

Using your mirrors

✓ Your mirrors should be set so you can assess the risk behind you with minimal head movement and you should look at them often. About a third of all accidents are rear end shunts so it's vital that you are constantly aware of what's happening behind you so that you can adjust your driving accordingly.

✓ When to check your mirrors

* Check the rear view mirror at least every ten seconds to keep abreast of what is going on behind you

* Before a change of direction or position check your rear view mirror and the side mirror in the direction you are about to go

* Before any significant change of speed check the rear view mirror

* Check all mirrors (& blindspots) before moving off from stationary

✓ Check your mirrors early... and then check again

It's important to check your mirrors well before you change speed or direction so you have time to fit in your actions safely with those of other road users. For example, if you notice a heavy lorry is following you very closely and you need to stop & wait to turn right into a side road, you should start the mirrors-signal-manoeuvre routine early. By signaling early and braking gently, the lorry driver will have more time to react to your brake lights. After signaling, check the rear view mirror again and if the driver has not responded, you could change your mind and continue straight on if that would avoid a crash.

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Mirrors dos and don'ts...

Do be nosey about who is behind you

Key questions to ask yourself about the driver behind include:

1. How close are they to me? (do I need to brake gently?)
2. Are they paying attention? (or are they arguing, on the phone etc?)
3. How old are they? (elderly drivers have slower reactions and young drivers have more accidents statistically)
4. What can I tell about them from their body language (aggressive/ relaxed?) and the body language of their car? (positioning to overtake?)
5. Is it a high risk vehicle? (Heavy lorry? Motorcyclist? Pressured courier?...)

Don't trust your side mirrors - they're bent

Side mirrors have convex glass, which provide a wider field of vision than flat glass, allowing you to see further to the sides. However, this makes everything look smaller and further away than it really is. But the rear view mirror has flat glass, giving a true image. When assessing how close a vehicle is behind, you must base your judgement on what you see in the rear view mirror, not the side mirrors.



Don't be a door-k... Check your mirrors before you open a car door

A common accident involving motorcyclists and cyclists is when they hit a car door opened by somebody who has not looked behind them first. The biker is either flung over the door, hitting the road with force or they are thrown/swerve into the path of traffic.

