

Country Driving

Driving in country areas is perhaps the most demanding of all driving since speeds are generally high and there can be a hazard around almost every bend. Observation needs to be particularly good and is the key element in the gathering of

INFORMATION You need to repeatedly look as far ahead as you can - to see bends looming up in the distance, to see changes of speed limit signs, to see pedestrians, horses, tractors, side roads etc. A good knowledge of 'observation links' will make your planning a lot easier. An 'observation link' is making an association between what you can see and what you can reasonably expect to happen as a consequence. If you see houses in the distance then expect a reduced speed limit. If the road has a line of trees down one side and the line curves in the distance, you know a bend is approaching. If you see a church in the distance then expect parked vehicles or pedestrians (particularly on Sunday mornings).

POSITION yourself for left hand bends towards the right hand side of your lane on the approach-but don't drive on or over the white centre line. Positioning in this way will give you an early view of any danger at or beyond the bend. However, don't position in this way if there is oncoming traffic (move back to the centre of your lane for safety) or if you might wrongly give the driver behind the impression that you intend to turn right at or beyond the bend. For right hand bends position towards the left of your lane for improved observation but only if there are no nearside hazards such as cyclists or pools of water. Never position yourself so far to the left that you drive over debris in the gutter along the roadside.

As you approach a bend consider whether you will need to reduce your **SPEED** in order to negotiate it safely. Don't immediately think of reducing speed by using the brakes. You may be able to lose all your unwanted speed by deceleration only. A good 'rule of thumb' to follow is that if you see SLOW written on the ground before a bend it will probably be a third gear bend. If there are 'sharp deviation' chevrons it will probably be a second gear bend. If the road is level and you know your speed is correct for the bend then take your foot off the brake and change to the GEAR (if necessary) that is most appropriate for your speed.

You are now almost to the bend - your position and speed are correct and you are in a responsive **GEAR**. If your timing has been correct you should have a few seconds to return your left hand to the steering wheel (assuming you changed gear) and prepare yourself to steer into the bend. Use your accelerator pedal to 'drive' through the bend at a constant speed. Do not increase your speed through the bend since this will make your car less stable on the road. Once you have a good view of the road beyond the bend then **ACCELERATE** away from the bend provided there are no hazards ahead or a reduced speed limit area.

Disclaimer: Driving is never a black and white activity, but full of grey areas, therefore neither I nor my fellow Observers in the St Helens & District Group of Advanced Motorists are liable for any consequences you may experience as a result of reading our advice. **You** are the driver. **You** should be in control of **your** vehicle at **all** times.