

HELPING YOUNG DRIVERS BE SAFER DRIVERS

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Road laws and legal requirements

Road laws change from time to time. Requirements for learners and tests may change accordingly. It is your responsibility to ensure that you study the current edition of the **Road to Solo Driving** handbook and the current licence test brochures in preparation for your licence test. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the most recent edition of this book and any update sheets. If you are in doubt, check with any of the VicRoads Customer Service Centres.

This book is a guide only and is not legal advice.

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How to use this book

Congratulations! You've passed your learner test, found yourself a supervising driver, and now you're ready to learn the skills you need to become a safer, probationary driver.

Getting at least 120 hours of driving experience, including 20 hours of night driving, before you get your Ps is the first big step to becoming a safe driver. It will also help you to prepare for your drive test.

This book will help you make the most of your practice sessions, get the essential driving experience you need and keep track of your progress as you work towards your Ps.

Importantly, it will help you structure your learner driving experience into four key stages so you'll be a safer learner and probationary driver.

You and your supervising driver should work as partners, so you should both read through this book.

To get a licence you will need to complete the **Learner Log Book** to show you've had at least 120 hours of driving experience, unless you're 21 or older when you apply for your Ps.

YOU MUST READ pages 1 to 3 of the Learner Log Book and complete the Declaration of Learner Log Book Completion after you have logged at least 120 hours of driving practice. You'll find the Declaration of Learner Log Book Completion on page 83 of the green section of this book. If you do not complete the Learner Log Book correctly or fail to provide a completed Declaration of Learner Log Book Completion, you will lose your booking and test fees, and a minimum six week wait could apply before you can take your drive test.

The VicRoads website includes useful information that is worth a visit. **Lessons from the Road** is an online resource for supervising drivers. It is designed to help supervising drivers support their learner driver. It features eight short videos with tips and advice about the supervisor's role. You may also find it worthwhile as it will make the learning to drive process easier for you. Visit vicroads.vic.gov.au

Also, for more information on the Graduated Licensing System visit vicroads.vic.gov.au

Your partnership for success

Learning to drive needs a partnership between you and your supervising driver(s).

You and your supervising driver(s) need to read this book and use it as a guide.

Also give your supervising driver(s) the book **Guide for Supervising Drivers**, and make sure they read it. Additional copies can be printed from the VicRoads website vicroads.vic.gov.au

Check out the online resource for supervisors, **Lessons from the Road**, at vicroads.vic.gov.au

Your learning partnership

Learning to drive works best when you have a partnership with your supervising driver.

A supervising driver isn't just a passenger

They have an important job to do and you both need to work together. Choose your supervising drivers carefully. They may include a parent, older relative or even a family friend. It is best to ask someone you get along with.

The best supervising driver is someone who is a safe driver.

- Their job is to make time for you to practice and to give some practical advice when needed.
- They should work with you to plan practice sessions and trips that follow the stages in this book – starting with simple driving activities, then becoming more challenging as you get more experience.

Learning to drive can be stressful. You may make mistakes and your supervising driver may panic or get upset. Be prepared for this and try not to let the upset feelings take over.

If things look like getting out of hand during a session, you can stop the car (safely) and calm down. You can stop the session and start again in a few days. Being able to work well with your supervising driver is essential.

Using driving instructors

Some people may find professional lessons helpful when learning to drive. They're never a replacement for practice and experience.

When you choose a professional driving instructor, make sure it's someone you can get along with. It is worthwhile shopping around to find the instructor that suits you. Your instructor might suggest what you and your supervising driver can practice, and your supervising driver might get some useful advice from your instructor. Your instructor could give you some initial practice in new or challenging driving situations.

Some instructors are more comfortable working with supervising drivers than others. Some will even let your supervising driver go along on a lesson.

Ask your friends if they've found a good instructor.



Keys for success

Choose your supervising driver carefully – a safe driver and someone you get along with.

Be prepared to stop the practice session if things get stressful.

You may want to visit [Lessons from the Road](#), the online resource of eight short videos for supervising drivers and learners, to understand how to go about learning to drive and deal with stressful situations.

Visit vicroads.vic.gov.au for videos, tips and support.

Victoria's Graduated Licensing System

Probationary drivers have a much higher risk of crashing than experienced drivers, especially immediately after getting their licence. For this reason, Victoria has a Graduated Licensing System to help you become a safer driver. It's based on research from Australia and overseas.

Steps to a driver licence

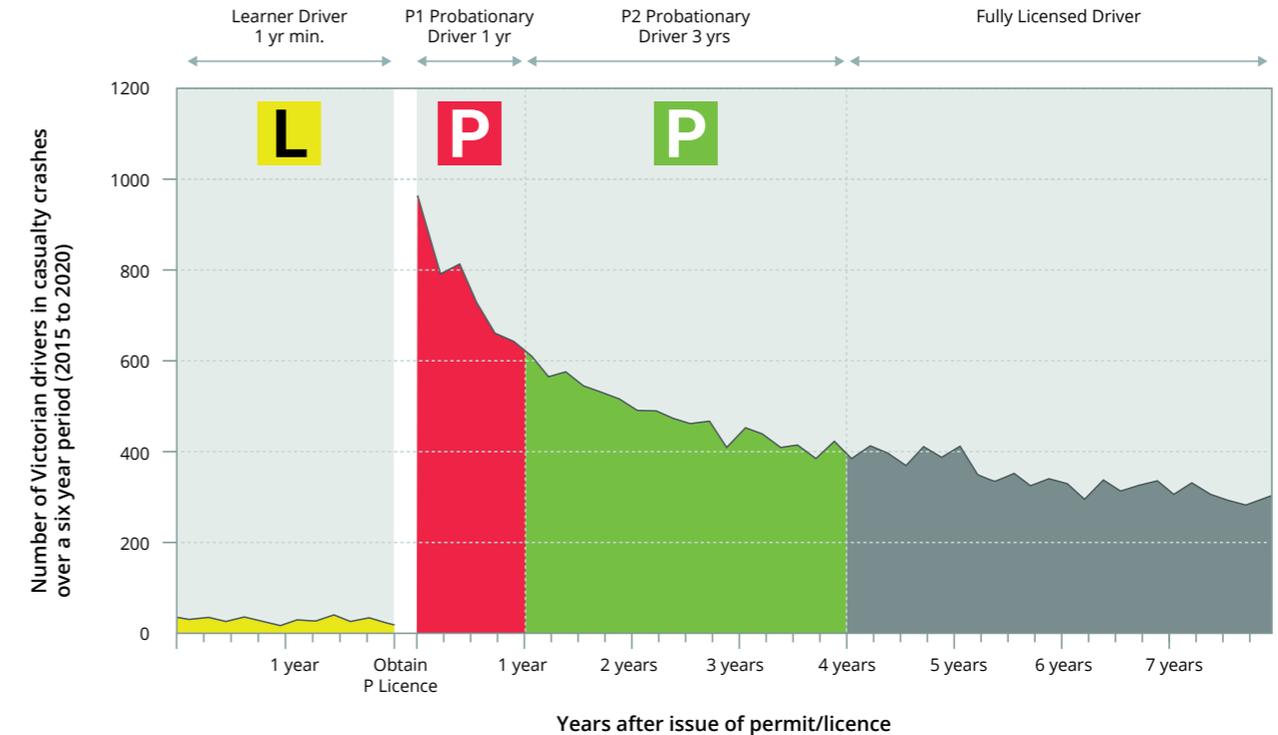
The Graduated Licensing System gives new drivers time to develop safer driving skills. It provides a structured transition to full driving privileges as the new driver's experience and maturity increase. It helps new drivers to be safer by:

