

quick guide to

Driver Training



It's better to have a plan you don't need, than need a plan you don't have", a compelling statement when attributed to driver training.

It belongs to driver training coach Rob Coulborn, who for the last 13 years has been providing driver training to fleet drivers and Porsche customers, more recently at the Porsche Driving Experience Centre where Rob is one of the Driving Consultants at the centre. Which are strong enough credentials for us to ask him to give us a quick run down on the basics of driver training.

It's a sad fact that the large majority of people with a driving licence take no further training the moment their instructor tells them they have passed their driving test, and only when you turn 70 will someone check if it's wise for you to have access to a piece of machinery that can kill someone. In a world where you have to reapply for a fishing licence every year, to be allowed to drive a car for up to 53 years without being retested is pathetic.

Of course, some of us take it upon ourselves to seek out further training, as Rob explains: "I see a wide

spectrum of customers, from those who are passionate about cars, enjoy track days and take pride in their road driving to those who are perhaps nervous after an incident or a collision. I also see drivers who have to take a course for their work. The common link is they still want to learn."

There are many aspects to driver training, perhaps the most common many of you reading this will be aware of will involve hiring the services of an instructor at a track day. But with the majority of our driving taking place on the road, what are the key areas to improving our road driving?

"If you remember the basics, and keep remembering them, you will have an advantage over other road users," says Rob. "Observation is key. Looking far ahead and scanning the environment for potential hazards is key. Only having a basic knowledge of road signs and markings means they can be of no real help. And many people focus so much on looking for moving hazards they ignore the general road layout. Have you ever nearly clipped a kerb when turning left on to

a road and thought it stuck out surprisingly far? It hadn't, you just hadn't paid enough attention to your immediate surroundings."

Another area that you should be looking to build on includes space: "The 'two-second rule' is rarely observed," says Rob. "Every driver I have asked to highlight when their attention begins to drift more to the car they are following rather than the wider surroundings, is when they break the two second rule. Drop back, build that gap and the car in front becomes part of the foreground and wider picture."

Poor observation leads to poor concentration: "Losing concentration is the worst habit of all," says Rob. "Switch off for the briefest moment and it can cause mistakes in otherwise capable areas of your driving. The modern world is one constant distraction. If you drive for a living; switching off from a meeting you've had, or you are going to gives you greater awareness of your surroundings and a more realistic view of making progress. Then you can see that driving faster won't get you anywhere."

Driving fast... we had to get to speed eventually: "Clients often expect me to faint if they hit 31mph in a 30mph zone, but the legality is the final consideration, safety of course comes first. Show me a 30mph zone where 23mph feels unsafe and I'll show you a scene where I won't likely reach 20mph. I might even stop."

"75 per cent of crashes are in 30mph zones, 20 per cent on roads with a national speed limit and five per cent on motorways. And a police officer's judgement and views on tolerance often reflect this. Appropriate speed is the real point, along with time, vision and anticipation of hazards as yet unseen," Rob explains.

As for yet unseen hazards? That's where anticipation comes in. "Simply expect everyone to make a mistake," says Rob. "The best of us still do, of course, and it's the only logical first assumption to stay safe, it's why I always have a plan."○

To discuss driver training with Rob, contact him on 07939 268688, or email enquires@robertcolbourn.co.uk.

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