

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

## Supervised Driving Practice – In Car Lesson 3

### 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 practice session the supervisor needs decide on the focus of the 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.

In Lesson 3 the focus will be on intersections of various kinds. Before moving on to this stage, supervisors should thoughtfully evaluate the student’s current skill level. Introducing students to more complex situations before they are ready will create a stressful and potentially dangerous situation. By now, the students should exhibit competency with left and right turns, uncontrolled intersections and intersections controlled by stop signs. They should be able to perform all the steps consistently – mirror checks, signalling, shoulder checks, speed choice, observation, smooth control of steering, brakes and accelerator. They should be able to describe right-of-way priorities in traffic scenarios. Students should show consistent lane positioning while driving and correct positioning at intersections. They should be using proper vision skills, looking far enough ahead to see developing hazards, scanning through intersections and looking through turns. In general, the student should consistently make good decisions and show they are able to drive safely and smoothly in this environment before moving to more complex traffic situations.

If either the supervisor or the student feels more practice at this level is appropriate, then there should be no rush to move on to more complex situations. It is impossible to predict how many hours of practice a student will need to get to this point – each student and each training situation is different. That is why it is so important to track and evaluate progress each step of the way. Don’t rush – it is never wrong to practice more of the basics. Again, Google Maps satellite view is a good way to identify good training areas. For this lesson, we are looking for streets with traffic lights and stop signs – 2-way and 4-way – but try to avoid busy multi-lane streets and intersections at this point. If there is no suitable area right where you live, it is worthwhile to have the co-driver drive to a safe area and begin the practice from there.

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

We cannot stress this enough - remember how important the choice of practice location is to the safety and success of your practice sessions. It is never a good idea to have your student driving in an environment unsuited to their skill level and experience.

**Reference Material – TUFD Chapters 12,13,14 – pgs. 69-85 – Road Sign review – LTDS, pgs. 29-36**

## **Basic Understanding of Road Rules, Signage, Lane Markings, Lights and Stop Signs:**

We are not going to go over these things in this guide. Your learner driver should have a pretty thorough knowledge of these topics at this point, before moving ahead. If, as their supervisor, you get a sense they are not well prepared in these areas, send them back to study! Before they can drive safely in more complex traffic situations, they need to properly understand the rules. It is not a good long-term strategy to have students rely on their co-driver to constantly remind them about the rules and sign meanings, etc. What will they do when you are no longer beside them? Student drivers need to take personal responsibility to learn these important things before they go any further. Put them to work – don't do their work for them!

ICBC's Learn to Drive Smart (LTDS) and "Tuning up for Drivers (TUFD) booklets have plenty of good information. 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 are 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 have been at home with your driver that day, it is 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 their fitness to drive – every time they get behind the wheel, for as long as they are driving. For tips on conducting an effective Head Check, see the notes in Supervised Practice: Part 2.

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.

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

**Crossing Intersections:** We will start each section of this lesson plan with a checklist. Bring out the whiteboard and ask your student driver to list the things they need to be aware of as they approach every intersection.

- How is it controlled – stop sign? 4-way, 2-way? Or traffic light?
- What colour is the light? If it is red or yellow – what do you do? (check mirrors, begin to slow down well in advance, prepare to stop at stop line. Scan for pedestrians and cross traffic.)
- If the light is green, did you see it turn green as you are approaching? (We will discuss handling “stale green” lights in a moment)
- Is it safe to proceed through? Scan left, center, right. Keep your eyes moving. Check your mirrors. Watch for pedestrians and other road users.
- Ease off the accelerator, cover the brake and horn as you enter the intersection.

Ask your student if it is safe to assume that they have the right-of-way because they have a green light. Do drivers ever make mistakes? What if another driver was distracted and went through on a red light as you entered the intersection? What could you do to reduce the risk here? Intersection crashes can be severe. A driver can protect themselves by watching their mirrors, slowing slightly, scanning carefully, covering the brake and horn and being prepared to brake suddenly if a car enters the intersection against the light.

