

Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

Supervised Driving Practice – In Car Lesson 1

Pre-planning Checklist

Your vehicle should be in good mechanical condition with all safety equipment in working order. You should have the proper insurance coverage on your vehicle – here is a link to information from ICBC: <https://www.icbc.com/insurance/costs/drivers-experience-crash-history/Pages/learner.aspx> Make sure your new driver “L” or “N” sign is displayed. Before each lesson, the supervisor needs to decide on the focus of the practice session and know where to find a suitable area for driving where the new driver can learn safely. Spend some time thinking about what type of area is suitable for the driver’s skill level. This is a key aspect to ensuring the safety of yourself and your new driver. Conducting a practice session in an area where traffic is too heavy, intersections are complicated, speeds are too high, etc. will be dangerous and extremely stressful for both of you. You may have to drive to a suitable area before handing control over to your student. That time is not wasted - it can be used productively by alternating running commentary, reading off road signs, or calling out hazards, for example. Remember learner drivers must have zero blood-alcohol content and are not permitted to use electronic devices. Supervisors also must not use hand-held electronic devices and may not be impaired by alcohol or drugs.

For Lesson 1, the ideal place is a large, open parking lot with a minimum of obstructions. It’s worth driving out of your way to find such a spot especially if this first lesson is the very first time your student driver has been in control of a vehicle. Google Maps satellite view is a good way to identify large parking lots if you’re unsure of where to find a good training area. If such an area is unavailable, a wide, quiet side street can be used with caution.

Reference Material – LTDS Chapter 2, pgs. 13-27, TUFDS Chapters 2 and 3 pgs. 9-23

ICBC’s Learn to Drive Smart (LTDS) booklet has plenty of good information. Chapter 2 - You and Your Vehicle is a good resource for information covered in this session – you should read this prior to the first session with your student driver. The other ICBC book, “Tuning up for Drivers” is intended to be used during in-car practice sessions. We recommend having a copy of both in the vehicle for reference during all supervised practice sessions. There is a wealth of good information that will help answer questions that will arise during the practice sessions. If you don’t already have them, they’re available at ICBC Driver Services Centres at no charge, and you can view or download them here: <https://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/driving-guides/Pages/default.aspx>

Driver’s License, logbook

Both the student driver and supervisor must have their original copy BC Driver’s Licences during supervised practice. MBDA GLP students have a logbook which should be brought along on practice sessions to keep track of progress.

Head Check

At the very start of each lesson, the Head Check procedure should be followed. Even if you’ve been at home with your driver that day, it’s good to follow the procedure to establish the routine. The goal is to have the driver get used to going through a mental checklist, identifying any influences that might affect

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their fitness to drive – every time they get behind the wheel, for as long as they're driving. For tips on conducting an effective Head Check, see the notes in Supervised Practice: Part 2 - Preparation.

Vehicle Familiarization and Pre-trip Inspection

Carry a rag or paper towel for fluid checks. Use the MBDA Pre-Trip Checklist and the notes contained in Learn to Drive Smart (Ch. 2, pgs. 24,25) as a guide for conducting pre-trip checks. We'll summarize it below:

Tires: Visually check all 4 tires for underinflation. This is a good time to for students to learn to use a tire pressure gauge if they're unfamiliar with them. Check for excessive or uneven tread wear, cracks, cuts or bulges in the sidewalls.

Lights: All lights should be functioning, clean, with lenses free of cracks or damage. Refer to the checklist for the complete list of lights to check. Don't forget high and low beam on the headlights, turn signals, brake and hazard lights.

Vehicle Exterior: Look under the car for any leaks. If you see something, note the colour of the fluid to help identify where it comes from. Look for anything loose or low-hanging from under the car – exhaust system, front air deflectors, etc. Check that you have front and rear licence plates with valid decal. Make sure the vehicle insurance documents are stored inside the car. Observe the area around the car to ensure there are no obstacles close by. Check the car body and window glass for damage. Make sure side mirrors are secure and clean. Check that windows are clean and unobstructed.

Windshield and Wipers: Windshield glass should be free of cracks and large chips. Glass should be clean and unobstructed. Check operation of windshield wipers – high, low and intermittent speeds. Check to make sure windshield washers are working.

Under Hood: Check all fluid levels – observe safety rules relating to hot coolant. Fluid filler caps should be in place and tight. Check to make sure hoses show no signs of leaks and are not cracking, or brittle. Drive belts should be tight, clean and not frayed. Battery connections tight and free of corrosion. Check for bare or frayed electrical wiring.

