

COMMENTARY DRIVING

Your role is to give your learner lots of practice opportunities and help them structure their driving sessions so they start simply and get more complex.

You will need to give advice, instruction, keep the student safe, answer and ask questions. It may help, then, to have a way to pass on suggestions about safe driving in specific situations.

This technique is called commentary driving. Basically, you describe aloud what you're doing as you drive in a specific situation, then do the same while your learner drives.

The technique has three steps:

1. Demonstrate driving in the specific situation yourself and give a commentary out loud to your learner.
2. While your learner drives in the same situation, describe aloud what you'd do. Keep practising until your learner completes each step safely and smoothly.
3. Give your learner the task by having them drive and talk at the same time. This will be challenging and should only be tried when your learner has mastered the driving situation.

If you use this approach, make sure the commentary isn't disruptive and that it focuses on key issues. Think about the following:

- Help get the hang of commentary driving by practising the technique when you're driving alone.
- Focus on one skill at a time, such as leaving the kerb, approaching an intersection or entering a roundabout.
- Practise the skill yourself a few times and notice what steps you perform.
- Be particularly aware of things that are automatic for you, such as slowing down, changing gears, indicating, and looking out for other cars and hazards.
- You'll be surprised how many steps are involved in even the simplest manoeuvre. There isn't time to mention every step, so limit your commentary to the critical ones. For example, instead of describing a headcheck as 'Turn head to right until almost looking backwards, and check behind for cars, then turn head back to front of vehicle', simply say 'Turn head and check for cars'.
- Get some advice from other driving instructor if you're not sure which skills are critical and which ones aren't.
- Remember, practise each individual skill and commentary before you try it with your learner.