- preparing learners for solo driving through extended learning
- protecting probationary drivers by keeping them out of higher risk situations
- motivating probationary drivers to drive more safely and within the law.

You will need to complete three steps before obtaining a full licence (or two stages for older drivers):

- The first step is an extended learner period of at least 12 months during which you must complete at least 120 hours (including 20 hours of driving at night) of supervised driving experience, documented in the **Learner Log Book** at the back of this book.
- After passing your probationary licence test you must then complete a one year P1 probationary licence period followed by a three year P2 probationary period, with special rules.
- This three step Graduated Licensing System is designed to reduce the number of crashes amongst new drivers. The diagram on page 7 shows how risky the first years can be.
- If you are 21 or older when you apply for a probationary licence you will only need to complete two steps before obtaining a full licence, the learner period followed by the three year P2 probationary licence period. Also you will have a shorter minimum learner permit period (six months if aged 21 to 24 years or three months if 25 years or older).

Crash profile of new drivers



Victoria's Graduated Licensing System

The learner period

- If you are under 21 years of age when you apply for your Ps, you have to hold your learner permit for at least 12 months.
- You also need at least 120 hours of logged driving experience (with a supervising driver) before you can take the drive test.
- 120 hours might seem like a lot, but many learners have their permit for two years, so 120 hours is just over an hour of driving each week for them. This book has advice on how you can make the most of the learner period and your 120 hours.
- Your learner permit is valid for 10 years so there's no need to rush through the learning process.
- You will have to use the **Learner Log Book** to prove you have had enough practice. You must read pages 1 to 3 of the **Learner Log Book**. If you do not complete the **Learner Log Book** correctly, you will not be able to take your drive test. You will lose your booking and test fees and could have to wait up to six weeks before you can take your drive test.
- The special restrictions and requirements for learner permit holders are shown in the table on page 9.

The probationary period

The probationary period in Victoria is four years (or three years for older drivers).

- It starts with a one year P1 probationary period, followed by a three year P2 probationary period.
- On a P1 probationary licence you must comply with extra restrictions and your P1 licence period may be extended if you do the wrong thing, such as accumulating too many demerit points.
- On a P2 probationary licence some of the extra restrictions for P1 drivers are removed, but there are still special restrictions and your P2 probationary period may be extended if you do the wrong thing, such as accumulating too many demerit points.
- If you are 21 or older when you first get your licence, you go straight to the P2 probationary licence.
- The special restrictions and requirements which apply to P1 and P2 probationary licence holders are shown in the table on page 9.

	L Learner	P Probationary P1 <small>(if under 21 when obtain probationary licence)</small>	P Probationary P2
Minimum age	16 years	18 years	19 years
Minimum holding period	1 year (6 months if 21-24 years, 3 months if 25 years+)	1 year	3 years
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display L plates • Must be accompanied by a driver with a full (non-probationary) car licence • Must carry a learner permit (or a valid paper receipt) when driving • Zero BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) • No hands-free or hand-held device use, except for navigation or to play or stream audio material if securely mounted and set up before driving. Simple audio and navigation adjustments using only an inbuilt device are allowed when driving. • No towing • Only drive cars • Complete at least 120 hours of logged supervised driving experience, (including 20 hours of night driving) documented in the Learner Log Book (if under 21 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display red P plates • Must carry licence (or a valid paper receipt) when driving • Zero BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) • No hands-free or hand-held device use, except for navigation or to play or stream audio material if securely mounted and set up before driving and only adjusted when driving using an inbuilt device. • No probationary prohibited vehicles • No towing (unless for work or under supervision of a full licence holder sitting beside the driver) • Only drive cars suitable to your licence type (automatic or manual) • Good driving record to progress to P2 probationary licence • No more than one peer passenger (aged between 16 and less than 22 years of age) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display green P plates • Must carry licence (or a valid paper receipt) when driving • Zero BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) • No hands-free or hand-held device use, except for navigation or to play or stream audio material if set up before driving. Simple audio and navigation adjustments using only an inbuilt device allowed when driving. • No probationary prohibited vehicles • Only drive cars suitable to your licence type (automatic or manual) • Good driving record to progress to full licence
For further information see vicroads.vic.gov.au			

Learning to drive in stages

Safe driving is more difficult than it seems. There's much more to driving than knowing the road rules and controlling a car. It takes years of practice to become a really safe driver – 120 hours is just the first step along the way.

The most important driving skills are dealing with traffic and driving safely in different conditions. The only way to develop these skills is to get lots of varied on-road practice as a learner.

You need to plan your practice sessions so they match your experience. You can't just go out into heavy traffic or a wet night at the start of your learner period. As a beginner, you're not ready to drive in difficult conditions.

