

Driving in Aotearoa New Zealand

Driving in New Zealand might be a bit different than what you're used to. For example:

- we drive on the left side of the road
- it takes longer than you think to get to places
- our roads are sometimes narrow, winding and steep.

The NZ Police make sure everyone follows the road rules and stays safe. There are also speed cameras set up all over the country. If you break the road rules or cause a crash, you could be fined or prosecuted.

Stopping for police

If police require you to stop your vehicle, they'll drive behind you and turn on red and blue lights and a siren. You must stop safely on the side of the road as soon as possible and wait in your car for the police officer to come to you.

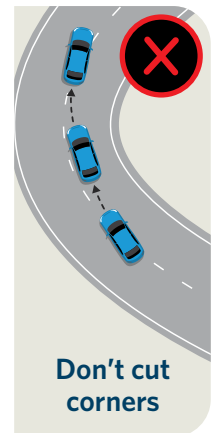
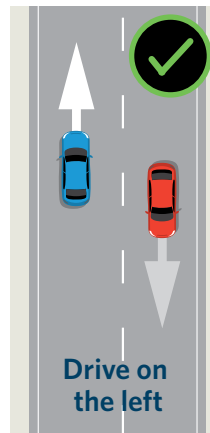
Travelling times

It's easy to think it won't take long to get where you're going. Distances may seem short on the map, but our roads can be narrow and winding through mountains and hills and some are unsealed gravel roads.

Go to journeys.nzta.govt.nz/journey-planner to work out your travel times.

Keep left

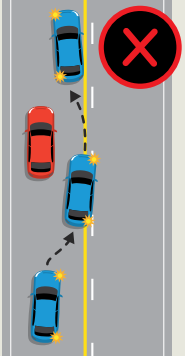
- Always drive on the left side of the road. Some narrow roads don't have line markings to guide you.
- Keep left at every intersection and every time you pull out on to a road.
- Don't cut corners.
- Don't cross the centre line unless safely passing or turning off the road.



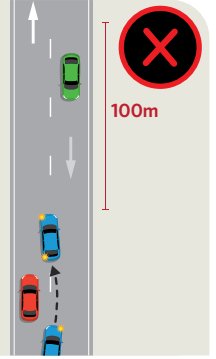
Overtaking - passing

Most roads in New Zealand have a single lane each way. Sometimes there's a passing lane. Use the passing lanes when overtaking - please be patient until you reach them.

A solid yellow line on your side of the centre line means it's too dangerous to overtake. A double yellow centre line means that no one on either side of the road can overtake.



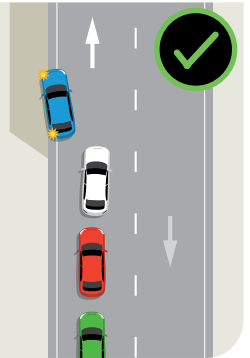
When overtaking, you need to have 100 metres clear road in front of you the whole time you are passing including when you have finished passing.



Never overtake on or near a corner.



If you're driving slowly, and there's a line of traffic behind you, find a safe place to pull over and let them past.



Driving speeds

Look for speed limit signs - there are different speed limits for different roads. Sometimes you'll need to go slower than the limit to drive safely, like when it's raining or foggy.

You must not drive faster than 90km/h if you're driving a vehicle that weighs over 3500kgs or towing another vehicle such as a boat, caravan or trailer - even on a road marked 100km/h.



These are examples of some speed limit signs

This sign means the maximum speed that you can travel at is 100km/h, but drive to the conditions.



These signs tell you there's a tight curve or bend ahead and what's a safe and comfortable speed for it. The arrows show which direction the curve goes.



Seat belts

By law, everyone in the vehicle must wear a seat belt or child restraint – no matter where they're sitting in the vehicle.



Age	Legal requirement
Children under 7	Approved child restraint
Children aged 7	Approved child restraint if available or seat belt
Children aged 8 and over	Seat belt
All adults	Seat belt

Fatigue

If you're tired, you're much more likely to have a crash.

- Get enough good sleep before you drive, especially after a long flight.
- Take a break from driving every two hours.
- Share the driving with someone else if you can.
- Avoid driving during the hours when you would normally be sleeping.
- Avoid large meals, which can make you tired, and drink plenty of fluid.
- If you start to feel sleepy, stop at a safe place and try to have a 15 to 30-minute nap. If you're feeling very tired, find a place to stay overnight.

Enjoy the view safely

Keep your eyes on the road, not the scenery. If you want to look at the view, find a safe place to pull completely off the road and stop. Don't stop where there are no stopping signs or on dashed yellow lines.

