

Observational points

Observation is a key part of your driving, this will help your hazard awareness & planning. Its not just about looking in front, behind and to the sides, you need to look at, understand, interpret and prioritise what you see, then plan on how best to deal with the information given.

What the signs mean!

Circle signs *Give orders.*

Triangle signs *Advise of warning.*

Rectangle signs *Inform.*

Blue circles *Generally give mandatory instruction, I.E. 'turn left' or indicate a route only to particular classes of traffic, e.g. buses and cycles only.*

Red rings or circles *tell you what you must not do, e.g. you must not exceed 30 mph, vehicle height restrictions.*

Blue rectangles *are used for information signs except on motorways where blue is used for direction signs.*

Green rectangles *are used for direction signs on primary routes.*

White rectangles *are used for direction signs on non primary routes, or for plates used in combination with warning and regulatory signs.*

*There are few exceptions to the shape and colour rules, to give certain signs greater prominence. Examples are the **STOP** and **GIVE WAY** signs*

Signs, Road markings, Lights & street furniture

Green traffic lights ahead *Could our traffic light change colour?*

Amber light reflected from opposing traffic lights *Our lights may change to green shortly, or the pedestrian crossing may be activated.*

Filter lights at major traffic junction *The filter light is there to help pedestrians cross safely, you should wait at the white line if you are not going in the direction of the filter until the big green light comes on.*

Illuminated 'wait' signals on a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing *Traffic lights will shortly change to red.*

People waiting at a pedestrian crossing *Expect the lights to change to red shortly.*

Diversion signs *This may confuse motorists, so expect the unexpected.*

A sign with the name of a village whilst still in a national speed limit area *Expect a reduction in speed ahead, probably 30 MPH.*

Speed/safety camera *Accident Black spot area ahead, expect vehicles to brake hard and sudden.*

Junction sign *Vehicles could emerge, also vehicles turning into junction could stop (What hazard have they seen that we do not know about?)*

Traffic calming scheme area *Possible speed limit change, also speed bumps, which may cause other vehicles to brake hard in front.*

Hospital sign *Expect emergency vehicles to be entering/exiting.*

Single street light along an otherwise unlit road *It may signify a possible concealed junction (opposite the post).*

Warning triangle *This is always 100 yards to the hazard.*

Lamp posts with no speed limit on them *Always 30 MPH.*

Cluster of street lights *Roundabout/large junction ahead.*

Bus stops on opposite side of road with people waiting *A bus may stop shortly, causing other road users to go around the bus, which could affect our travel as we may need to stop/give way.*

A bus stops ahead *You may need to go around (if its safe) but beware of pedestrians who have just got off the bus. Expect the unexpected.*

Convex mirrors *This will indicate that roads/drives have an obscure view of the road. Expect the unexpected as cars may pull out.*

Solid double white lines *No overtaking, including blue light response vehicles - do not panic find a suitable place to pull over when the road markings allow to do so.*

Cars and their drivers.

Vehicles parked in a long line *Prepare for oncoming vehicles, also the gap may be smaller so you may need to slow down or prepare to stop. If you slow down, prepare to change your gears.*

Car driver looking around *Prepare for them to stop suddenly, maybe they are looking for an address or shops? Expect the unexpected.*

Driver in parked car *Door could open, or car could drive off with no signal.*

Car Slowing/stopping *Driver or passenger door could open, car could move off without stopping. Expect the unexpected.*

Brake lights illuminated whilst parked up *Car could pull away with no signal.*

Cars parked near shops/schools *Un sighted pedestrians could cross in-between the parked cars.*

Vehicle parked up with left signal on *Car may have forgotten to cancel signal and could pull away.*

Vehicle in front is wandering *Could be lost or drunk, tired, or a drugged driver.*

Attempting to overtake a vehicle on a dual carriageway, the driver makes a head movement for mirror checks *They may wish to change lanes, this may affect your speed/travel.*

A vehicle pulls up ahead without warning and reverses into a side road *Expect to change speed or direction or the vehicle could pull out without warning.*

Vehicles behind you at traffic lights, their eyes are constantly looking down *They will be texting, so no concentration on their surroundings.*

Driver using mobile phone *They are not concentrating 100% around them, be aware they could be a danger to you.*

Motorcyclists & Cyclists

Motorcyclist's ride behind to your left *Are you aware they are there? They could be in your blind spot! A good Motorcyclist should ride to your offside so you can see them.*

