

A GUIDE TO DRIVING SAFELY FOR LONGER

Your Driver MOT



DRIVE SAFELY FOR LONGER

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Scotland has an ageing population and many people are continuing to use the car in later years, for work, family, community commitments and convenience. According to census data, 1.2 million of the Scottish population are over the age of 60¹, and 72% hold a driving licence². With so many drivers over 60 on Scotland's roads, it is important to make sure that, whenever you get in the car, you are still able to drive safely.

In 2023, 23% of car drivers killed or seriously injured on our roads were aged over 60³.

Just like you get your car an MOT test, it's important for mature drivers to have a Driver MOT test. As we age, deteriorating eyesight, slower reaction times and medications can affect driving. You may find you start to avoid driving at night, use the car less, drive shorter distances along quieter routes, and generally avoid motorway driving where possible.

THERE ARE MANY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO KEEP DRIVING SAFELY FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN.



NEXT STEPS FOR SAFER DRIVING

1 Book in for an eye examination

Deteriorating eyesight can be a gradual process and may go unnoticed, so it is important to have a regular eye examination. This will not only ensure you have the right glasses or contact lenses for driving, but also flag up common age-related conditions, such as cataracts and glaucoma. These can greatly reduce the ability to see clearly, especially when driving at night, in bad weather or in conditions where visibility is poor. Remember, you do not have to wait until you are due for your next eye examination if you notice changes in your vision.

Please note:

Some people are eligible for help towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses, following a free NHS eye examination undertaken by a community optometry practice (opticians). This is provided in the form of an NHS optical voucher. Further information can be found at eyes.nhs.scot

2

Use hearing aids

If you usually wear a hearing aid at home, use it when driving too. Any kind of sensory loss can lead to feeling confused and disconnected from your surroundings.

3

Reduce night-time driving

As you get older your eyesight changes so, at age 65, it can take four times longer for your eyes to recover from glare. If you do have to drive at night, the first rule is to wear an up-to-date pair of distance glasses or contact lenses recommended by an optometrist. Avoid wearing tinted lenses, such as red or amber, as they can filter out traffic lights, brake lights and indicators of cars in front. Make sure headlights, brake lights and indicators are all working and clean, and don't forget to keep the windscreen clean and clear, inside and out.

4

Avoid distractions

It is helpful to avoid distractions, especially when negotiating busy junctions. It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving, but even using a hands-free one can distract attention away from the road ahead and traffic.

5	Plan before you go
Plan your journey before heading out, especially when driving long distances on unfamiliar routes, and allow time for rest breaks. Even when driving close to home, take extra care at busy roundabouts, when turning right or when joining traffic from a slip road. When driving longer distances to unfamiliar places, a SatNav can be useful, but never adjust it while driving.	
6	Keep active
Daily physical activity helps improve strength and flexibility behind the wheel. It can also help address common problems such as turning the steering wheel or looking over your shoulder. Regular exercise can also help sharpen mental agility and concentration.	
7	Keep an eye on speed
Reflexes can slow down as you get older and you may not notice it. Allow more time and space to react when driving by reducing your speed and leave plenty of room between you and the car in front.	

8	Refresh driving skills
Driving on today's roads can be challenging. A mature driver assessment is a relaxed 30-60 minute session with an expert, driving your own car, on roads you are familiar with. At the end of the session, you will be given guidance on how to continue driving safely for longer. Refresher courses and mature driver assessments are available through most driving schools as well as national organisations such as IAM RoadSmart and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).	
9	Consider the need for mobility modifications
<p>If you are experiencing problems such as difficulty in gripping the steering wheel or with other car controls, the Scottish Driving Assessment Service can give advice. They can also provide a full fitness to drive assessment. This is a free NHS service open to everyone in Scotland via a GP referral. For more information visit smart.scot.nhs.uk/service/driving-assessment/</p> <p>Parking concessions may also be available to disabled drivers and passengers under the Blue Badge scheme. For further information visit gov.uk/apply-blue-badge</p>	
10	Be ready for winter driving
Be sure to plan ahead if travelling in winter conditions. Ensure you have a fully-charged mobile phone and keep up-to-date with the latest weather reports. Plan for any journey at traffic.gov.scot	

HEALTH, MEDICINES AND MOBILITY

Certain prescribed or over-the-counter medicines can affect the ability to drive.

Everyday remedies such as cough medicines, cold and flu treatments, painkillers, antihistamines, and even certain eyedrops, can cause drowsiness behind the wheel.

The combined effects of taking more than one medication can also seriously affect your driving, even though one may be harmless on its own.

It is best to ask your pharmacist or doctor to check what medications are safe to take while driving. If not safe, then ask if they can recommend a safer alternative.

It is also important to consider the effect on driving ability, such as withdrawal symptoms, when you stop or reduce taking medication.

Driving while impaired due to the use of prescription drugs is against the law and subject to exactly the same penalties as driving under the influence of illegal drugs. This can include a fine of up to £5,000, loss of licence and, potentially, prison.

THE LAW *DECLARING MEDICAL CONDITIONS*

It is up to you to self-declare your fitness to drive. It is also your responsibility to tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) if you develop a 'notifiable' medical condition or disability, or you have a condition or disability that's become worse.

