

Driver self-assessment: Answer key

1. Intersections bother me because there is so much to watch for from all directions.

The best answer is **never**, and it's good to be aware if your intersection driving skills need a boost.

Intersections are places where you meet other road users, such as vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. It can be hard to know what other road users will do. Intersections, especially when doing left-turns, are common places for crashes.

A refresher course or driving lessons with a professional instructor may give you some helpful tips so you are more confident at intersections. Be sure to practise your intersection skills at times when traffic is less busy.

2. I wear a seatbelt.

Always wear a seatbelt, even if you're only driving a short way in good driving conditions.

Crashes involving older drivers usually happen on clear days, on straight, dry roads, and at intersections within 25 kilometres of the driver's home. Wearing your seatbelt greatly reduces your chance of serious injury or death in a crash. It's also against the law in B.C. to not wear a seatbelt, and you can be fined if you don't wear a seatbelt.

The lap belt holds you down, and the shoulder belt holds you back. Adjust your seatbelt so it fits snugly over your chest and low over your hips. Many cars have adjustable shoulder belt mounts, or you can buy a device to make it fit properly.

3. I find it hard to decide when to merge into traffic on a busy road or highway.

The best answer is **never**, although most drivers feel some tension when merging into traffic on a busy road or a highway.

If you find the speed of traffic or the number of cars difficult, improving your merging skills may help you. Review the rules of the road about merging, and consider taking driving lessons with a professional instructor. Keep practising the tips you learn to increase your skill and confidence.

4. My thoughts wander when I'm driving.

The best answer is **never**. Driving is a complicated task that demands your constant attention. The more your thoughts wander, the greater the risk of a crash. Not seeing road signs or stop signs, failing to yield, and other forms of inattention are common factors in crashes involving older drivers.

Many conditions can interfere with your ability to concentrate, such as feeling upset or tired, illness, medications, alcohol, heavy meals, having pain, or a loud radio. Be aware of how you feel, and try using other ways to go where you need to when driving is not a safe choice.

5. My reaction time while driving is slower than it used to be.

The ideal answer is **never**; however, with age it takes longer to process information from several sources at once. That is why the reaction time of older drivers is slower than it used to be.

To manage this, you can avoid driving in congested or fast-moving traffic. Keep yourself physically fit and mentally stimulated. Choose not to drive when you are feeling tired, unwell, or if you've had any alcohol or medication that may slow down your mental or physical responses.

6. Driving in traffic makes me feel angry.

The best answer is **never** because showing anger while driving can put you and others in danger. Angry behaviour such as honking the horn, yelling at other drivers, cutting others off in traffic, blocking intersections or challenging other drivers is unsafe.

Fortunately, there are many ways to make driving less frustrating. Give yourself plenty of time to get to your destination. If you're feeling angry while driving, take a short break to walk around your car, take a few deep breaths and calm yourself down before going farther.

7. I try to keep up-to-date on facts about wellness and healthy choices.

The best answer is **always**, because good health and wellness choices can help you handle the demands of safe driving. To be a safe driver, your mind and body need to be in shape to be alert and able to act quickly. Making healthy choices and staying well will also help you to feel in control of your future as a driver and eventually, a non-driver.

8. In the past 2 years I have noticed scrapes or dents on my car, mailbox or garage; or bumped into a curb; or had a fender-bender or crash.

The best answer is **no**, because these show that other bumps and crashes are likely to happen. If you answered yes, consider taking a refresher driving course to learn tips to anticipate risks on the road and to avoid them. Think about your safety and take steps to avoid injury and damage.

9. Family members, friends or a health care provider are concerned about my driving ability.

If your answer is **yes**, it's time to start planning to retire from driving so you can keep doing the activities you enjoy. It's hard to accept, but hearing concerns about your driving can be valuable information for you. With good planning, your life after driving doesn't have to be restricted. Start talking about your transportation options with your family members, friends or health care provider before a crisis occurs.

10. I have been pulled over by a police officer, or received a driving ticket in the past two years.

The best answer is **no**. Common reasons for older drivers getting driving tickets are failing to yield, not seeing and obeying traffic signs and signals, careless crossing at intersections, improper turning and lane changing, and careless backing up.

If you answered yes there are several things you can do. Pick up a driver's guide from an ICBC location to review the rules of the road. Enroll in a senior driver training course to brush up on your driving skills and learn new ways to handle driving situations that are difficult for older drivers.

11. I check with my pharmacist about how any prescription and over-the-counter drugs I take may affect my ability to drive.

The best answer is **always**. Your local pharmacist is your best source of advice on whether drugs or supplements you take can impair your ability to drive.

Combinations of medicines, even over-the-counter types, are particularly risky. Always ask your pharmacist about possible drug interactions. This also applies to drinking alcohol while taking any medicine, even over-the-counter types.

12. I try to stay up-to-date on changes in driving skills and traffic laws.

The correct answer is **always**. All drivers must keep their driving skills sharp and up-to-date to be safe on the road, no matter how good a driver they've been in the past.

Driving conditions change over the years. Some examples of recent changes are roundabouts, bike lanes, directional signals for lane use, and shared left-turn lane markings. Knowing what to do reduces hesitation and uncertainty so you can make decisions quickly and safely in traffic.

You can stay up-to-date by picking up a current driver's guide from an ICBC location and studying it as though you were taking a road test. Take some refresher lessons with a professional driving school, and practise your skills.

13. I signal and look over my shoulder when I change lanes.

Always do a shoulder check (look over your shoulder) and use your turn signal when you plan to change your direction or position on the road. The purpose of a shoulder check is to see into the blind spot on that side of your vehicle and to make sure it's clear before you change lanes.

If looking over your shoulder to check your blind spots is difficult, you can install extra-wide rear view mirrors and side mirrors to decrease your blind spots. You'll need to learn how to use the side mirrors correctly. Some mirrors can make objects appear smaller and farther away than they actually are. You can also ask your health professional about exercise programs that might improve your flexibility.

Adapted from Manitoba Public Insurance "The Older and Wiser Driver"