Controls familiarization: Have the student driver seat themselves in the driver's seat. Go over the primary controls first: Steering wheel, brake pedal, accelerator pedal, gear selector, parking brake, turn signal lever, horn. Describe the operation of each control. Show the student how to operate the ignition switch (or push-to-start/stop button if equipped). Secondary controls: Headlight switch, dimmer switch, windows and door locks, seat adjustment controls, mirror adjustment controls, hazard flasher switch, rear defroster switch, heating and air conditioning controls (make sure the student knows how to set controls for maximum defrost). Instrument panel: Point out the speedometer, odometer, tachometer, fuel gauge and other gauges (if equipped). With the ignition on (engine not running) point out the indicators and warning lights installed in the car. Your owner's manual is a good source of information for anything you're unfamiliar with. It's a great idea to familiarize the student driver with the owner's manual and the type of information it contains. It can be very helpful in the case of a roadside breakdown. The ICBC LTDS book has a section on the instrument panel on pages 22 and 24.

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Safety Devices – Seat Belts, Head Restraint, Air Bags: Seat belts must be worn at all times by all passengers in the vehicle. Check that belts retract properly, are not twisted or frayed and the buckles latch and unlatch properly. Belts must be worn properly without looseness to function effectively. Head restraints should be moved to the correct position if they're adjustable. There are (at minimum) driver side and passenger side air bags on most vehicles. Many vehicles also have supplemental air bags in several other areas inside the vehicle for additional safety. Air bags only work properly if vehicle occupants are restrained by seat belts in a crash. Unrestrained occupants can be seriously injured by deploying air bags.

Seating and Mirrors: With the student seated in the driver's seat, adjust the seat, steering wheel and mirrors. Refer to Supervised Practice: Part 2 for full details on these adjustments and finding the proper seating and mirror position.

360-degree check - Blind Spots: A 360-degree check should be done every time you move your vehicle after it's been parked, and right before reversing. Here's the procedure:

Start on the left side – do a left shoulder check, then check your left side mirror. Start scanning towards the right, through the left side window, front through the windshield, checking the rear-view mirror on the way, continue to the right side, checking the right-side mirror and then shoulder checking to the right. Finish the 360-degree check by turning and looking backwards through the rear window. Do this a couple of times to get used to the procedure. It can be helpful to have the driver say the steps out loud as they practice.

The supervisor should exit the vehicle and demonstrate the location of the blind spots around the vehicle. There are four – front, rear and both sides. Have the student driver seated in the driver's seat in the proper position. Instruct them not to move their head but to use the mirrors only. Start from the front and walk slowly towards the front of the car. When the driver can no longer see the supervisor's knees they should call out "Stop" or give a quick tap on the horn. Now, mark the spot with something (we use traffic cones for this) – possibly a soccer cone, or even an "X" with driveway chalk etc. Do the same thing at the rear – walk slowly towards the rear while the student observes using the rearview mirror. Mark the spot where they can no longer see your knees in the mirror. Next, walk slowly around the car and have the driver signal when you disappear in the side mirrors on both sides. This indicates the area of blind spots to the sides. When you've done these steps, ask the driver to exit the vehicle and walk around the car with you. Note the size of the blind spot to the rear – what could be hidden there?

Best practice: Do a quick walk around your car every time you approach it after it's been parked to make sure there is nothing hidden in those blind spots that could be a hazard when you move the car.

Use of controls: The left foot should be on the rest pad. Do not use your left foot on the brake pedal. The right foot is used to operate the brake and accelerator pedals. Locate the transmission gear selector and turn signal lever.

Steering wheel hand position & hand-over-hand steering: Most supervisors were taught to hold the steering wheel with hands at "10 and 2". This has evolved due to changes in vehicle's steering systems and vehicle equipment and the recommended hand position is "9 and 3". This hand position has several benefits: You can turn the steering wheel through more degrees of rotation without repositioning your

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hands. This position keeps your hands and arms away from the air bag should it deploy. Your hands will be in the best position to operate other controls – turn signals, wiper controls, headlight switches are mounted on stalks that can be reached without moving your hands from 9 and 3. Steering wheel mounted controls are designed to be in easy reach with hands at 9 and 3. With your hands in this position, you're able to steer around almost all corners and intersections without repositioning your hands.

“Hand-over-hand” steering is the correct way to use the steering wheel when maneuvering in tight spaces or parking. Follow this description and be prepared to demonstrate to your student: Start with hands at 9 and 3, Turn the wheel to the right until your right hand goes past 6 o'clock. Release your right hand while you continue turning the wheel with your left hand. Reposition your right hand at 10 o'clock as you continue turning the wheel. As your left hand passes 3 o'clock, continue steering with your right as you release your left hand and reposition at 10 o'clock and continue turning. Repeat this until you have turned as far as necessary or you reach the steering “lock” – as far as it will turn.