You need lots of practice. You should organise your driving sessions to help make sure you're really ready to drive solo when you go for your test.

This book divides the learner period into four stages. You need to go through each stage to become a safer driver.

You start with simple driving and move to more complex driving situations as you gain experience.



The four stages of learning to drive

S1

Stage 1 is about controlling your car. It's the shortest stage and aims to get you to start, stop and steer safely in quiet areas without traffic.

S2

Stage 2 is about applying your new skills in car control and looking out for other road users on quiet low speed roads with little traffic.

S3

Stage 3 takes longer and uses your Stage 1 and 2 skills on busier roads and in more difficult driving situations. Now you start becoming a real driver. You learn to deal with traffic and other hazards to become safer in varied driving situations.

S4

Stage 4 takes a long time and can be the longest stage. It involves driving in lots of different conditions, on all types of roads and in all types of weather and traffic. You will be practising making the range of decisions expected of a solo driver, while you still have a supervising driver next to you. Stage 4 is about getting ready to drive on your own. By the end of Stage 4, when you're ready to go for your Ps, you should be able to drive without frequent help from your supervising driver.

Moving through the stages

You need to work through each stage with your supervising driver. You need to reach the goals in each stage before moving onto the next. If you do it gradually and get enough practice, you will see yourself improve as you get closer to becoming a solo driver.

Driving time

Research shows that to improve your safety on the roads and to develop your hazard perception skills you need on-road driving practice, interacting with real traffic on real roads. This is the key reason for the 120 hour learner requirement. You are permitted to record any driving time in your official **Learner Log Book** provided the practice was undertaken with a supervising driver (see page 16 for Tips for your supervising driver).

Remember, the four stages are related to each other:

- The later stages depend on the earlier ones – you need to complete each stage properly before moving on to the next.
- The earlier stages include skills that you should practice throughout the learner period. You may be tested on these, so it's worth keeping up the practice all the way through!
- The low speed skills in Stage 1 will continue developing over the whole learner period, so you still need to practice and check them.
- You need to keep practising your parking and three point turn skills in Stages 3 and 4.

Don't forget you can use a professional driving instructor to help work out when you are ready to move on to the next stage.

Keeping track of your progress

If you're going to have a successful learner period, you need to make and follow plans, compare your progress to the goals listed in each stage and record your driving in the Learner Log Book.

Work through each of the four stages methodically. You and your supervising driver need to plan how you will spend your practice time.

You can use the lists of goals in each stage to track your skill development. They help you and your supervising driver decide when to move on to the next stage.

Use your **Learner Log Book** to track what you have done. It's a good tool to work out what types of driving you should focus on.

Rego.	P Parking	Traffic Light Adverse Heavy	Weather Dry Wet	Road Local St Main Rd Bare City Rough Bumpy Bad Day	Light Overcast Night	License
123	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0345
2123	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0987
578	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0987
123	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0987

Keys for success

Get yourself and your supervising driver(s) organised!

Plan your practice sessions.

Fill in your **Learner Log Book** as you go.

Achieving 120 hours

Practice is the key to your success

Victoria chose a minimum of 120 hours because:

- Available research shows that new solo drivers with almost 120 hours of learner driving experience have a 30 per cent lower risk of crashing than those with about 50 hours.
- Road safety experts agree that 120 hours is a good step towards becoming a safer driver.
- The more experience you get, even beyond 120 hours, the safer you become. It takes years of experience to become a really safe driver.

Getting 120 hours of practice isn't a big deal when many young people are learners for two years. A little more than an hour a week over two years will get you there easily.

Keys for success

- Don't expect to be a good driver right from the start.
- Getting at least 120 hours is important for your safety and can be easily achieved.

Learners differ in how interested they are in getting a licence or practising driving. Don't be surprised if your interest levels go up and down over the learner period, but always remember – to become a safer probationary driver you need lots of regular practice.

People learn differently and at different rates. You might find some things are easier to pick up than others.

Don't get stressed out about it – practice is the best way to learn.

Many learners use professional driving instructors as part of their 120 hours of practice. Professional lessons are never a replacement for practice and experience. An instructor can help with specific skills and advice as to when it's OK to move into busier traffic or onto freeways and rural roads.

Don't forget, your safety as a driver will continue improving long after you get your Ps.

Before starting

There are some important things to check before you sit in the driver's seat. Work through this checklist with your supervising driver and make sure you can put a tick in every box.

Checklist

- You have a current learner permit
- You've studied the **Road to Solo Driving handbook** (you're about to apply some of those road rules!)
- You have L plates fitted to the front and rear of your car and they are visible from 20 metres
- You and your supervising driver have thought about the option of professional lessons
- You have a manual car for practice if you want a licence that will let you drive a manual car immediately
- Your supervising driver has a current, full (non-probationary) car licence
- Your supervising driver knows the road rules (have they looked through the **Road to Solo Driving handbook**?)
- You or your supervising driver has checked that your car insurance will cover a learner driver
- You and your supervising driver have checked that the car is in good condition (see page 16)



Is my car safe to use for driving practice?

You should check any car you're going to drive to make sure it's safe to use. The car you practice in must be roadworthy. Check these things together before every practice session:

- Tyres have enough tread and are properly inflated.
- All lights and indicators are working.
- Wipers, washers and horn are working.
- Brakes have been checked.

You can check that the car is registered by entering the number plate details online at vre.vicroads.vic.gov.au

Tips for your supervising driver

Supervising drivers must have a full (non-probationary) car licence.

To be able to provide quality driving practice, it is important that they are alert, not tired or stressed.

They must carry their licence with them, sit in the front passenger seat, cannot have a BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) of .05 or above, and cannot drink any alcoholic beverages whilst supervising.

It's important they stay alert, so they shouldn't use their mobile phone.

There are some specific rules for learners that you have to obey. When you're driving you must:

- display your L plates in a prominent position on the front and rear of the car and ensure that they are visible from 20 metres
- carry your learner permit
- have a zero BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) at all times
- be accompanied by a driver with a full (non-probationary) car licence at all times
- adhere to the road rules.