Sunny day & twisting bends *Motorcycles riding at higher speeds, taking risks, they may cut you, there may be more than 1 motorcycle. Expect the unexpected.*

Cyclists riding in groups *They will affect your speed, it may not be safe to overtake, proceed with caution, prepare to slow, only pass when it is safe to do so.*

Cyclists riding with no lights or reflective clothing *Hard to spot, will make you change speed or direction.*

Cyclist looks over shoulder *Expect them to turn or pull out.*

Cyclists swerves suddenly *Possible pothole or hazard in the road.*

Cyclist on the pavement *May jump on to the road without warning.*

Cyclist coming from opposite direction *May swerve, causing following motorists to pull past them into your path, causing you to take evasive action.*

Cyclist near a bend *May not be safe to pass, slow down, change gears accordingly, only pass when it is safe to do so.*

Weather conditions *Heavy wind/rain, could get blown around, obscured vision.*

Other Vehicles.

Large vehicles indicating left *It is likely to move to the right first to get around the corner. Prepare to slow/stop.*

You check your mirrors, you see a large vehicle behind has moved to the right early *They may have seen an obstruction ahead due to their vantage view point.*

Vehicle ahead with insecure load *This may fall off, causing damage to your vehicle, or may make you or other motorists brake hard.*

Emergency service vehicle *May be called onto an emergency, so Blues & twos could be activated (may shock you) PULL OVER ONLY WHEN IT IS SAFE AND LEGAL TO DO SO (remember they are trained to a higher standard of driving)*

Ice cream van in housing estates *Expect children to run from obscure places to get their ice cream.*

Distant sound of emergency sirens *Could be any hazard approaching, Ambulance, fire, police, even stolen vehicles being chased. You should use caution expecting the unexpected.*

Unusual number plate on vehicles *Driver could be foreign, not used to our roads or rules.*

Flashing green light *Doctor on emergency call, give way when it is safe and legal to do so.*

Amber flashing light ahead *Slow moving vehicle ahead doing a variety of tasks (road works, hedge cutting etc*

Delivery van ahead *Prone to sudden stops/rash manoeuvres.*

Height restriction bridge *Large vehicle approaching in middle of road.*

Debris/marks on road-verges

Mud on road *Could cause skidding.*

Fresh mud from field exit *Possible tractor ahead.*

Straw in road *Slow moving vehicle ahead/hazards in the road.*

Overgrown vegetation on pavement *Pedestrians forced to walk in the road.*

Hedges battered on rural roads *Large vehicles use the road regularly, be prepared to slow/stop.*

Pedestrians

Elderly/Young people looking to cross the road *May not judge your speed and distance correctly.*

Pedestrians carrying shopping *Contents could spill*

Pedestrians on mobiles or with headphones on *They will not be paying attention to their surroundings, be aware.*

School time, school holidays *Expect children to run out between cars.*

School entrance's *School parents rushing across road to get children to school, be aware.*

Vehicle with hazard lights on *Could be broken down, pedestrians could be walking to seek assistance.*

Animals

Cow/horse poo in road *Animals ahead, prepare to slow/stop.*

Dogs not on leads *May run into the road.*

Poor fencing in rural areas *Animals in the road.*

Buildings

Petrol stations *Vehicles entering/exiting - spilt fuel.*

Industrial estates *Large delivery vehicles looking for units - fork lift trucks.*

Pubic houses *Drunk pedestrians - drink drivers.*

Schools *Reduced speed limits - children playing.*

Cluster of houses *Reduced speed limit ahead.*

Smells/sounds

Diesel *Slippery surface.*

Smell of Fresh cut grass *Hedge/grass cutters ahead.*

Smell of tar *Road works ahead.*

Emergency sirens *Use caution, other vehicles may panic and brake/stop suddenly.*

Other hazards

Wheelie bins at side of road *Bin wagons, refuge workers behind bin wagon.*

Skips *Unmarked or unlighted at night, debris on road especially on windy day.*

Heavy rain *Flooded roads, spray, reduced vision, possible aquaplaning, light steering, extended braking distances.*

Winter sun *Low and bright, obscure vision.*

Shaded area in winter *Ice patches, increased risk of skidding.*

Snow/Ice *Increased braking distance, risk of skidding, getting stuck in snow from lack of traction. Harder to spot pedestrians with snow.*

