



ROAD  
SAFETY  
COMMISSION

# A GUIDE TO DRIVING ON WA ROADS





Western Australia is a vast state bigger than the whole of Western Europe.

A road trip through remote WA is an amazing experience and we know you'll enjoy viewing our unique landscape, wildlife and Aboriginal culture, but we also urge you to drive carefully in unfamiliar conditions.

Being aware of keeping left, the dangers of smoke caused by bushfires and kangaroos feeding at dusk.

As the voice of road safety in WA, the Road Safety Commission is dedicated to tackling road crashes: one of the biggest and most sustained causes of death and injury in the community.

We are proud to have produced this brochure in conjunction with the Consulate of Italy in Perth.

Enjoy your travels in WA!



# DRIVING IN CITIES AND TOWNS

## Keep to the left

In Australia, all vehicles drive on the left side of the road.

We understand that if you are not used to driving on the left, it may take you some time to adjust, so tape a note on your dashboard to remind you to stay on the left.

When coming to an intersection or making turns, take extra care.

On a multi-lane road you may only drive in the right-hand lane if:

- You are overtaking
- The left lane is a special purpose lane (bus, cycle)
- You're avoiding an obstruction.

**In Australia, all vehicles drive on the left side of the road.**





## How to merge

Where two lanes merge into one, the vehicle in front has the right of way.

If there are dual lanes, and the lane you are in ends, give way to the vehicles in the lane you are moving into.

Remember:

- Always use your indicator to signal your intentions to other drivers when merging;
- You need to match the legal speed of the road you're merging into.
- Drivers should leave a gap to let new traffic merge into the lane.

## Roundabouts

When entering a roundabout, always give way to any vehicles already in the roundabout.

Turning Left:

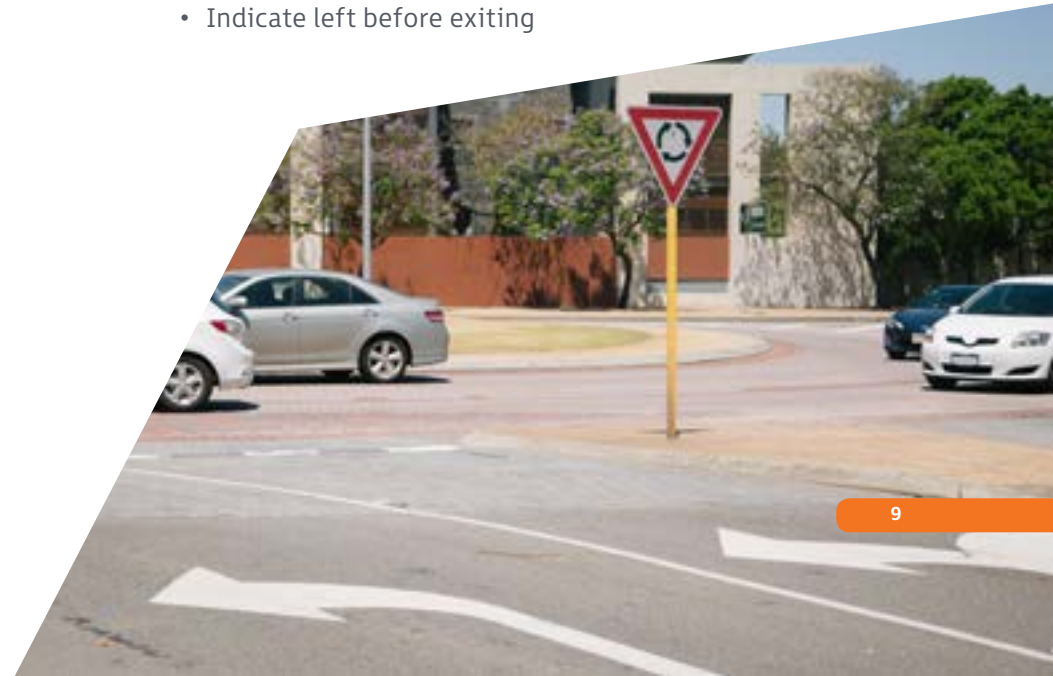
- Stay in the left lane

Driving straight ahead:

- Stay in and exit from the same lane
- Indicate left before exiting

Turning right or making a full turn:

- Indicate right
- Stay in the right lane
- Indicate left before exiting





## Crossing road lines

You may cross a broken line when it is safe to do so, but stay to the left whenever possible.

You may be issued a fine up to \$150 for crossing a continuous (unbroken) line.

There are exceptions:

- You may cross an edge line while entering or exiting a road
- You may cross a centre line if you are turning right or making a U-turn
- If you need to avoid an obstruction you may cross the line if you have a clear view of traffic ahead.

## Emergency vehicles

On Western Australian roads you must allow an emergency vehicle using blue or red flashing lights and/or sounding an alarm to easily pass.

When an emergency vehicle is approaching:

- Give way by moving as far to the left of the road as possible.
- If you can't move left, slow down, indicate left and let the emergency vehicle drive around you.
- If you are in the left lane, allow other vehicles from an adjacent lane to move into your lane if they need to.