You must not use a mobile phone or other device, hands-free or hand-held except for navigation or to play or stream audio material and only if set up before driving. You cannot tow a trailer, caravan or another vehicle.

Your supervising driver needs to have a full (non-probationary) car licence and must have a BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) less than .05.



Thinking about stress

Most learners and supervising drivers find there are occasional angry outbursts and stressful situations in the car. It's not surprising – learning to drive can be stressful.

Expect a little anxiety sometimes because learning to drive safely is far more complex than most people realise. It's relatively easy to start, stop and steer but developing and applying safe driving skills in complex situations is very difficult.

Don't turn driving into an unpleasant chore. Keep the following in mind:

- If stress or anger affects you or your supervising driver, stop the car and take a short break.
- If the driving conditions become worse and your supervising driver is uncomfortable, stop the practice session and let them drive. Driving sessions should never place you at risk of crashing and learners shouldn't drive beyond their ability.
- You should both be very proud of your decision to work together. Keep reminding yourselves that a few mistakes will happen sometimes, but there will also be lots of progress.

Stage 1: Controlling the car

Your first job is learning how to make the car start, stop and steer.

If you've never been in the driver's seat, this can be a challenge. Even if you've been driving, your supervising driver needs to see you can do everything listed here before you move into traffic.

You'll be ready to move on from Stage 1 when you can show your supervising driver you can do the following in quiet locations, away from traffic.

In quiet locations, away from traffic:

Stage 1 goals

Adjust the seat, mirrors and other controls ready to drive

Know where the controls are

Start the car

Move off smoothly

Slow down and stop smoothly at a chosen location

Corner smoothly at low speed

Stop the car on a slight slope and move off again using the handbrake

Use the gears smoothly and efficiently in low speed driving (for manual cars)

Reverse in a straight line and around a curved path

How to achieve the goals

- Find a quiet location to practice. Try places such as:
 - new housing estates or industrial areas on weekends
 - car parks near beaches or big public parks when they're not crowded or busy
 - car parks and roads leading to sports grounds after the weekend games
 - a quiet local street.
- Spend some time getting to know the car's controls. You should be able to find and operate most of the controls – floor pedals, indicators, lights, horn, gears – without looking for them.
- Before you start driving, make sure the seat, steering wheel (in some cars) and mirrors are all adjusted to suit you. A professional driving instructor can show you how to set the car up for driving.
- Consider getting some professional driving lessons. Your supervising driver could go along for one with you.
- Make sure you can start and stop the engine, and learn how to change gears if you're learning in a manual car.
- To start, make the car move off in a straight line, then make it stop. Practice accelerating and braking as smoothly as possible.
- Choose a simple path to follow. If you are practising in a car park you could use some old boxes or similar to mark it out. Practice steering smoothly around corners at a slow speed. Don't forget to use your indicators!

Tips for your supervising driver

Make sure your learner fills in their **Learner Log Book** – you should use it to ensure they get practice in a variety of conditions.

Stage 1: Controlling the car

- As you get more comfortable with cornering, focus on changing gears while you're driving around your course. You probably won't get beyond second or third gear but the practice is useful.
- While you're doing all this, make sure you practice using your mirrors and looking for other road users and potential hazards.
- Change the route from time to time or go in the opposite direction.
- Practice reversing. Start in a straight line, then practice reversing around corners or a marker. Be extra careful to watch out for others!
- Find a slight slope and practice starting and stopping – both uphill and down.

Tips for your supervising driver

Learning a new skill is difficult, and people learn at different rates and have different styles. For many learners this is the most frustrating part of learning to drive – it looks easy, but it's challenging.

You can do the following to make the learning process smoother:

- **Get rid of any potential distraction – no radio, passengers, music, mobile phones or spectators. Your learner needs to concentrate.**
- **Start with simple tasks and only advance to more complicated ones when these are under control.**
- **Early in the learner period, short, more frequent sessions are better than long ones.**
- **The basic skills practised here are the building blocks for safer driving. Get some professional help if needed. Don't move on to Stage 2 until Stage 1 is under control.**
- **Make it a habit at the end of each session to discuss how your session went and what may need more work next time.**

How much professional driving instruction should you have?

If you get professional lessons, you might wonder how many you should have and when to have them. The answer is different for every learner.

Many learners have lessons early in Stage 1 – before they move into traffic. Many learners have lessons at the end of the learner period to make sure they're ready for their on-road drive test.

If you can afford it, it's good to work cooperatively with a driving instructor – perhaps to get advice as you move into each new stage or when you need some initial practice in a challenging driving situation.

Different learners learn different things from an instructor. You need to work out what's best for you and your supervising driver.

Keys for success

Consider starting with some lessons from a professional driving instructor.

Focus on starting, steering and stopping – all at low speeds in a quiet place.

Once you can manoeuvre the car, start and stop smoothly, and have achieved all the Stage 1 goals, you're ready for Stage 2.

Stage 2: Driving on quiet low speed roads



Once you can drive the car smoothly in a quiet area without traffic, it's time to apply your new car control skills on quiet, low speed roads. Quiet residential streets are ideal. This stage will give you a chance to practise driving on real roads, without having to deal with too much traffic or other road users.

You'll be ready to move on to Stage 3 when you and your supervising driver agree you can do each of the goals shown on the facing page, in fine weather, in the rain and at night.

Tips for your supervising driver

This stage brings new challenges – these include other cars, children, cyclists, pets and other hazards. From now on the main safety skill your learner will develop is detecting and responding to potential hazards before there's a risk of a crash.

As well as navigating and giving practical advice about car control, you should point out potential hazards to help direct your learner's attention to possible problems. It's hard work, which is why you should spend as much time in Stage 2 as you need before moving on. There's no need to rush!

Start simply and increase complexity over the stage. Plan the routes together, then talk about each session afterwards – and it's OK to stop (safely) during sessions to discuss how things are going.

Don't forget, you can ask a professional driving instructor for help at any time if you're unsure about anything or you want advice about readiness to move on to the next stage.