## “Stale Green” lights and Point of No Return:

As you approach an intersection with a green light in your direction, if you didn't see it turn green as you are approaching, how do you know if it is about to turn yellow, and then red? Well, it turns out there are clues that can help. Using a whiteboard, have the student make a list of what things they can think of that might provide clues as to how long the light has been green before you got there and whether it is about to change. Here is a list – see how many of these your student can come up with on their own. When they get stuck you can ask some leading questions to steer them in the right direction.

- Traffic is building up in the opposite direction (light has been red for a while and traffic is waiting)
- Is the crosswalk signal: counting down, flashing hand or steady hand? (all signs the light may be about to change)
- Are there pedestrians standing waiting to cross? (may have pushed the crossing button)

All of these are indications the light may be about to change. The driver should ease up on the accelerator and cover the brake in case they must stop. As you approach an intersection, there is a point where you can no longer stop safely and that is referred to as the “point of no return”. This “point” is something the driver must decide upon. Again, you can ask your student to make a list of things to consider when deciding if they have reached the point of no return. The list should include the following:

- Vehicle speed and stopping distance required

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

- Road and weather conditions
- Traffic behind

There comes a point when for any given speed, you can no longer stop safely and properly behind the stop line. This point can be different if the road is slippery, or if there is a vehicle following closely behind, particularly a large vehicle which may not be able to stop in the same distance as your car.

While the student is learning how to judge where that point of no return is, you can have them say out loud “I can stop, I can stop, I can stop...” – then, “I cannot stop” when they feel they have reached the point of no return. That way you will be able to compare their decision to where you would decide the point of no return should be and provide some feedback on their chosen point. Practice this a lot – as you go through every intersection on a green light. I still do it when I drive every day!

## **If stopping at the intersection:**

If you know you need to stop at the intersection ahead, begin slowing early. It is best practice to use a bit of extra brake pressure at the beginning of the braking zone, to reduce speed early. Then you can begin easing up on the brake pedal to bring the car to a smooth controlled stop at the line. If there is a car in front, maintain a 2-second following distance gap as you slow and stop. Keep the wheels pointed straight – if you are struck from behind you don’t want the car veering to the left or right, potentially into oncoming traffic. Plan to stop behind the stop line. If stopping behind another vehicle, leave a car length’s space between. This provides space to move out of the lane in case a car approaching from behind cannot stop in time and provides a little space if the car in front rolls back. Sometimes the car in front cannot move because of a problem – if you have space you can drive around it and carry on.

## **While you are waiting...**

While sitting at an intersection waiting for the light to change are you still driving? Well, yes actually. You may not be moving but you are still part of the traffic pattern. Keep your eyes moving, watch your mirrors. Pay attention to the cycle of the lights in other directions so you can anticipate when it is time to move. Know where pedestrians are – waiting to cross or midway across the street. Before you move, carefully scan left, centre, right so you know, for example, if anyone is going to run the red light as you move into the intersection. If you are behind other traffic, make sure you leave proper following distance to the car in front as you move off. It has been said that a driver should “count to three” before moving away from a stop. The problem with that, is that if the driver looks straight ahead and moves away simply after a three-count, they are not going to see a car missing the light and crossing the intersection late. When a proper scan is done and it is determined that traffic will / has stopped, then it is safe to move into the intersection without waiting. And you will avoid unnecessarily raising the ire of an impatient driver behind you which helps keep the stress down.

## **Turning Right at Intersections:**

Another brainstorming / whiteboarding opportunity to get your student to think for themselves and take responsibility. Have them list the steps to making a right turn at the intersection. Remember, they have been doing this on quiet streets, so this is an example of linking one skill to another. Let’s look at

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

the example of making the right turn and an intersection where you don't have to stop. Here are the things that should be on the list:

- Check mirrors, signal in advance
- Reduce speed
- Re-check intersection – other vehicles, other road users, traffic lights or stop sign
- Just before starting the turn, shoulder check right
- Lane tracking – make sure your car is in the correct (right) lane and properly positioned about 1.5 metres from the right-side curb and pre-angled slightly to the right
- Last scan, left, centre, right and left again
- Scan through the corner, look towards where you want the car to go
- Complete the turn, using hand-over-hand steering if necessary, straighten the wheels once complete
- Look ahead, check mirrors, make sure signal is cancelled
- Smoothly return to normal speed.