# Allow emergency vehicles using blue or red flashing lights to easily pass.



## Protect pedestrians

Pedestrians are our most vulnerable road users. Drivers should give way to pedestrians:

- when turning;
- when making a U-turn;
- at all intersections and stop signs;

### Did you know?

All school traffic zones have a speed limit of 40 kmph at arrival and departure times.

## Share the road with cyclists

Cyclists of all ages are allowed to ride on WA footpaths, but pedestrians have right-of-way.

On the road, drivers should give way to cyclists.

Drivers should keep a safe distance (at least one metre) between their vehicle and a cyclist.

If it is not possible to safely overtake a cyclist, slow down and wait until it is safe to do so.

Motorists are only permitted to drive in a marked bicycle lane for 50m to stop or park in a designated parking area.

On the road,  
drivers should give  
way to cyclists.



## Making a “U-turn”

Drivers performing a U-turn should give way to all other road users and use their indicator.

A driver must not make a U-turn:

- If there is no clear view on oncoming traffic
- At traffic lights (unless sign permits)
- Where there is a “No U-turn” sign
- On Freeways.

**Did you know?**  
Aussies often call a U- turn a “you-ee.”

## Mobile phone distraction

WA is home to unique, rugged scenery, so turn off your mobile phone and enjoy the view.

It is illegal to create, send or look at a text message, video message, email or similar communication, while driving, even when the phone can be operated without touching.

Whilst driving, you can only touch a mobile phone to receive and terminate a phone call if the phone is secured in a mounting affixed to the vehicle.

If the phone is not secured in a mounting, it can only be used to receive or terminate a phone call without touching it (e.g. using voice activation, a Bluetooth hands-free car kit, ear piece or headset). GPS may be used by a driver whilst driving if no touch of the keypad or screen is required.

**PENALTIES:**  
**\$400 AND 3 DEMERIT POINTS**





## Drink driving

Western Australia is famous for its exceptional vineyards, particularly in the south-west, but be aware that driving with a blood alcohol level over .05 is illegal, with penalties including fines, disqualifications and even imprisonment for a second offence.

A zero blood alcohol level is required for:

- Novice Drivers
- Holders of Extraordinary licences
- Recently Disqualified Drivers
- Drivers of:vehicles exceeding 22.5 tonnes.
- Buses, taxis and small charter vehicles.

## Drug driving

Police have the power to stop drivers suspected of driving while impaired by any drug.

Drivers may be given a saliva or blood test.

Currently the maximum court penalty for drug driving is a \$5000 fine or 18 months imprisonment.

### Did you know?

37% of people who died on WA roads in 2015 were affected by drugs.

## Seatbelts save lives

Don't forget to buckle up for your road trip! Wearing a seat belt is one of easiest ways to protect drivers and passengers in a vehicle.

Children aged up to seven should be properly restrained in a harness or booster seat. A calculator for the right seat for your child's height and weight is at [rsc.wa.gov.au](http://rsc.wa.gov.au)

Drivers and passengers can all be fined for not wearing seatbelts.



## Riding a motorcycle

Motorcyclists and scooter riders are vulnerable on WA roads because the lack of physical protection and small size when compared to other motor vehicles.

Safety helmets must be worn by riders and their passengers and should comply with Australian standards.

Children under 8 are not permitted to be passengers.

Take breaks to avoid fatigue on long rides.

We also encourage riders/passengers to wear appropriate protective gear.

## Drivers licence rules

You must carry your current overseas licence and a translation, or an International Drivers' Permit (IDP) with you while driving.

If your foreign licence does not have a photo ID, you should get an IDP before travelling to Australia if you intend to rent a car.





