



FACT SHEET THE NEW AARP SMART DRIVER COURSE

FACT: 10,000 people are now turning 65 every day. Many of them are still driving.

As the number of older drivers increases, so must our efforts to optimize the driving experience for capable older adults. Doing so can reduce the negative driving-related human, financial, and social costs for older Americans and make driving safer for all Americans.

FACT: When today's 60 year old was born, the U.S. interstate highway system didn't exist.

The roads and their rules are changing. In recent years, the changes have been significant, including new technologies inside vehicles, new vehicle designs, and new traffic and safety rules that reflect a growing number of distractions around us.

FACT: AARP Driver Safety offers the nation's first and largest older driver refresher course.

- AARP Driver Safety is a leading authority on best practices for healthy and safe drivers age 50 and over.
- Since founded as "55 Alive" in 1979, it has graduated over 15 million participants.
- As the flagship initiative of AARP Driver Safety, the AARP Smart Driver Course is completed by approximately 500,000 participants per year, resulting in an estimated \$128 million in savings through insurance discounts¹.
- 4,000-plus volunteers help deliver the Course; approximately 30,000 classroom courses are offered each year.
- According to a recent poll, almost all participants (97 percent) indicated that they changed at least one key driving behavior as a result of what they learned in the Course.

FACT: On Jan. 1, 2014, AARP Driver Safety will launch its new and enhanced AARP Smart Driver Course.

The new AARP Smart Driver Course was designed to continue AARP's legacy of quality driver education while introducing a focus on topics that are highly relevant for older drivers, such as:

- Best practices for sharing the road with other vehicles, including motorcycles and bicycles
- Stopping distance and merging
- Proper rules for roundabouts and stop-sign compliance
- Techniques for adjusting mirrors to reduce blind spots
- A full visual redesign, which takes into account how adults retain information. It features larger print type, full-color pages, an easy-to-follow format and videos to accompany the course book.

The course has been shown to help drivers make fewer errors that lead to crashes. It is the product of new evidence-based research in partnership with Eastern Virginia Medical School, expert insight and volunteer input. According to the research, those who completed the course:

- Committed fewer total errors and traffic violations, such as speeding or driving in the wrong lane during a follow-up evaluation whereas a control group committed more errors.
- Self-regulated their own driving behaviors, such as driving less at night, or in challenging weather conditions when the frequency of accidents is higher.

For more information on the AARP Smart Driver Course, or to book an interview on the topic of older driver safety, please contact Carrie Fox at 301-585-5034 or carrie@cfoxcommunications.com

1. Internal AARP Data: "Value of AARP Driver Safety," (January 2013).

ARE YOU A SMART DRIVER?

Even the most capable drivers can benefit from a driver refresh course. Test your own driving knowledge with these questions, pulled from the new AARP Smart Driver Course:

Q You approach a 4 way stop and 3 other vehicles are present. Which car has the right of way?

- A.** The vehicle to your right
- B.** The vehicle to your left
- C.** The vehicle that arrived at the intersection first, followed by the vehicle to your right
- D.** The vehicle that arrived at the intersection first, followed by the vehicle to your left

A **C.** The presence of a four way stop sign means that there are four stop signs at this intersection. Traffic from each of the four directions are required to stop. Typically the first vehicle at the intersection should move forward first. If two vehicles reach the intersection at the same time, the driver on the right would have the right of way.

Q Older drivers are typically safe, cautious drivers, but they're not perfect. What is the most common traffic violation committed by drivers age 55+?

- A.** Failure to yield the right-of-way
- B.** Making an improper left turn
- C.** Making an improper lane change
- D.** Ignoring a stop sign or traffic light

A **A.** According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 35 percent of traffic violations for drivers age 55+ are for a failure to yield the proper right-of-way. One in four traffic violations involve making an improper left turn. Fifteen percent involved an improper lane change and 10 percent are the result of ignoring a stop sign or traffic light.

Q When driving, how much distance should you keep between your car and the car in front of you?

- A.** You should remain at least 3 feet behind the car you are following
- B.** You should remain 3 car lengths behind the car you are following
- C.** You should remain 3 seconds or more behind the car you are following
- D.** You should remain 30 seconds behind the car you are following

A **C.** A 3 second following distance will help you spot possible driving hazards and give you time to react. For instance, if your car is traveling at a speed of 60 mph, in 3 seconds your vehicle will have traveled more than 250 feet – that's just under the length of a football field.

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Q While waiting to turn left at an intersection, your wheels should be pointed in which direction?

- A. Straight
- B. Left
- C. Right
- D. It doesn't matter

A A. When you're at an intersection while waiting to turn left, your wheels should be pointing straight ahead. This way, if your foot slips off the brake or you are struck from behind, your car won't move into oncoming traffic.

Q Which of the following is a false statement about blind spots?

- A. The best way to compensate for blind spots is to turn your head and glance over each shoulder before making a lane change
- B. The larger the vehicle, the smaller the blind spots
- C. No matter what kind of car you have, or how well adjusted your mirrors are, you will always have blind spots
- D. Neck or shoulder stiffness can prevent you from being able to see blind spots

A B. All vehicles, regardless of size and the availability of side and rear view mirrors, have blind spots. In fact, the larger the vehicle, the larger the blind spot. You need to know your car's blind spots and take care not to travel in another driver's blind spot.

Q At what age does vision start to change in ways that affect driving?

- A. 30
- B. 40
- C. 50
- D. 60

A B. For many people, age 40 is a turning point for vision. People in their 40s often begin to have trouble reading items up close, or seeing far distances, or seeing clearly at night. It's important to have regular eye examinations by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist, and if you are having vision problems, ask if you should be wearing glasses, and whether you may need one type of glasses for day and another for driving at night. If possible, you may want to avoid driving at night, or at dusk or dawn, as driving visibility is more difficult during those times.

Q Which of the following is a true statement about driving in bad weather?

- A. The car's interior lights should be turned on so other drivers can see your vehicle more easily.
- B. Wearing polarized sunglasses during a heavy downpour can improve visibility.
- C. You should drive with your high beams on until the weather improves.
- D. You should keep up with the posted speed limit and activate your hazard lights.

A B. Strange as it may sound, wearing polarized sunglasses during a heavy downpour can actually improve visibility. Sunglasses can cut the glare that the rain produces on the road and allow you to see through the white mist coming off of car tires.