



# Perception

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## Visual Search / Perception

### *Scanning*

To be a safe driver, you must know what is happening around your vehicle. You must look ahead, to the sides and behind the vehicle. Scanning helps you to see problems ahead that may cause you to change speed or roadway position, such as vehicles and people that may be in the roadway or signs warning of problems ahead.

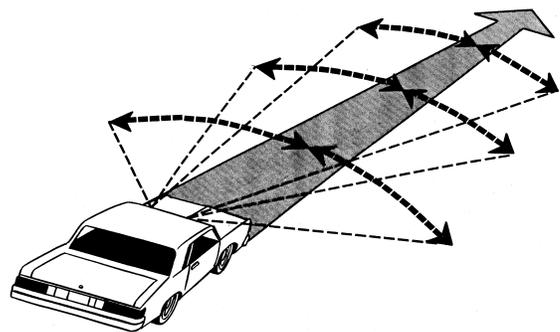
**Look ahead** –In order to avoid emergency braking or steering, you should look well down the roadway to the end of the travel path. By looking well ahead you can operate a vehicle more safely, save on fuel, help keep traffic moving at a steady pace and allow yourself time to see better around your vehicle and along the side of the road. Looking well down the travel path will also help you to steer with less weaving.

In the city/urban area, you should look at least two blocks or two traffic signals ahead. In a suburban area, you should look at least three blocks or three traffic signals ahead. In a rural area, you should look at least a quarter of a mile ahead.

When looking well ahead, look for vehicles coming onto the roadway, into your lane, or turning. Watch for brake lights from slowing vehicles. By seeing these things far enough ahead, you can change your speed or change lanes if necessary to avoid a problem. If you see a traffic light that has been green for a long time, it may change to red before you get there. Therefore, you should start slowing down and be ready to stop.

By seeing problems ahead early, you can drive more safely, which also helps drivers behind you drive more safely too. Making driving changes well ahead of time gives drivers behind you more time to react. The earlier you act, the less often someone behind you has to react quickly to your vehicle.

To identify potential problems in the travel path, you need to look as far ahead as possible. Having a good visual lead and using good searching skills helps you see changes in your travel path. If something is in your vehicle's travel path that requires you to make an adjustment, it is critical to see the problem with time to stop or steer around it.



**Look to the sides** – At any time, other vehicles or pedestrians may cross or enter your travel path. You should search to make sure other roadway users will not cross your travel path. This is especially true at intersections and highway-railroad grade crossings.

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Whenever there is a lot of activity along the side of the road, there is a good chance that someone will cross or enter the road. Therefore, it is very important to look to the sides when you are near shopping centers and parking lots, construction areas, busy sidewalks, playgrounds and schoolyards.

**Look to the rear** – Besides watching traffic ahead of you, you must check traffic flow to the rear. You need to check to the rear more often when traffic is heavy. This is the only way you will know if someone is following too closely or coming up too fast. The searching process will give you time to change speed or change lanes avoiding any potential problems. It is very important to look for vehicles to the rear prior to changing lanes, slowing down, entering traffic from the side of a street or driving down a long or steep hill.

## *Adjusting speed*

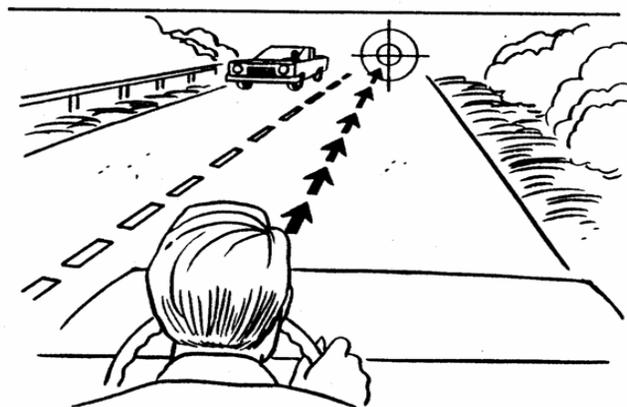
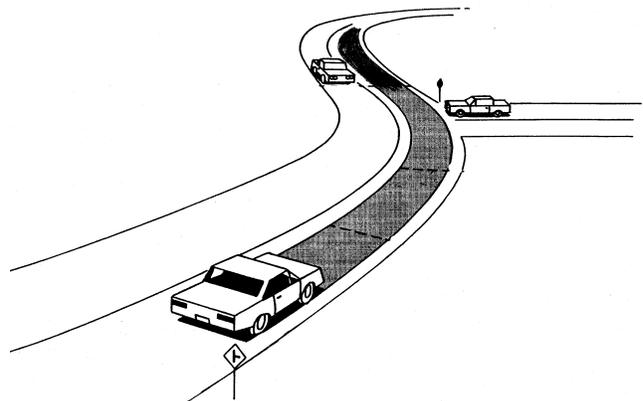
The faster your vehicle is going, the more time and distance it will take for turning, slowing or stopping. Driving safely means adjusting your vehicle speed for roadway and traffic conditions, seeing well ahead in the travel path, providing an adequate following interval, and obeying the appropriate speed limits.

## *Adjusting to roadway conditions*

There are road conditions where you must reduce speed to be safe, such as before a sharp curve, when the roadway is slippery or when there is a potential for animals standing on the roadway.

## *Scanning*

- Use efficient eye habits.
- Use a systematic search pattern.
- Search for conflict situations.
- Know what to look for.
- Picture the path of travel.
- Look down the middle.
- Look far ahead
- Search 20 to 30 seconds ahead.
- Search from side to side.



Information for this fact sheet was derived from:  
 ADTSEA Curriculum version 2.0  
 AAMVA Model Driver Manual