In fine weather, in the rain and at night:

Stage 2 goals

☀️ Dry daytime driving ⌚ Wet weather driving 🌙 Night time driving

Move from the kerb safely and stop at the kerb safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Turn right at quiet intersections safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Use your mirrors correctly and do head checks (look over your shoulder and through the rear side windows when necessary)	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Drive within the speed limit and at a safe speed for the conditions	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Observe potential hazards when moving off	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Leave a safe space between your car and other cars, and the kerb	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Drive on straight, quiet, low speed roads safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Start and stop on hills	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Drive around curves on quiet, low speed roads safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Complete a three point turn and parallel park smoothly	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Turn left at intersections safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Reverse out of a driveway or out of a parking spot safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Negotiate roundabouts (in quiet, residential streets) safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Detect and respond to potential hazards in quiet streets (such as parked cars, other traffic, cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians, children or pets)	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Smoothly slow down when approaching intersections	☀️ ⌚ 🌙	Obey give way, stop signs and traffic lights	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Travel through quiet intersections safely	☀️ ⌚ 🌙		

Stage 2: Driving on quiet low speed roads

How to achieve the goals

The key to Stage 2 (and 3) is choosing driving routes that let you develop your skills, without driving beyond your ability.

You and your supervising driver will map out some driving routes through residential areas or other quiet driving locations so you can practice driving.

The routes should match where you're at as a learner. You wouldn't start dealing with heavy traffic or multi-lane roads yet. The idea of learning to drive is to develop skills progressively, not throw you in the deep end.

Here's what you and your supervising driver need to do during Stage 2:

- Get a map of your local area. Mark out a route that stays on quiet roads where there won't be much traffic. Do this together and discuss the route and potential hazards before you start driving.
- Your first route should look like a rectangle with left turns only.

- With each driving session, increase the complexity of the route so it includes roundabouts and going straight, or turning right at intersections. Always remember, this stage must focus on quiet streets.
- As you get more experience, you should add some wet weather and night time driving, but stick to quiet streets.
- Towards the end of this stage, it's OK to move on to slightly busier roads to get a sense of what the next stage will involve.
- With each drive, make sure your supervising driver navigates for you. You should concentrate on seeing and obeying signs, driving at a safe speed and noticing and avoiding potential hazards.
- Keep practising slow speed manoeuvres such as parking.
- After each session, talk with your supervising driver about how it went and what you could improve next time. Don't be upset by a bit of criticism – you won't improve if you can't identify areas you need to work on.

What does 'safely' mean?

When you work through your list of goals, you and your supervising driver need to decide if you're doing things 'safely'. The easiest way to do this is to work out how you both feel when you drive in each of those situations.

Driving safely means choosing the right speed, using mirrors and head checks, noticing and avoiding potential hazards, keeping safe distances from other cars etc. It also means driving in a way that makes the supervising driver (or any passengers) feel relaxed.

If they feel a bit tense at some point in your drive, you probably need to improve your driving in that situation.

Keys for success

Plan your practice routes with your supervising driver.

Start with simple routes and slowly make them more complex.

Drive mainly on quiet streets with little traffic.

Stage 3: Complex driving situations



Now that you can handle driving in quiet streets, it's time to apply your safe driving skills to complex situations such as main roads, busy traffic and difficult conditions.

This will be a challenging stage of the learner period. The aim is to help you become a safer driver in a variety of driving situations.

You'll be ready to move on to Stage 4 when you and your supervising driver agree you can do each of the goals shown on the facing page, in fine weather, in the rain and at night.

Keys for success

Remember, in order to stream audio material or use navigation, you must set this up before driving and not interact with these functions in any way whilst driving, including through voice commands. The only exception is that you are permitted to make simple audio or navigation adjustments whilst driving using an inbuilt device only. Remember, scrolling, entering text or numbers is not permitted.

How to achieve the goals

Stage 3 involves driving in complex situations. The skills you developed on quiet roads can now be applied to busy traffic and more difficult driving conditions.

The best way to do this is to start with simple tasks or situations and gradually make them harder. Each new situation draws on your earlier experience and what you've already learnt, so don't feel overwhelmed.

Here are some suggestions to help you:

- Start by choosing practice routes that include some sections on lower speed busy roads.
- Don't move into peak hour traffic right away.
- Begin with routes on normally busy roads during the day or when there is less traffic.
- As you become more experienced in traffic, get some night time or wet weather practice using the same routes.
- Once you can handle lower speed roads in a range of complex conditions, gradually build up to higher speed roads by the end of this stage.

In fine weather, in the rain and at night:

Stage 3 goals

☀ Dry daytime driving ☔ Wet weather driving 🌙 Night time driving

Enter busy traffic safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Drive on lower quality roads safely	☀ ☔ 🌙
Drive on straight and curved main roads safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Plan your own driving routes for normal driving trips	☀ ☔ 🌙
Keep in your own lane and change lanes safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Overtake others safely on divided multi-lane roads	☀ ☔ 🌙
Negotiate and turn at traffic lights safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Detect and avoid potential hazards	☀ ☔ 🌙
Smoothly slow down and choose a suitable speed when approaching intersections and curves	☀ ☔ 🌙	Drive within the speed limit and at a safe speed in busy traffic	☀ ☔ 🌙
Handle busy roundabouts safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Select safe gaps when entering or crossing traffic	☀ ☔ 🌙
Cope with busy intersections safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Keep a safe following distance in busy traffic	☀ ☔ 🌙
Turn across oncoming traffic safely	☀ ☔ 🌙	Drive on high speed roads safely	☀ ☔ 🌙
		Be able to use navigation or play or stream audio material safely without being distracted	☀ ☔ 🌙

Stage 3: Complex driving situations

How to achieve the goals *(continued)*

- With increasing experience, you can start driving in heavy traffic (peak hour), then begin combining driving on busy roads with other skills such as night time driving.
- Keep using planned routes when you begin Stage 3. As you progress, start replacing them with everyday driving tasks, such as going to the shops, or driving to and from school or work.
- Planned driving practice can still be useful if you find your everyday driving doesn't include enough driving at night or in poor weather.
- The supervising driver's role will change towards the end of this stage:
 - They gradually become less involved in your driving decisions as your skills improve.
 - They'll still offer advice, but hopefully you'll begin detecting hazards and making safe decisions more easily, without needing prompts from your supervising driver.
- As you get more experience and do more everyday driving, there may be times you need to carry an extra family member as a passenger. That's OK as long as you and your supervising driver are comfortable and the passenger doesn't interfere with your concentration.
- It's easy to include driving practice into your family's everyday driving. Allow some extra time each trip so you never feel rushed.
- Offer to drive whenever you think you can manage the trip.
- Start using navigation or play or stream audio material (set up before driving) safely for short less complex drives and then shift to more complex drives once you can drive safely with these distractions. Remember you must not use voice commands and only interact with your phone/device using an inbuilt device whilst driving, and navigation or audio material must be set up before taking off.
- When driving, learner drivers get tired more quickly than experienced drivers. Remember to plan for and take regular breaks. Make sure you've had a good night's sleep so you're both alert.

