

30. Driving at night

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In some respects, driving at night can be easier than driving in daylight; for example, there is often less traffic at night and you can usually see approaching headlights early.

However, there are a lot of things that you can't see at night, cyclists, pedestrians, animals, unlit vehicles, obstructions in the road and so on. Also, the things that you do see will not be seen as early as in the daylight and so you will have less time to react. Because of these things it's really important to remember that you must be able to stop safely well within the clear space that you can see ahead - generally this will mean driving more slowly at night than you do in daylight, especially on unlit roads.

The first night driving 'must' is to maximise what you can see and reduce dazzle by keeping your windows and mirrors clean; next, help other drivers to see you by keeping your lights, reflectors and indicators clean.

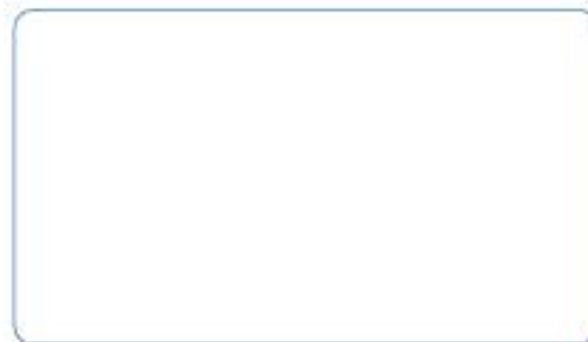
If you are dazzled by approaching headlights, slow down and look away from the source of the light, the best way to do this is often to look down at the left kerb or road edge. If necessary, stop your car. Whatever you do, don't try to dazzle other drivers in retaliation if they don't dip their lights - that would result in two 'blind' drivers, a sure recipe for disaster!

Use the 'dip' lever on the interior mirror to reduce glare from following headlights (some cars have electronic systems to dim the mirrors automatically). If you are dazzled by lights in your door mirrors simply move your head slightly to one side to avoid dazzle.

Avoid dazzling drivers in front by keeping well back. If you can see the colour of the car in front on an unlit road you are probably following too closely.

It takes time for your eyes to get used to the lower light levels when leaving brightly lit places, for example, supermarkets. Because of this, it's a good idea to allow a couple of minutes for your eyes to adjust to the darkness before you start to drive.

Finally, keep plenty of fresh air in your car at night to avoid drowsiness, if you feel tired, stop and take a break.



Brake lights can dazzle, especially in the rain. Use the handbrake when waiting in queues and at junctions!

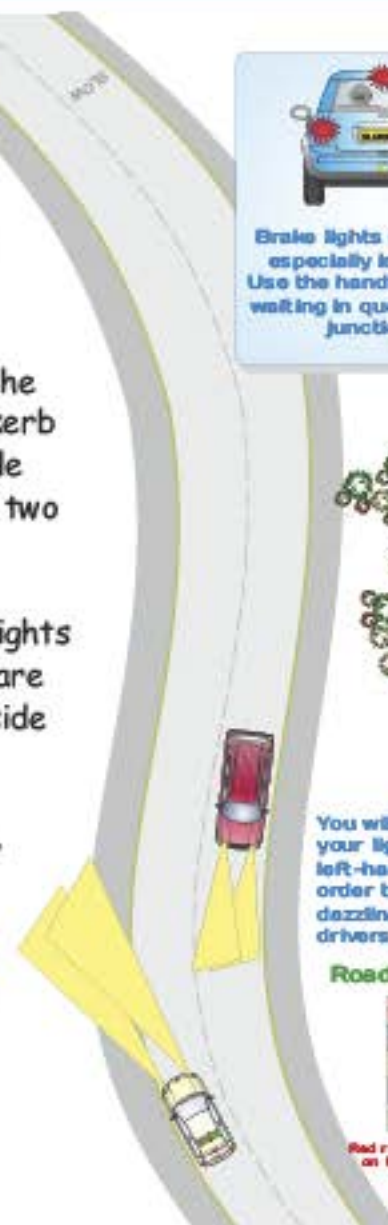


You will need to dip your lights earlier on left-hand bends in order to avoid dazzling approaching drivers

Road edge markers



Red reflectors on the left
White reflectors on the right



Lesson Notes:

