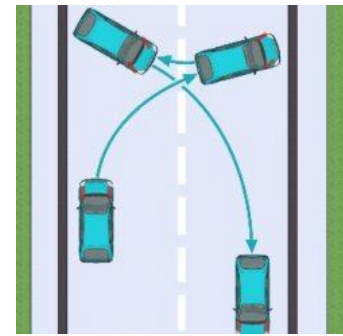


Slow Manoeuvring

The following is from Wirral Group's Guy Lightfoot.

Following my "how to change gear" tutorial (well, I received no complaints) this egg-sucking series continues with yet another everyday driving activity, to provide food for thought for Associates, Observers and IAM members. Some of what follows are my personal opinions and might be provocative – but that's the idea!



Yesterday, as a pedestrian, I was nearly run over by a car reversing out of a minor road (never a good idea) and this brings me to the first and most important issue – observation. I was in the chap's blind spot and I was able to stop before we collided. Before you start, plan what you're going to do and LOOK. In all directions. This involves a true 360 degree scan. Having limited neck or back movement makes this more difficult but it remains necessary.

Let's use the example of a turn in the road – what is commonly termed a 3-point turn. Stating the obvious, don't contemplate doing this on a busy road. Stop and decide your plan of action. Indicate or use hazard warning lights if these would provide other road users with information of your intentions. Look. If all is clear, tackle the first phase: a 60-90 degree turn to the right to the opposite side of the road.

Do this slowly. In automatic cars it should be unnecessary to press the accelerator unless you're on an incline; just use the footbrake to control your speed. Even in a manual, you may not need to use the accelerator – some cars can be manoeuvred at idle if the clutch is used very gently.

As soon as you start to move (but never before – that's "dry steering"~) turn the steering wheel quickly clockwise in "big handfuls" (not lots of tiny shuffles), ideally to full lock before you reach the middle of the road. This will be possible only with rapid steering movements and slow forward speed. Once you pass the half-way point then do the opposite to remove the steering lock – the objective is to come to a stop with wheels roughly straight. Stop before your front bumper overlaps the curb and certainly before your wheels touch the curb. Unless the road is sufficiently flat, consider applying the handbrake.

Next is the reversing (second) phase. Take a quick but complete look around you. No dog walkers crossing behind you? No cyclists or kids running after a football? Do this using all the tools available to you, including a reversing camera and mirrors but supplement these with direct vision. As soon as you start to move quickly turn the wheel anticlockwise but aim to remove this lock before ending the second phase. Whilst reversing, look in the direction you're going; don't reverse just using mirrors.

Although we are encouraged to use the "push-pull" steering method in everyday motoring, use whatever method suits you when manoeuvring, so long as it is safe, effective and

accurate. This might involve one-handed “palming” for example if your left arm is placed behind the passenger seat as you look over your left shoulder during the reversing phase.

Finally, complete the manoeuvre forwards.

~ Dry steering is turning the wheel whilst stationary. Whilst modern cars with power-assisted steering allow this with minimal effort, it places large and avoidable forces on steering linkages and scrubs rubber off your tyres.