Tips for your supervising driver

Practice means more than just one or two short trips. For example if your learner is trying to get some practice at night, make sure you get out as often as possible.

At this stage learners can feel less motivated to practice. They feel they can control and manoeuvre the car pretty well so practising isn't important. Remember, practice is essential, so find ways to build practice sessions into your everyday transport needs. It's amazing how much time your learner builds up driving to and from school and other places.

Only use a phone/device for navigation or to play or stream audio material, set up before driving. Only introduce when your learner is ready. Do this slowly and in less complex environments so they are not distracted and can still drive safely.

Use professional driving instructors if you or your learner have any questions about driving, or if you want some advice about readiness to move on to the next stage.

The learner needs to maintain good speed control by driving within the speed limit at all times, and preferably a little below the limit.

As this stage progresses, you become more of a coach, keeping an eye on your learner, giving them practice opportunities that match their improving skills and offering occasional advice.

Keep having short review discussions at the end of each drive. Talk about the good and not-so-good aspects of the session, including any unsafe driving you noticed from other drivers.

Remember to include the full range of driving situations:

- If you're in a rural area, have some sessions in a regional centre.
- If you're in a regional centre, visit Melbourne at the end (not the beginning) of this stage for some practice on really busy roads.
- If you're in Melbourne, don't forget to practice on rural highways and smaller rural roads, at the end of this stage.
- Perhaps get some practice on dirt roads – although professional help might be worthwhile if you're not experienced in that sort of driving.

Stage 3: Complex driving situations



Thinking about hazards

You probably already know you'll have to do a Hazard Perception Test when you go for your licence.

That's because avoiding hazards and risky situations is an important skill for safe driving.

What happens in your head is more important than just controlling your car.

Keys for success

Get lots of practice in lots of different driving situations.

Gradually increase the complexity of your driving situations.

Replace planned routes with your family's everyday driving tasks as you get more experience.

What makes a driver unsafe?

You can only concentrate on one or two tasks at a time. Many unsafe situations occur because drivers don't focus on driving as much as they should. For example:

- New drivers need to concentrate closely on their driving because they have trouble making quick decisions when the situation gets difficult.
- New drivers in challenging situations tend to focus on their basic driving skills instead of looking out for potential problems.
- Distractions (using a mobile phone, changing CDs, having a conversation) also get in the way of concentrating on your driving.
- When you drive too fast, it's difficult to think quickly and it's hard to focus on possible hazards.
- Alcohol and many drugs slow your thinking. Driving with either in your system can mean you can't concentrate well enough to drive safely.
- Tiredness and stress have the same effect as alcohol and some drugs.

Keep your mind on driving

Anything that helps you concentrate more will reduce your crash risk. Here are some good habits you should learn:

- Slow down. Even skilled drivers are safer when they drive slower because there's more time to process what's happening around them.
- Remember that the speed limit for a particular road is the maximum speed under ideal conditions. You may need to drive more slowly when conditions are poor, such as in the rain or when it is dark or traffic is heavy.
- Avoid driving when you're tired, stressed or distracted.
- Never drive after drinking alcohol, and check with your doctor or pharmacist that your driving won't be affected by any drugs you are taking.
- Purposefully slow down and be extra vigilant in new or challenging driving situations, or when conditions change, such as when it starts raining.
- Minimise distractions in the car. Only use securely mounted phone or other devices for navigation or to play or stream audio material set up before driving and only if ready.
- Avoid concentrating on distractions outside the car.

Stage 3: Complex driving situations



Avoiding hazards

Detecting and responding to hazards are essential skills for safe driving. There are some practical ways you and your supervising driver can improve these skills:

- Early in the learner period, your supervising driver should have been pointing out most hazards. As your experience grows, they shouldn't need to do this as often.
 - When you're driving in challenging situations (heavy rain, fog or darkness), talking your way through the hazards can help focus your attention. If it is safe, tell your supervising driver what you see and what you're doing about it (e.g. 'There's a bike rider there so I'll slow down').
 - Drive a bit slower when you're in new situations or on unfamiliar roads. It gives you more time to spot hazards.
 - Look further ahead of your car so you spot hazards before they become a problem.
 - Practice spotting less obvious road users (cyclists, pedestrians, children and motorcyclists) and drive more cautiously than usual when you see them.
 - Don't forget hazards can be behind and beside you. Use your mirrors and do head checks when needed.
- Drive as if something unexpected will happen. Make sure there are no distractions and all your attention is on driving.
 - The two best defences against unexpected hazards are less speed and more space:
 - Drive slower than you might want to and practice creating space around your car.
 - Try to avoid driving alongside other cars – you could be in their blind spot.
 - Leave large gaps when you turn across oncoming cars or enter moving traffic.
 - Don't drive too close to the vehicle in front, keep a safe distance from other cars.
 - Keep practising! Hazard perception skills improve with driving experience, so make sure you get as much experience in as many different driving situations as possible. You can even practice spotting hazards as a passenger.
 - Become predictable. Other drivers are trying to avoid hazards. If you do unexpected things, you become their hazard and increase your risk of being in a crash.



Keys for success

Slow down and create space around your car.

Minimise distractions and avoid alcohol, tiredness and stress.

Keep practising your driving to improve your hazard perception skills.

Be predictable so you don't become someone else's hazard.