To straighten out, reverse the procedure to the left. You should not let the steering wheel slide through your hands as it straightens – “unwind” the steering using hand over hand motions. Keep hands on the outside of the steering wheel rim, don't turn your hand and grab the wheel from inside the rim to turn. Don't “palm” the wheel when turning – always use hand-over-hand. Tip: you can bring a prop along to use as a steering wheel to demonstrate and practice – a Frisbee or even a dinner plate will work! Also, be aware that “dry steering” (steering lock-to-lock while the vehicle is stationary) can be a little hard on some of the car's components and the tire tread – don't over-do the number of times you practice this while the car is stationary. Later in this lesson, you could have your driver practice some low speed, tight “figure 8s” if there is space so your student can practice hand over hand repeatedly to the left and right without straining the car's steering components or tires.

Starting and shut down procedure: To start the vehicle, make sure the transmission is in “Park” and the parking brake is set. Apply the brakes with your right foot and hold pressure on the brakes while starting. Turn the key in the ignition until you see all the instrument panel warning lights appear. This is the “On” position. Turn the key to the start position and be prepared to release the key as soon as you hear the engine start. If your vehicle has a push button to start and stop the engine, a single press will start the sequence and the system will automatically engage the starter then disengage the starter when the engine starts. You don't have to hold the button depressed and then release it when the engine starts. A single press and release are all that's required. When you want to shut off the engine, either turn the key to the off position (never turn the key to the start position with the engine running – damage to the engine's starter will result) or push the Start/Stop button once.

Starting and stopping: For this warmup, we'll assume the car is facing forward in a lane in an open parking lot where the student can simply begin driving forward, starting and stopping without pulling out and pulling over towards the curb. If you're practicing on a public street, review the whole lesson plan below before you start.

Start the engine. Apply the brakes and hold pressure. Pivot your right foot over to the accelerator pedal and very lightly move the pedal a small amount. You can experiment with being very gentle on the pedal to control the amount the engine speeds up. Look at the tachometer to see the engine speed increase. Listen to how the sound of the engine changes. In this driving exercise you need to use very light

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pressure on the pedal to get the car to begin moving. Once you've practised this a few times, put your foot back on the brake and hold pressure. Put the transmission in "Drive". Release the parking brake. Perform the 360-degree check. Check mirrors. If it's safe to move, release the brake smoothly and pivot your foot on the heel to the accelerator. Apply slight, gentle pressure and the car will begin to move. You're driving! After you move a short distance, pivot your heel and move your foot back to the brake. Gently apply the brakes and bring the car to a smooth stop. When you apply the brake, look in the rearview mirror. Practice "foot to brake – eyes to mirror" every time you apply the brakes. Repeat this starting and stopping exercise numerous times. You can start to drive a little farther before stopping now. Keep your hands at 9 and 3 on the wheel. Already you're working on your mental program for starting and stopping. Be smooth. See if you can stop the car gently without a big jerk as the car comes to a stop. While you're practicing, think about your vision. You should be looking far in front of the car – all the way as far as you can see. Looking farther in front of you will help you to keep the car going straight.

Remember "You go where you look." While your vision is focused far out in front of you, think about all the things you can see using your peripheral vision without actually focusing on them. Now you can start practicing scanning – looking side to side (left, center, right is the proper pattern for scanning as you approach intersections) as you drive forward. Introduce checking the mirrors – follow the scanning pattern, Left side mirror, centre rearview mirror, right side mirror. It's recommended you check your mirrors every 5 to 8 seconds whenever you drive. When you've gone as far as you can, use the hand-over-hand steering method to turn the car around and practice going in the other direction.

The supervisor might have to help with instruction here, or even reach over and assist with steering at first. The student should never look down at the controls, but always look where they want to go, when driving straight or when turning around. Sometimes you need to look through the driver's or passenger's side windows to see where you need to go. Repeat, repeat, repeat. The supervisor needs to identify and have the student correct errors – hand position, mirror checks, scanning, smooth control application, vision, hand over hand steering, etc. It's important to make sure your student doesn't practice the doing things the wrong way. Remember one of the goals is building a mental program and committing things into the driver's subconscious. Perfect practice makes perfect. Remember the idea of "linking". All these steps are linked to everyday driving – the student will be performing these same actions constantly as they drive, on busy roads, freeways, everywhere.