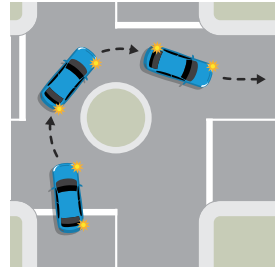
Intersections



A stop sign means you must come to a complete stop, then give way to all traffic.



A give way sign means you must give way to all traffic except those at a stop sign.



At roundabouts, you must go clockwise around the roundabout and give way to traffic on your right.

One-lane bridges

Some of our roads have one-lane bridges.

These signs warn you there's a one-lane bridge ahead. Slow down and check for traffic coming the other way. Stop if you need to give way.

The small red arrow shows which direction must give way.



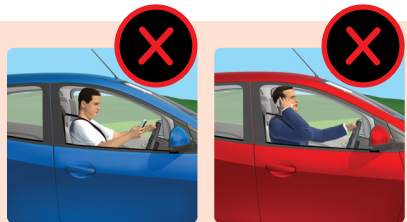
These two signs show you must give way to traffic coming the other way.



This sign says if no traffic is coming, you can cross the bridge.

Mobile phones

You must not use a hand-held mobile phone when driving. If a phone is used, it must be hands free. Texting on any mobile phone while driving is illegal.



Rail crossings

- If red lights are flashing, stop and only go once the lights have stopped flashing.
- If you see a stop sign at a rail crossing, stop and only cross the track if no trains are coming from either direction.
- If you see a give way sign, slow down and be ready to stop and only cross the track if no trains are coming.



Unsealed or gravel roads

Unsealed roads can be slippery to drive on. Keep left, and slow down. Slow down even more when vehicles are coming towards you as dust could make it hard to see and loose stones could chip your windscreen.



Sharing the road

You must watch for pedestrians crossing the road, particularly at pedestrian crossings and intersections.

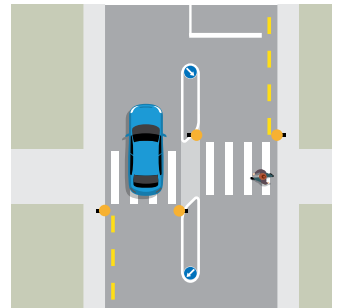
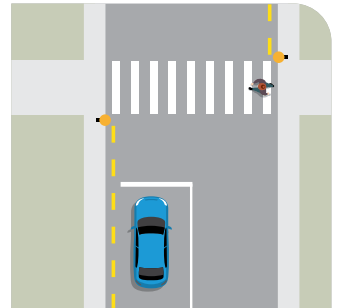
When coming up to pedestrian crossings:

- slow down and be ready to stop for any pedestrians on or stepping onto or waiting at the crossing
- if there's no raised traffic island in the middle of the crossing, stop and give way to pedestrians on any part of the crossing
- wait until the pedestrian has crossed in front of you and is clear of your vehicle before you continue.

Don't move onto a crossing if there isn't enough room for your vehicle on the other side of the crossing.

Always slow down near cyclists and only pass when safe. Try to leave a space of 1.5 metres between you and the cyclist when passing.

If you see animals on the road, slow down and go carefully. Don't sound your horn.



Winter driving

Our weather conditions can change quickly so check the weather forecast and road conditions before you travel and be flexible with your journey.

metservice.com

nzta.govt.nz/traffic

Snow and ice can make roads even more risky, particularly around mountain passes and roads that don't get any sun. If your rental vehicle company has given you snow chains, make sure you know how to fit them before leaving.



Look out for this slippery surface sign in wet or icy conditions – slow down and avoid braking suddenly.

Signalling

Always signal for at least three seconds before turning, changing lanes, and moving in and out of traffic.

Parking

You can be fined or towed away for facing in the wrong direction when parking. If it's a one-way street, you can park on either side of the road.

Alcohol and drugs

Don't drink alcohol or use drugs and then drive.

It's illegal to drive with any drugs in your system that may affect your driving, even some prescription drugs.

For drivers under 20 years old, there's a zero alcohol limit. For drivers over 20 years old, the alcohol limit is so low, it's safest not to drink at all if driving.

Driver licence requirements

You must always have your current and valid driver licence or driver permit with you while driving. If your overseas licence or permit isn't in English, you must also carry an accurate English translation. After 12 months of living in New Zealand, you must get a New Zealand driver licence.

Go to nzta.govt.nz/new-residents-and-visitors for more information.