Stage 4: Rehearsing solo driving



In the final stage of the learner period it's important to use a car safely and consistently, in all conditions and traffic, so that you're prepared for when you'll be driving on your Ps.

By the end of this stage you should be ready to drive safely as a solo driver in a broad range of driving conditions.

You and your supervising driver should agree you can drive safely in light and heavy traffic in all sorts of driving conditions.

Tips for your supervising driver

Make sure your learner fills in their **Learner Log Book** – you should use it to ensure they get practice in a variety of conditions.

Your learner can drive with passengers, but make sure they don't become a distraction. Remember that they can only carry one peer passenger when they hold a P1 licence.

A sign that your learner is ready to drive on their own is when you say little and no longer need to tell them how to drive.

Your learner needs to show they can drive in all conditions, safely and independently.

Do not drive if you start feeling tired or drowsy or if your learner driver is starting to get tired or drowsy.

It's important that you and your learner have a good night's sleep to remain alert during your trips. Take regular breaks, have a 'powernap' and don't drive if you're starting to feel tired or drowsy.

It's important you stay alert, so don't use your mobile phone.

In fine weather, in the rain and at night:

Stage 4 goals

☀️ Dry daytime driving ⌚ Wet weather driving 🌙 Night time driving

Drive safely in light and heavy traffic	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Detect and respond to hazards	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Keep a safe distance from other traffic	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Choose safe and legal speeds	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Leave a safe gap when turning across other traffic	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Drive safely on a variety of road types and in different conditions	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Choose your own driving routes to get from your starting point to your destination	☀️ ⌚ 🌙
Drive safely making the range of decisions expected of a solo driver	☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Make safe decisions about driving – such as when to drive and when not to, and taking safe routes ☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Handle unexpected situations safely ☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Understand how to use a car safely as part of normal everyday transport ☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Manage moderate levels of distraction in the car, such as passengers and music, and know when and how to reduce distractions to stay safe ☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Handle complex tasks such as merging on a freeway, reversing from a driveway, parallel parking and changing lanes in busy areas, hook turns and busy intersections ☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Be able to set up navigation and audio to play or stream on your phone before driving, and use inbuilt device to adjust (not voice controls) without being distracted and still driving safely ☀️ ⌚ 🌙

Stage 4: Rehearsing solo driving

How to achieve the goals

Stage 4 is all about rehearsing for independent driving. You still need a supervising driver sitting beside you to help when needed, but you need to be developing your independent driving skills. They'll still offer advice and suggestions and will help you look for potential hazards, but increasingly you'll need to practice driving as if most of the responsibility and decision making belong to you.

You can do the following to continue developing your safe driving skills:

- Move slowly into this stage. There's still more practice and learning to do.
- At the start, you'll still get lots of advice from your supervising driver.
- As you progress you'll feel more like a solo driver as you become more competent across all driving conditions. Towards the end of stage 4, your supervising driver should not need to help as much but this will vary depending on the type of driving you do.
- If you need to go somewhere by car, ask to drive. It's up to your supervising driver to say 'yes', but it's worth asking for the practice.
- There are still times when specific practice is good:
 - If you haven't done much wet weather driving and it rains, ask for some extra practice sessions.
 - If you haven't driven on a freeway or rural road, ask for a session to practice on this road type.
- Gradually introduce distractions such as navigation or audio, but make sure you can keep your mind on driving.
- At first, only add distractions when you're driving in easier conditions. Once you can manage these in easier conditions, add them to more complicated trips – but stay in control. Make sure you can focus on driving and that the distractions don't cause you to lose concentration.
- Stage 4 is a good time to get some practice with passengers in the car. It is important to make sure that your passengers understand the importance of letting you focus on driving. If necessary, ask your supervising driver to help with this.

- You're in charge of the car when you're driving now. It's OK to tell passengers to settle down.
- Try to become your family's driver whenever you're going somewhere with them.
- Start making some longer trips, but make sure you manage your fatigue:
 - Don't drive when you're feeling tired.
 - Have a rest stop at least every two hours or more often if needed.

Keys for success

Move slowly through Stage 4.

Begin making most of the driving decisions without your supervising driver needing to help you as much as in Stage 3.

Be your family's driver whenever you can, but make sure you leave extra time so you're not rushed, and don't go beyond your driving ability.

Getting your licence



Don't rush! If you don't need your licence yet, it's alright to wait.

The more practice you get as a learner, the safer you'll be – and your learner permit is valid for 10 years.

If you've worked your way through this book and have done at least 120 hours of driving practice, you're well on the way to your probationary licence.

Remember to book a manual licence test if you will be driving a manual car or need to drive a manual car for work, study or an apprenticeship.

Goals

Your goal now is to get your probationary licence – if you're really ready!

You need to review your progress, prepare for the test, book it and take it.

How to achieve the goals

Don't stress out about the on-road drive test. Many young people get probationary licences every year in Victoria. The best way to improve your chance of success is to know what's coming and be prepared. Remember:

- Brush up on the road rules. You may think you know them because you've been driving for a while, but it's easy to forget the details.
 - Go through the basic driving skills again and make sure actions, such as checking mirrors and blind spots, and travelling at safe speeds with safe following distances and gaps, are second nature.
 - Consider some professional lessons. Ask the instructor and some of your licensed friends what to expect.
 - Review your **Learner Log Book** to be sure you have the minimum experience and have driven in many different situations.
- You probably already know what type of car (manual or automatic) you'll use for the test. Don't forget, if you use an automatic for the test, you'll be restricted to one when you're on your Ps.
 - Get some practice in the car you're using for the test. You don't want to be getting used to a new one during the test!
 - Contact VicRoads and book your test. You can take a professional driving instructor along if that helps you feel less anxious but you can't take a friend or relative.
 - You have to do a computerised Hazard Perception Test and an on-road drive test. Test details are in the **Road to Solo Driving** handbook and on the VicRoads website vicroads.vic.gov.au

Getting your licence

The Hazard Perception Test

The Hazard Perception Test is designed to see how safely you respond to traffic situations.

It will indicate how well you are able to observe the whole road environment and anticipate potential hazards. It will also assess your speed control, following distances and gap selection.

For each item in the Hazard Perception Test, you will see a video of a traffic situation and be given a driving task such as slowing down or making a turn. You will have to respond safely to each traffic situation.