Moving away from curb: Performing the above exercise on a quiet side street gives the driver an opportunity to add a couple more skills to the practice. If you're transitioning to a quiet street from a big parking lot, the supervisor should drive to an appropriate place to continue the lesson. Start with the vehicle parked at the curb. Now the driver must add the steps of signalling, shoulder checking and steering out into the lane of traffic. They will observe proper lane position and be alert to other road users and hazards present. The process from the curb is mirror check, left signal on, shoulder check and steer into the traffic lane when safe to do so. Once established in the lane, check mirrors and make sure turn signal is off. During this practice session it's worth doing a hazard perception exercise, both while parked at the curb and while in motion. Have the driver call out every hazard they identify to give you an idea of what is being recognized as a hazard. There are stationary hazards – for example, hidden

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driveways, parked cars, overgrown bushes or trees, and there are moving hazards – vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, animals, etc.

Right Turns: During this exercise, students will have to begin doing some right turns. The best place to do this is a quiet neighbourhood where the intersections are quiet and feature either 2-way stops or are uncontrolled. New skills to introduce: Vision through turns, stop position, right-of-way at uncontrolled intersections. When introducing new skills or introducing students to new driving environments, it's an opportunity to use a whiteboard (or whiteboard app) to let students brainstorm and list steps to take when approaching stop signs and intersections. This is part of the process used to transfer responsibility to the student. Even at this early stage, student drivers should be taking responsibility for decisions and making those decisions in real time under the supervision of their co-driver. This process accelerates their learning and retention of the skills and concepts far faster and more permanently than if the supervisor is in a constant "instruction" mode, telling the student what to do every step of the way. It's hard not to do that – we all want to help as much as we can and giving constant instruction makes us feel like we're helping more. But when we do that, we just kick the problem down the road, and it becomes a bigger problem when the student begins to drive solo and doesn't have their co-driver to instruct them and remind them. The time to start coaching and limit instructing is on the first lesson.

Common mistakes – driving too close to parked vehicles, improper lane position, turning too wide or too sharp and constant steering corrections are all related to vision. Be on the lookout for these issues and fix them early before incorrect mental programming creeps in. Watch to make sure all the steps are done in the correct order – mirror, signal, shoulder check – lane position, stop position (refer to LTDS Pg. 42 for a description of where to stop at intersections - there are several variations!) Evaluate the student's smooth use of the controls, steering, brakes and accelerator, correct mistakes as you identify them. Practice this stage as much as possible. We'll work more on turns and vision on the next lesson as well.

Pulling over and stopping: It's good to take frequent breaks, just to let the student relax (they're using a lot more concentration than you might think) and to discuss progress, answer questions etc. Pulling over to the curb needs to be done slowly and carefully to avoid touching the curb and damaging the wheels. The first time the student does the pull over, don't worry too much about getting them close to the curb – we'll tackle that in a bit. Get them safely off the traffic lane and stop. Driver will apply and hold the brake, put the transmission in park and set the park brake. Shut the engine off if you're taking a break and plan to be parked for a while.

Pulling over requires the same steps as pulling out: Check mirrors, signal right, shoulder check right, steer gently towards the curb, applying the brakes to bring the car to a smooth controlled stop. When pulling over, if there is a car parked up ahead, have the student line up the center of the parked car (the licence plate is often a good reference) and park in line behind them. If there is no car, ask them to imagine one being there. The worst thing to do is to look at the curb! Remember – you go where you look. If they look at the curb as they approach it, they will very likely contact it. Don't forget, as a supervisor you can reach over and gently correct the steering if it looks like curb contact will occur.

Practice this literally for hours. Perfection at this stage will make so much of the more complex (and potentially stressful) much easier for the student and the co-driver. Remember linking – the skills and

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routines practiced, and the mental programming achieved are all linked to more complex driving situations like lane changes, merging and complex intersections. Getting this lesson perfect enables a much better transition to the next steps.

Congratulations for making it this far – you’ve both accomplished a lot. You won’t get all the practice you need to be proficient at these skills in one session. If you’re new to driving, you’ll want to spend several hours working on this level alone, but we suggest keeping the lessons to no more than 90 minutes to maintain concentration and reduce the chance of frustration. If you (either one of you!) feel frustrated, suggest you wrap up early and continue during the next session. Tired and frustrated drivers and/or supervisors do not have productive and enjoyable driving lessons. It’s much better to save it for another day.

Before you go: Record your progress in your logbook. Use scaling to decide on how your student is doing. Decide what you can do to get these skills to “a 9 or 10” on the scale. Wrap up, decide on when your next session will be and set yourself a reminder (a shared, on-line “driving lessons” calendar on your phone works great!) and decide what new skills you’ll work on, and what you’ll continue to practice.