Notifiable conditions are anything that could affect your ability to drive safely. They can include:

- **diabetes or taking insulin**
- **syncope (fainting)**
- **heart conditions**
- **sleep apnoea**
- **epilepsy**
- **strokes**
- **glaucoma**

You could be fined up to £1,000 if you do not tell the DVLA about a condition that might affect your ability to drive safely. You could also be prosecuted in the event of a collision, even if it is not your fault.

The rules and advice on what you must do will depend on the exact nature of your condition. It is essential to seek, and follow, advice from a medical professional, and to comply with any decision the DVLA makes about your driving licence. For further information visit gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving/find-condition-online

CHOOSING WHEN TO STOP

UK driving licences expire when you reach 70, but this doesn't mean it's time to hang up your keys. It simply means you must renew your licence every three years.

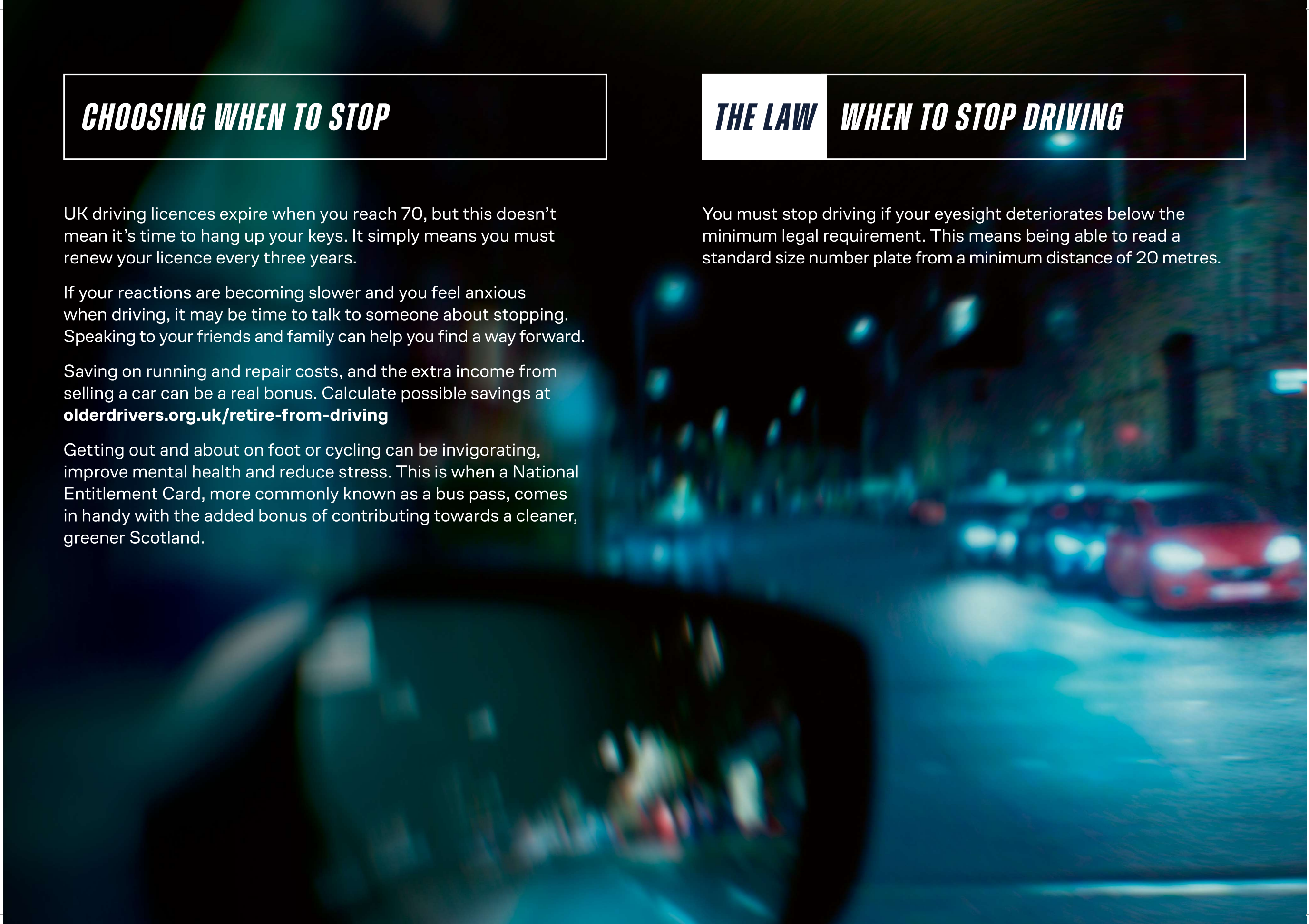
If your reactions are becoming slower and you feel anxious when driving, it may be time to talk to someone about stopping. Speaking to your friends and family can help you find a way forward.

Saving on running and repair costs, and the extra income from selling a car can be a real bonus. Calculate possible savings at **olderdrivers.org.uk/retire-from-driving**

Getting out and about on foot or cycling can be invigorating, improve mental health and reduce stress. This is when a National Entitlement Card, more commonly known as a bus pass, comes in handy with the added bonus of contributing towards a cleaner, greener Scotland.

THE LAW WHEN TO STOP DRIVING

You must stop driving if your eyesight deteriorates below the minimum legal requirement. This means being able to read a standard size number plate from a minimum distance of 20 metres.



This leaflet is available to download
in a variety of languages and accessible
formats at **roadsafety.scot**

¹ Scottish Census Data, 2022

² Transport Scotland Data, 2022

³ STATS19 Injury Collision Database, Transport Scotland 2023

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