



ADDITIONAL DRIVING PRACTICE – Speed & Space Exercise

Learning Objective

During this exercise, you will practice adjusting your speed to respond to driving conditions, maintaining an adequate space cushion, identifying possible escape routes and staying out of the blind spots of other vehicles.

What's the Game Plan?

Build upon what you learned in Module 5, Speed & Space. During the drive, comment on what you are doing to adjust your speed and the space cushion around your car, and the reason you are doing it.

In this exercise, find a 4 or 6 lane road with medium traffic. The teen will drive and the adult observer will write down comments on the worksheet and note any suggestions for improvement. Twice during this exercise, the teen should use the skills learned in teenSMART to estimate how many seconds he/she is from the car in front.

While the teen is driving, he/she should also comment on what is being done to:

- Adjust your speed to match road conditions
- Adjust your speed to match visibility and sight distance
- Adjust your speed to match the flow of traffic
- Maintain an adequate space cushion around your car (3 seconds as a rule, 4 seconds if possible, and never less than 2 seconds.)
- Maintain a safe distance in front and rear when changing lanes or merging
- Identify possible escape routes
- Avoid driving in the blind spots of other vehicles

Once or twice during the driver, when it is safe, the adult observer should ask the driver to estimate how many seconds he/she is behind the car in front.

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. Stick to the topics described for the exercise. It's good to say, "I am slowing down because there is road construction." You don't need to say, "I really like going to the mall and this road work makes it much harder to get there".
- While you drive, talk about what you are seeing, feeling and doing that helps you recognize issues relating to speed and space management.
- 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 a worksheet you can use to document and provide feedback.

- **Wait until you are out of the car 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 concentrate on maintaining adequate space cushions," 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, "Are you trying to rear-end 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 this Speed & Space Driving Exercise, enter the hours spent driving in the Drive Time Matrix. Continue to work on 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 _____

In the chart below write a brief description of the actions to adjust speed and maintain an adequate space cushion during the drive as described by the driver. Note what the driver says they are seeing, feeling and doing to react to changing driving situations. In the Observer Notes, comment on what the driver did well or what you would have done in addition or differently. Use this chart at the end of the drive as a reference for both positive comments and constructive feedback.

Driver Comments:	Observer Notes:
Driver Comments:	Observer Notes:
Driver Comments:	Observer Notes:
Driver Comments:	Observer Notes:



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OBSERVER WORKSHEET: SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Refer to your in-car notes and rate how the driver did on each of the various driving skills. Complete this chart once the drive has ended as a reference for both positive comments and constructive feedback.

Driving Skills	Did Well	Needs Improving	Notes/ Examples
Speed Adjustment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Space Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identifying Escape Routes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Avoiding Blind Spots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Estimating Distances in Seconds from Other Vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Setting Priorities: Based on your notes above, select the 2 or 3 things that the driver should concentrate on practicing and improving right now.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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?