The process contains all these steps if you have to stop, as well. Make sure you stop in the correct position. Watch mirrors. Is it legal to make a right turn at a red light? In most cases yes, unless prohibited by a sign saying, "No Right Turn on Red". Use the same procedure as at a stop sign, scan carefully for oncoming traffic and go when it is safe to do so. Remember "Don't know? Don't Go".

Once you have come to this stage, it is a good idea to spend a fair bit of time practicing going straight through intersections and making right turns before moving on to left turns. Give your student plenty of practice at this stage. Get them used to the environment – other road users, traffic lights, point-of-no-return, etc. Work on getting the checklists committed to their subconscious through repetition. Be patient – you cannot spend too much time on this. Depending on how your student is doing, you may decide to spend a couple of supervised practice sessions at this level before moving on to left turns. Don't rush things! Remember to use breaks to discuss errors and to give your student driver (and yourself) time to relax a bit and decompress. They will be using a lot of concentration at this time. Overwhelming the student now by introducing more driving situations can lead to unnecessary risk and high stress.

**Ready to move on? Left Turns:** Let's take a break to let the student relax, to discuss progress, and plan for making left turns. Many of the skills are the same with a couple of important additions – oncoming traffic and turning around the near lane and into the proper lane. Give the whiteboard to your driver and ask them to make a list of things they need to do when making safe left turns. Once you have all the items listed you can number them in order. Once you have thought of all the steps, the list should look something like this:

- Check your mirrors, signal left in advance

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

- Reduce speed
- Keep your vehicle towards the left side of your lane
- If there is a red light, a stop sign, or if there is oncoming traffic, stop.
- Keep your wheels straight while waiting to turn
- Scan the intersection – left, center, right and left again to make sure it is clear.
- Shoulder check to your left just before you turn
- Check for pedestrians before you begin the turn
- Begin the turn. Look where you want to go first before turning the wheel. Turn around the centre line or raised median. Don't cut the corner or turn too wide.
- Gradually accelerate as you finish the turn and straighten your wheels.
- Once you have completed the turn, check your mirrors, look ahead, make sure your signal is off and return to normal speed.

**Common questions:** Suddenly, the driver may find there is a lot going on here! It is more complicated than right turns, with potentially higher risk because of oncoming traffic. Have your student use running commentary to help them commit the steps to memory and to communicate what they understand about the maneuver. Here are some tips that will help drivers learn to make safe left turns:

- Stop position – 3 possibilities: no need to stop – green light, no oncoming traffic, crosswalk clear – driver can complete the turn without stopping. Next, green light but oncoming traffic – driver can enter the intersection and wait until it is safe to turn. If the cross street has only one lane, the driver should stop about half a car length past the farthest crosswalk line and wait. Don't go too far in – you will have a very sharp turn to make to stay in your lane. If you are crossing a multi-lane street, you can position the whole car just past the crosswalk. Last, if the light is red or there is a stop sign, stop behind the line and wait.
- What if the light turns yellow and I'm in the intersection waiting to turn? At that point you have entered the intersection and you legally must complete the turn. Even if oncoming traffic is late to stop and you must wait so long the light turns red in your direction, you are still able to complete the turn legally.
- Look at the crosswalk before initiating the left turn. You don't want to start the turn and then realize there is a pedestrian crossing and have to stop mid-turn, blocking the lane for oncoming traffic. Make sure you will be able to complete your turn before moving.
- Timing – you need to be able to complete left turns assertively. This is not a time to be overly slow. Commit the steps needed to memory and be prepared before you enter the intersection. When it is safe to go – go without hesitation.

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

- Knowing how much gap is needed – if you don't know, don't go. You shouldn't be practicing left turns at busy intersections until you feel confident with your vehicle and observation skills to make the manoeuvre with some confidence. Judging this takes experience, you should approach it by practicing in lower traffic situations to begin. If you are feeling uncomfortable, take a step back and practice left turns on quiet side streets for a while.
- Quick left turn checklist:
  - What colour is the light?
  - Stop position required?
  - Oncoming traffic?
  - Light changing to yellow?
  - Crosswalk clear?
  - Complete the turn
- Have your student use running commentary to call out these steps when making left turns. You will be able to judge if they are following all the steps safely.

