

Overtaking

This is probably the most dangerous manoeuvres that we do as drivers. Three conditions need to be met before overtaking:

1. the vehicle must be capable of quickly responding to the use of the accelerator pedal
2. the driver must be concentrating and
3. the safety of the full overtaking manoeuvre must be predicted by the driver BEFORE starting the overtake

The decision to overtake is NOT made the moment of arrival behind a slower moving vehicle in front. Rather, the decision is made much earlier when the driver sees the vehicle ahead for the first time and realises that he is traveling faster. The decision is then made to overtake the vehicle when it is safe to do so. An overtaking opportunity may soon occur, may not occur for several miles or may not occur at all. As long as there is no opportunity, the vehicle ahead is followed at a safe distance (2 second rule). This is called the *Following Position*. The driver behind scans the road ahead, looking for an overtaking opportunity. Oncoming vehicles, other road users, junctions and weather conditions are some of the factors considered.

Let us assume that the driver realises that an opportunity may develop in the next ten seconds. The driver draws his vehicle slightly nearer to the vehicle in front. This is called the Overtaking Position. If it is the lack of view of the road ahead that is preventing the overtake, the driver could move slightly to the left or right of the vehicle ahead to improve the view. This could entail crossing the white centre line. Moving slightly to improve view prior to an overtake would only be acceptable if no one is endangered or confused i.e. particular consideration should be given to oncoming vehicles and vehicles behind. If against expectations, an overtaking opportunity does not develop the driver should re-adopt the 'following' position.

Before overtaking, a gear needs to be engaged which will be used throughout the entire manoeuvre and which will enable the manoeuvre to be carried out quickly i.e. a responsive gear for the planned overtaking speed. The gear must also provide, if needed, more acceleration than that originally anticipated for the manoeuvre. The point at which the gear is engaged will depend upon the circumstances at the time. If, after checking the mirrors, a decision has been made to start the overtake, the manoeuvre should be carried out speedily but without undue haste or aggressive acceleration. During the overtake, continue to scan all around for danger as well as monitoring the speed and position of the vehicle being overtaken. Avoid forcing the overtaken vehicle to change speed or position. The entire overtaking manoeuvre must be carried out in a decisive, calculating manner with a high level of concentration. If something goes horribly wrong, and you survive, you should know what went wrong!

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.*