The on-road drive test

It's easy to get nervous about the on-road drive test.

Read the VicRoads brochure **What you need to know about your Drive Test** for more information.

Make sure you can do the following:

- Know where the car's controls are and how to use them.
- Drive safely in quiet traffic conditions demonstrating you can use the indicators correctly, steer smoothly and perform simple actions such as turning at an intersection.
- Drive in different conditions at a speed to suit the conditions and within the speed limit, but not too slowly.
- Leave a safe gap between your vehicle and those around you at all times.
- Stay aware of (and avoid) potential hazards in quiet and busy traffic.

- Demonstrate good judgement at intersections and in other potential conflict situations in different traffic situations.
- Know how to perform slow speed actions such as a three point turn, U-turn and parking.
- Drive safely in busy traffic and on higher speed roads.

Discuss potential hazards with your supervising driver. Talk about what you're doing to reduce the risk of problems developing.

If you pass the on-road test you'll have your photograph taken and VicRoads will mail your probationary driver licence to you within about a week.

Keys for success

Brush up on the road rules and revisit your basic skills.

Read the VicRoads brochure *What you need to know about your Drive Test*.

Have some lessons with a professional driving instructor to see if you're ready for the test.

Check that your *Learner Log Book* is complete and book your test.

During your on-road test you will need to use a vehicle that:

- is currently registered, roadworthy and in clean condition
- can maintain a comfortable temperature for passengers
- has a speedo display on the dashboard that can be seen easily by the Licence Testing Officer
- has a manual transmission (for manual licence tests only)
- has a centrally mounted handbrake accessible to the person in the front passenger seat (in a dual control vehicle an accessible centrally mounted handbrake is not required if the instructor is in the front passenger seat)
- is capable of having the headlights (low beam) turned on during the test
- has a seat belt for every occupant
- has doors that are able to be opened from the inside (driver operated or automatic locking system must be disabled for the test).

Where dual controls are fitted, the vehicle must have working electronic buzzers fitted, or dual control pedal covers.

Any speed warning device and cruise control must be turned off during the test. Parking sensors and reverse cameras may be left on.

Staying safe on your P plates



Congratulations! You've got your licence and you've just joined one of the highest risk groups on the road. It takes years of experience to become a really safe driver. You may think you're a better driver than everyone else, but thinking you're safer than you really are can increase your crash risk. As a new driver, there are things you can do and think about to reduce your crash risk.

The facts

Driving seems pretty easy most of the time. As long as nothing unexpected happens and you drive carefully and legally, you should be safe.

However, unexpected things do happen. Sometimes drivers make mistakes or make poor judgements.

Probationary drivers are especially crash prone, particularly in their first year of driving. Here are some facts to keep in mind:

- Probationary drivers have three times the risk of being in a crash where at least one person is injured or killed.

- They have three times the risk of having a single vehicle crash, such as running off the road.
- Their crash risk in the first few months is very high compared to later in the probationary period.
- Even with 120 hours of experience as a learner, probationary drivers are still developing safe driving skills and still have a high risk of crashing.
- Drivers aged 18-25 account for about a quarter of all drivers killed.

Common crashes involving new probationary drivers include:

- running into the back of another vehicle
- turning right at intersections
- being hit by a right turning vehicle
- single vehicle crashes.

Staying safe on your P plates

How to be a safer driver

Driving solo is a new skill. Start carefully and gradually increase the complexity of driving. You can help yourself be safer in the following ways:

- Drive for a reason. The risk of crashing is much lower when you're driving to go somewhere – when you use your car for transport, not just for fun.
- Never drive after drinking or taking drugs that affect your driving. You have a zero BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) requirement for the whole of your probationary period because alcohol influences you more than experienced drivers.
- Start simply. When you first get your Ps, limit your driving in the first few months.
- Minimise driving at night or in wet weather – they're high risk times for new drivers.
- Don't drive when you're feeling tired. Fatigue is a problem for everyone, especially young drivers. If you get less sleep than you need because of study, work or partying, you'll have a higher crash risk.
- Scan intersections for hazards.

- Don't follow other cars too closely and increase the space around your car.
- Remember that you can only carry one peer passenger in your P1 period. For now, avoid carrying a car full of passengers until you've built up plenty of experience in difficult driving conditions. When you do carry passengers, make sure that they understand the importance of letting you concentrate on driving safely.
- Wait for longer gaps when turning into or across traffic.
- Only use your securely mounted phone or device for navigation or to play or stream audio material, and only if set up before driving. Simple audio and navigation adjustments using **only** an inbuilt device are allowed when driving.
- Keep control of potential distractions in the car (such as the CD player) and stay focused on your driving.
- Control your speed. As you get more experience, you may tend to push the speed limit or exceed it when you think it's safe. All drivers are more likely to crash if they're speeding. If someone else causes a crash and you're speeding, your injuries will be more serious than if you'd been driving more slowly.

- Experts agree that overconfidence leads to many young driver crashes. You do improve your skills and become safer as you get more practice on the road.

Some thoughts for supervising drivers

It's OK to make suggestions about your new solo driver's safety when you're concerned.

If your new driver is borrowing your car it's OK to make some rules like the suggestions on the previous page.

You can get your new driver to give you a lift every now and then. They might put on a bit of a safety act when you're there, but it reinforces your interest in their safety.

Remember you can check out the online resource, **Lessons from the Road**, at vicroads.vic.gov.au for further information about staying safe on P plates.

Keys for success

Don't be overconfident. Remember your safe driving skills improve with experience.

Practice the skills on page 44 to reduce your crash risk, they could save your life.

The road ahead

You've got your licence, but there's still plenty to learn. The Learner Kit has plenty of tips that will help make you a safer driver. Come back from time to time and read through the sections on the four stages of learning to drive. Most importantly, don't let yourself become overconfident.

Stay safe!

Did you know?

If you are under 25 and have completed your entire P1 and P2 probationary periods and have a good driving record, you may be eligible for a free three year driver licence.

To check the rules for eligibility, go to vicroads.vic.gov.au

vicroads.vic.gov.au

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Department
of Transport
and Planning