As a supervisor, be on the lookout for mistakes in the path the driver chooses when making turns. Unless the student practices proper vision, their steering won't be precise. Their steering technique determines how the car ends up positioned in the lane when they complete the turn. If they start turning too early and use a wide arc, there is a good chance they'll run wide at the end of the turn. If the student starts turning too late, they'll have to turn the wheel a lot to turn sharply enough to stay in the proper lane. Proper vision is important as is technique and timing.

**Continue to practice:** Practice multiple left turns. You can alternate between left and right turns now for variety, but make sure they practice lots of the new skills. Don't forget to pull over and take a break from time to time. If you notice your student making a mistake you want to help them correct, it is best to have that conversation while the car is parked so they can devote their full attention to the conversation. Remember it is very difficult for new drivers to listen and absorb your suggestions and coaching while driving. They are still using too much of their concentration for the task of driving and cannot yet drive and listen effectively at the same time. This is a good time to do some scaling – on a scale of 1 to 10, how do you think those last few left turns went? Find out their answer, compare it to yours and together determine what you could work on to get those left turns to rate a 9 or 10. Remember the perfect practice goal. Don't let your student do turn after turn where errors are consistently being made. Pause the lesson, identify the error and determine a fix. If you identify more than one problem, prioritize based on safety and fix the problems one at a time. Patience and repetition will pay off. If frustration sets in, take a break or end the lesson and pick up where you leave off next time.

**Variations:** As previously discussed, you can change it up to keep things more interesting. Go straight at some intersections. Remember to scan left, center and right as you approach every intersection, all the time. Don't let up on this. This is one (like mirror checking and shoulder checking and using signals) that needs to be fully burned into the driver's subconscious through relentless, correct repetition. These are subtle safety practices that could save their life one day. Repeat them often enough that these simple

# Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy for New Drivers

routine tasks no longer require any thought on the part of the driver. Have your driver use running commentary as a tool for you to discover what the student is seeing and thinking.

See, Think, Do: ICBC uses this term to describe the process of observing hazards, thinking about what might happen and what you could do, and then executing a maneuver to keep safe. At some point, when you are parked at the side of the road, you can look at your surroundings and identify hazards. Use the whiteboard to write them down. Now that you are practicing in higher volume traffic areas there are more/different hazards to consider. How is your student driver doing at identifying the newly introduced hazards? Once they have identified all they can think of, add any you can see they have missed and have them describe what they would do as a driver to reduce the risk and stay safe. Remember the two categories of hazards, moving and static. When they are driving, have them use running commentary to call out moving hazards as they see them.

Don't know? Don't go. Unsure about whether it is safe to go when you are at an intersection or waiting to make a left turn? If you don't know, don't go. If you have stopped at an intersection and you cannot see far enough down the road to determine if traffic is clear, creep slowly forward until you can see enough to decide. If you are waiting to turn left and cannot decide if the gap is sufficient to turn left safely? Don't go. As you practice you will gain experience in two important areas: You will be able to complete your left turns confidently in less time and you will build up more experience in judging the closing rate of oncoming traffic to decide if you have time to complete your turn safely without rushing.

There is no substitute for practice and acquired experience here, unfortunately! Co-drivers, let your student drivers take responsibility for these decisions unless you have to intervene for safety reasons. Be patient if your student driver hesitates to go in situations where you would be comfortable proceeding. The goal is to have students making their own decisions now, so they are fully equipped for this when you are no longer supervising.

You are doing a great job! Again - congratulations for sticking with it and putting in the necessary time – you have both accomplished a lot. You won't get all the practice you need to be proficient at these skills in one session. You will need to spend several hours on these skills, but remember we suggest keeping the lessons to no more than 90 minutes to maintain concentration and reduce the chance of frustration. As the student gains more experience, there are more options for practice – different areas, different times of the day, and different weather conditions are examples that will keep this interesting and challenging but still within a safe level of risk. 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 is 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 will work on, and what you will continue to practice.