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# Essential Guide to Sri Lanka's Traffic Rules for Drivers

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**Drivers**

Last update: October 27, 2021



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[- Terms](#)



If you're planning a trip to Sri Lanka and want to explore the country at your own pace, [renting a car](#) is the best option, especially if you plan to visit off-the-beaten-path destinations. However, it's important to have a basic knowledge of Sri Lanka's traffic rules in order to have the best possible travel experience with your rental vehicle. To help you get started, we've put together this guide to the most important traffic rules and signs in Sri Lanka.

## Traffic Rules in Sri Lanka For Drivers

### 01. Speed limit

- Speed limits are put in place to keep drivers and pedestrians safe. It is important to follow these limits, as driving too fast can result in accidents and fatalities. Be mindful of speed limits, especially in residential areas, school zones, and other areas where there are likely to be pedestrians. If there are no signs or markings, stick to the general speed limit. Here are the speed limits in Sri Lanka:
  - The speed limit in **urban areas** is 0-50kmph
  - The speed limit in **rural areas** is 0-70kmph (This limit depends on the area. So make sure to pay close attention to the given limit by the side of the road)
  - The speed limit on a highway is 80-100kmph (If you are not in the given speed limit on a highway you'll be fined when

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## 02. Don't Drive Under the Influence of Drugs or Alcohol

- Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal in Sri Lanka. Not only is it illegal, but it is also extremely dangerous.
- If you are taking medication that may affect your ability to drive, make sure to check with your doctor before getting behind the wheel.
- If you plan to drink or take special medications, make sure to arrange for a designated driver or use public transportation to get home.
- Violating this rule can lead to severe penalties under the Sri Lanka Motor Traffic Law.

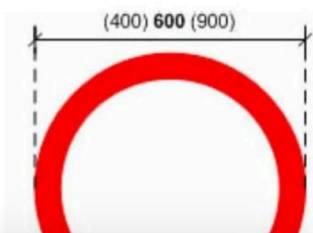
## 03. Avoid Using Mobile Phones

- Using mobile phones while driving is dangerous and can result in accidents.
- It is illegal to use a mobile phone while driving in Sri Lanka, so make sure to avoid this temptation.
- If you need to make a call or send a text message, pull over to a safe location.

## 04. Road signs

- You must always follow the road signs accordingly. Failing to do so may harm you or your vehicle or pedestrians or a third party. In the worst-case scenario, above all or some of them together may happen.

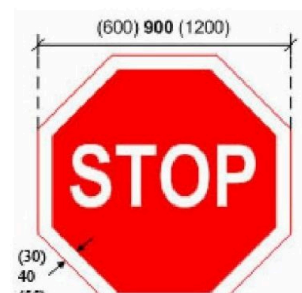
### Examples of road signs in Sri Lanka



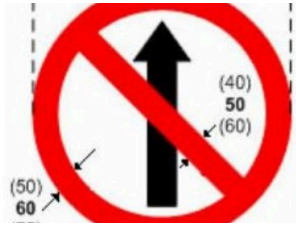
How can I help you?



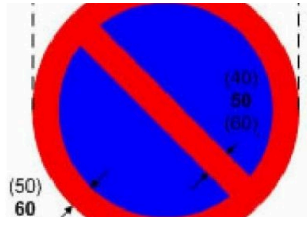
No Overtaking



STOP



No Entry



No Parking



No Parking and Standing



No Honking



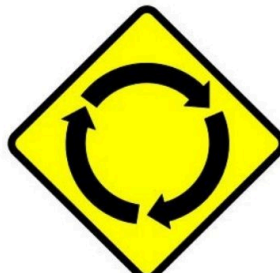
Height Limit



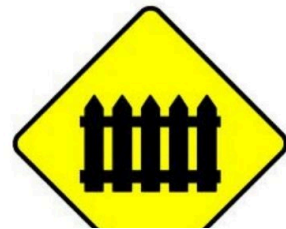
Speed Limit – 50kmph



Road Work Ahead



Roundabout Ahead



Railway Crossing with

Gates Ahead

## 05. Traffic lights

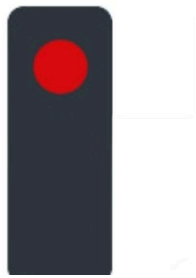
- Traffic signals are put in place to control the flow of traffic and ensure safety on the roads.
- A red light always means “stop.” If you’re facing a red light, wait for it to turn green. Here’s what other traffic light signals mean in Sri Lanka:
  - Both Red & Yellow: Get ready to move forward
  - Yellow: Slow down and prepare to stop
  - Flashing Yellow: Slow down and proceed with caution
  - Green: You can go
  - Green Arrow: You can turn only in the direction indicated by the arrow
  - If traffic lights and traffic police are present, follow the signs given



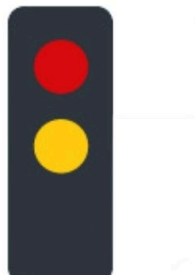
How can I help you?  police officer.

- If both traffic lights & traffic police are at present, you must follow the signs given by the police officer.

