



ADDITIONAL DRIVING PRACTICE – Critical Decision Making Exercise

Learning Objective

In this exercise you will combine visual awareness, hazard recognition and speed and space management skills while concentrating on highway merges, lane changes and determining escape routes.

What's the Game Plan?

Build upon what you learned in the initial critical decision making driving exercise in Module 8. The goal is for the teen and the adult to get a chance to play both roles: a driver who does commentary driving and an observer who gives feedback. The driver's job is to talk about the situations encountered on the trip. The observer's job is to give feedback to the driver after the drive is completed.

Drive different routes at different times of the day. That way you'll face new situations and challenges to give you lots to practice and discuss. When you choose your new routes, try for a mixture of residential/suburban, downtown/commercial, highway/freeway and rural/country. You might want to choose a highway entrance and exit that you use most often.

Guidelines for Being the Driver

- Rule #1 is **drive safely**. Don't get so wrapped up in describing what you are doing that you forget to follow the rules of the road. If you get overloaded or stressed, discontinue the exercise and then find a safe opportunity to pull over and stop the car.
- As you drive, don't try to comment on everything you see and hear. Just talk about the situations that really impact (or could impact) your driving. It's good to say, "I can see that someone is coming up too close on my rear bumper, which is dangerous. I'm going to signal and move over a lane so they can go by." On the other hand, you don't need to say, "That car two blocks away from me is a station wagon. It looks like it's in good condition... I like the color..."
- While you drive, talk about what you are seeing, feeling and doing that helps you recognize and respond to the various driving situations, including merging on and off the highway and changing lanes. Also talk about where your escape route would be should an emergency situation arise. Stress the following:
 - How you are using visual search techniques (forward, to the sides, behind) to identify hazards
 - How you are adjusting your speed to match the flow of traffic, road conditions, and visibility
 - The kind of space cushion you are keeping in relation to the cars around you
- When you are listening to feedback from the observer, accept it with good grace, even if you may not agree. It's best to listen and try not to argue. Focus on what the observer is saying, and take away what you can use to improve your driving.



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Guidelines for Being the Observer

When you are the observer, you want to give feedback to the driver in a way that is helpful and constructive. To assist you, we have developed some Observer Feedback sheets you can use. These sheets are based on the following guidelines:

- **Ask the driver to pull over safely to the side of the road before starting to give feedback.** That way you can both concentrate safely on what's being said.
- **Begin by saying two or three positive things about what the driver did right.** We all like to hear something good up front. Try to make this a meaningful compliment.
- **Ask the driver for his/her own brief take on what went well and not so well.** By giving the driver the chance to express his/her own feelings first you'll reduce any sense of confrontation, and it will be easier to cover everything without repetition.
- **When you give corrective feedback, concentrate on just two or three things.** The more you criticize, the less the driver will hear or remember. So pick out two or three things that are really important.
- **Focus your feedback on driving skills or how you felt during the drive.** It's better to say, "You should check your side mirrors more often for traffic behind you," or "I was feeling a little scared when we got close to that red car, because there was a chance we might hit it," than to say, "You're driving carelessly. Don't you care if you hit someone?"
- **End on a positive note.** To wrap things up, remind the driver of some of the good things he/she did. You don't want things to end with too much emphasis on what went wrong. By returning to the positive feedback, you'll make sure the driver feels encouraged and responsive.

One last word: You may be getting the idea that the observer isn't supposed to talk while the car is in motion. In general, this is a good idea. You don't want to distract the driver or interrupt his/her comments. If you do see something dangerous or threatening, you should speak up! You'd hate to have an accident and then say, "Well, I saw the truck coming, but I didn't think I was supposed to say anything!"

A Word About Follow-Up

Once you finish the Critical Decision Making Driving Exercise, fill out the Drive Time Matrix. Continue to practice those areas where you still need practice. This means concentrating on those areas the next few times you get behind the wheel. Tell your adult how you are improving. Use the completed Observer Feedback sheets as memory joggers about skills to keep working on.



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OBSERVER WORKSHEET: IN-CAR NOTES

Route you are driving _____

Situations Encountered: In the chart below write brief descriptions of the situations described by the driver in each category. Note what the driver says they are seeing, feeling and doing. Make sure the driver completes some highway merges and lane changes, and talks about escape routes. Use this chart at the end of the drive as a reference for both positive and constructive feedback.

Highway Merge – On-ramp
Highway Merge - Off-ramp
Lane Change
Lane Change
Escape Route
Escape Route



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OBSERVER WORKSHEET: SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Use the chart below to record how the driver did on each of the various driving skills. Jot down notes/examples to support either “did well” or “needs improving.” Use this chart at the end of the drive as a reference for both positive and constructive feedback.

Driving Skills	Did Well	Needs Improving	Notes/ Examples
Visual Search ahead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Visual Search behind (Did driver use rearview mirror?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Visual Search to the sides (Did driver use side view mirrors and look over shoulders?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speed Adjustment to road conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speed Adjustment to visibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speed Adjustment to traffic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Space Management (Did driver maintain a minimum 3-second space cushion?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Overall Feeling:

On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable/safe did you feel during the drive (circle one)?

1 = Scared to death / 2 = Uncomfortable / 3 = Mostly okay / 4 = Pretty comfortable / 5 = Completely safe and secure

When did you feel most comfortable? Why?

When did you feel least comfortable? Why?