# DRIVING IN THE BUSH

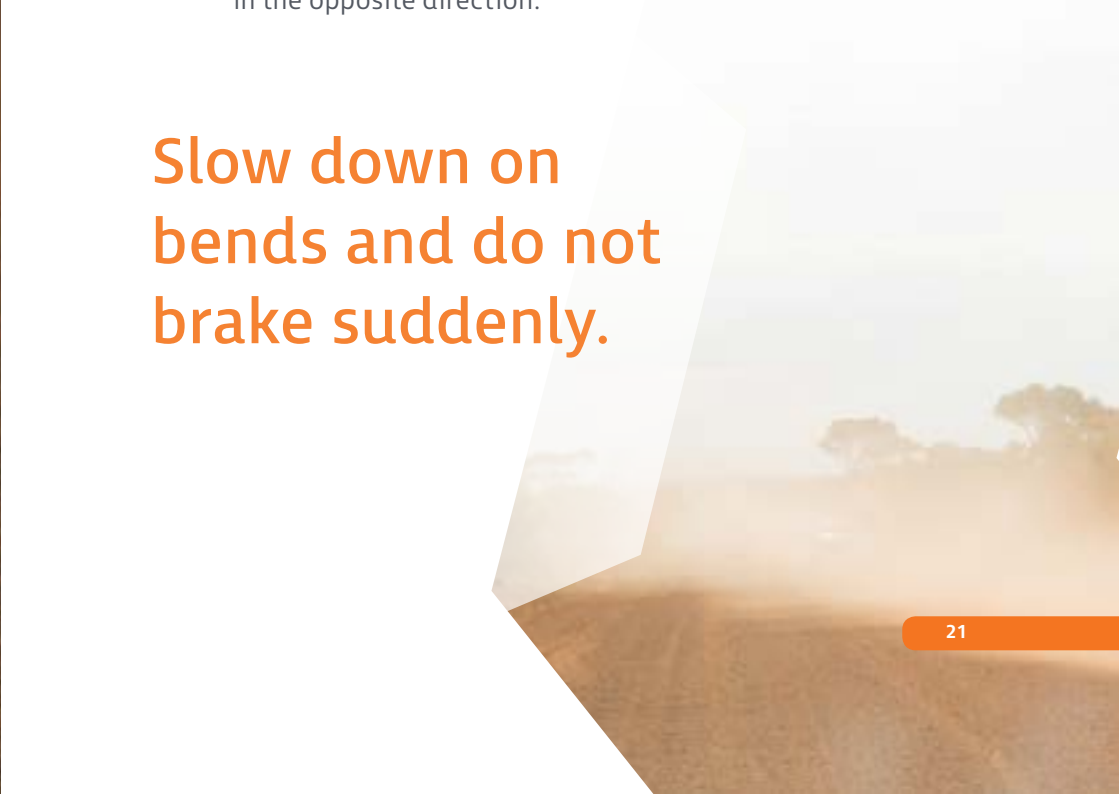
## Driving on gravel

The roads outside WA cities and towns usually have gravel edges, or, further afield, are made up of red dirt and small stones.

Gravel is like ball-bearings under car tyres. Please slow down on bends and do not brake suddenly as you are likely to skid.

Be aware that gravel and dirt roads also create big clouds of dust and impede visibility, so keep a safe distance behind other vehicles.

Be prepared for dust and stones from cars travelling in the opposite direction.



## Slow down on bends and do not brake suddenly.



**Did you know?**  
Australian wildlife  
is most active at  
sunrise and sunset.

## Wildlife on the road

It is exciting to see Australian wildlife, but beware roaming animals such as kangaroos, cattle, camels and even large birds that can settle on the road in front of your vehicle.

Put on your brakes and sound your horn.

Be aware that animals on the road will be unpredictable, sometimes heading towards your vehicle rather than away from it.

Drive slowly and do not try to swerve around an animal as you may lose control on the gravel verge.

## Low visibility

Hot and dry conditions in Western Australia make the beaches attractive, but they also create a bush fire risk.

Avoid driving when there is smoke on the road.

Torrential rain in the wet season reduces visibility and increases risk on the roads.

Switch on your headlights, use the vehicles windscreen wipers and do not attempt to cross flooded roads.

Plan your journey to avoid roads which have been affected by bushfire smoke or flooding. Up to date "Alerts" are available at [mainroads.wa.gov.au](http://mainroads.wa.gov.au)

It is also dangerous to drive directly into the sun. Take a break until the sun rises higher in the sky, or in the evening, wait until the sun sets and drive within the visibility of your headlights.



## Fatigue over long distances

WA covers an area of 2.5 million square kilometres – that's bigger than the whole of Western Europe or four times the size of Texas.

Use a detailed, recent road map, plot your journey based on distances and keep track of your mileage so you always know how far you've travelled.

Remember to take regular breaks from driving to relax and admire the sights. Share the driving with a friend.

Drinking water is a good idea to prevent fatigue. Carry at least 4-5 litres of water per person, per day.

Remember to get plenty of rest the night before a long trip. You should not be driving if you feel tired.

When travelling in Western Australia, it is good practice to stop and take a break at rest areas and take in the sights. When you feel refreshed, recommence your journey.

## Overtaking road trains

Australia is home to some of the largest trucks in the world known as 'road trains', which require great care when overtaking.

- You need a long straight stretch of road that is clear as far as you can see.
- Be aware that it may take some time to overtake one of these long trucks.
- Take your time and stay back several car lengths. When it is safe to pass, indicate, move over the centre lane, accelerate and overtake quickly.
- If you are towing a caravan or trailer it is best not to try and overtake at all. Wait for an overtaking lane, where it is safe to do so.

### Did you know?

Road Trains can be up to 53.5m long (175.5 feet) with 2, 3 or even 4 trailers.





## Vehicles

If you are hiring or borrowing a car for a trip in WA, get advice on the best model for the road conditions. A four wheel drive (4WD) track is no place for a conventional vehicle.

## Some road signs in Western Australia



WA railway crossings often intersect roads. Stop at warning signals and wait for the train, or trains to pass.



These flashing signs will often be located outside schools. Slow down to 40 kilometres per hour and watch out for children.



Roundabouts can be confusing. Remember to drive on the left in a clockwise direction.



Open speed signs are on some remote roads. In these areas the maximum speed limit is 110km/h — Remember to always drive to the conditions.