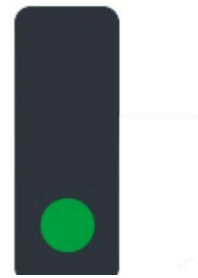
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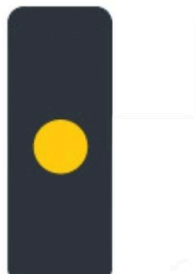
Red Light



Red &amp; Yellow Lights



Green Light



Yellow Light



Yellow Light Flashing



Red &amp; Right Green Lights

## 06. Wear Seat Belts

- Wearing seat belts is mandatory for all drivers and passengers in Sri Lanka. It is one of the simplest things you can do to protect yourself in the event of an accident. Make sure that your seat belt is properly fastened before you start driving.

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## 07. Keep Left

- In Sri Lanka, drivers and cyclists are required to drive on the left side of the road. This is because most vehicles in Sri Lanka are right-hand drives. Keeping left is not only a legal requirement, but it also helps to prevent accidents and keep traffic moving smoothly.



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- Indicators are used to signal your intentions to other drivers. When you are turning or changing lanes, make sure to use your indicators to let other drivers know what you are doing. This will help prevent accidents and ensure that traffic flows smoothly.

## 09. Keep a Safe Distance

- Maintaining a safe distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you is important to prevent accidents.
- If the vehicle in front of you suddenly stops or slows down, you need to have enough time to react and avoid a collision.
- The recommended distance is at least two seconds behind the vehicle in front of you.

## 10. Give Way to Pedestrians

- Pedestrians have the right of way in Sri Lanka, especially at zebra crossings and other designated pedestrian crossings.
- It is important to give way to pedestrians, as they are more vulnerable than drivers and may not be able to react quickly enough to avoid an accident.

## 11. Keep Your Vehicle Roadworthy

- Keeping your vehicle in good condition is important to ensure safety on the roads. Regular maintenance, such as oil changes, tire rotations, and brake checks, can help prevent accidents and keep your vehicle running smoothly.
- Make sure to also check your lights, signals, and brakes before you start driving.
- At SR Rent A Car, we make sure all vehicles in our fleet are roadworthy with regular vehicle checkups.
- We advise you to do a daily morning check on the vehicle during your



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- Lane discipline is important to keep traffic moving smoothly and to prevent accidents.
- When driving on multi-lane roads, keep to the left lane unless overtaking.
- Use the right lane only when overtaking and return to the left lane once you have passed the vehicle in front of you.
- Avoid zig-zagging between lanes as it can confuse other drivers and cause accidents.

### 13. Use Headlights Properly

- Headlights are an important safety feature of your vehicle.
- Use your headlights during the day in low-light conditions or when visibility is poor due to weather conditions such as fog, rain or mist.
- When driving at night, use your headlights on the high beam only when there is no oncoming traffic or when overtaking.
- Switch to low beam when you see oncoming traffic to avoid dazzling other drivers.

### 14. Give Way to Emergency Vehicles

- When you hear sirens or see flashing lights of an ambulance, fire truck or police vehicle, move to the side of the road and give them the right of way.
- This helps emergency vehicles reach their destination faster and saves lives.

### 15. Yield to Vehicles on Your Right

- When approaching an intersection or roundabout, yield to vehicles on your right.
- If two vehicles approach the intersection at the same time, the vehicle on the right has the right of way.
- Make sure to come to a complete stop at stop signs and only proceed



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- Blocking intersections or crossroads is illegal in Sri Lanka and can result in a fine.
- If you are approaching an intersection and the traffic is backed up, wait until there is enough space for you to pass through before entering the intersection.
- This helps prevent gridlock and ensures that emergency vehicles can pass through if necessary.

## 17. Don't Use Horns Unnecessarily

- Horns should only be used to warn other drivers of your presence or to alert them of imminent danger.
- Honking your horn unnecessarily can be annoying and distracting to other drivers and pedestrians.
- It is also illegal to use horns in some specific locations.

## 18. Give Way to heavy vehicles

- Heavy vehicles like buses and lorries are a common sight on Sri Lankan roads, and it is important to give them plenty of space. Buses have the right of way when pulling out from a bus stop, so make sure to yield to them.

## 19. Watch Out for Motorcycles

- Motorcycles are a common mode of transportation in Sri Lanka, and they can be difficult to see on the road. Always check your blind spots before changing lanes or turning, and give motorcycles plenty of space.

## 20. Don't Park Illegally

- Illegal parking can cause traffic congestion and make it difficult for other drivers to navigate the roads. Make sure to park only in designated parking areas and avoid blocking driveways or entrances.



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- Animals, such as cows and dogs, can sometimes wander onto Sri Lankan roads. Always be on the lookout for animals, especially in rural areas, and slow down if necessary to avoid hitting them.

## 22. Have a Valid Driving License

- All who drive a motor vehicle in Sri Lanka must have a valid driving license on public roads. It is illegal to go without a license, and doing so can result in fines, imprisonment, or other penalties.
- If you are a foreigner and thinking about whether your licence is acceptable in Sri Lanka to drive a motor vehicle, read our complete [license requirement guide](#).

In conclusion, these are some of the basic traffic rules that every driver in Sri Lanka should know. By obeying these rules, you can help prevent accidents, reduce traffic congestion, and ensure safety on the roads. Remember to always drive safely, and stay alert while on the road.

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