

1a - OBSERVATION.

MotorCycle RoadCraft. Chapter 3. Pages 39 - 64.

Observational skills cannot be over-emphasised. It is only by constant concentration and observation that other skills can be developed.

Almost inevitably, at some time or other whilst riding or driving, you will find your concentration wandering. Recognise this as a serious flaw and resolve to correct it.

Probably the best method is to practice "commentary" riding/driving.

As with all skills, it will improve with practice.

Doing commentary forces you to concentrate on the road/ride/drive.

Talk out loud about what you see.

How this might affect you.

What you are going to do about it?

Start simply on quiet roads: -

Here there are centre of road markings.

Ahead there are hazard warning lines (what ARE hazard warning lines?)

Further ahead there is a double white line system.

I am warned of this by the "feed-in" or "get left" arrow(s).

Then go on to describe what action, if any, you intend to take.

To improve your observational skills constantly scan both sides of the road and its surface.

Scan the far distance, middle distance, near distance and rearwards. Look for road signs, bus stop signs, house for sale signs, etc. It is only by constantly working at these skills that you can hope to fully develop them.

I always like to ride with **EMMA**.

Who is **EMMA**?

EMMA is a lovely little acronym to remind me to keep my **E**yes **M**oving and **M**ind **A**lert.

We need to look for all types of hazard including, but not exclusively: -

Looking well ahead - in order to be proactive, not merely reactive to potentially developing situations.

Road surface - paint, grates, pot-holes, fuel spillages, etc.

Other road users - vehicles, pedestrians, animals.

Road junctions - positively assess ALL junctions for safety (especially traffic light controlled ones) for the possibility of emerging/crossing vehicles.

Remember, whilst you may have priority at a road junction

- **not** "right of way" -

PRIORITY IS NO GUARANTEE OF SAFETY.

The speed of a vehicle as it emerges from a side road or turns across your path into one will not kill or seriously injure (KSI) you.

BUT YOUR SPEED MIGHT !

Take cross observations, over hedgerows, wall tops, between buildings etc. especially on rural roads. Also in urban situations, e.g. when approaching all junctions.

KEY POINT: -by training yourself to look into side roads, etc. you automatically program your brain to react quicker.

Statisticians (those sad people who have yet to get a life - only joking, honest) reckon that if only one of the participants in collisions had acted half a second earlier, then most collisions wouldn't happen!

Be constantly aware of the rearward and side traffic conditions.

Consider purchasing "blind spot mirrors" - I prefer circular ones, positioned in the top outside corners of the existing mirrors.

Invaluable.

Work on being **systematic**, this does not mean being rigid.

Picture the numbers 1 to 5 in chronological order.

Now picture the same numbers randomly without any two consecutive numbers.

Compare the mental effort and time required for both and you will realise the importance of being methodical (**systematic**).

MotorCycle RoadCraft. Chapter 2, page 27 - 38.

The System.

I. P.S.G. A. =

Information - a continuous and on-going assessment of the whole riding/driving environment.

Take, use and give information as required.

Position - dependant upon the information received.

Speed - adjustment (if needed) using brakes or throttle - NOT the gears (unless very poor conditions - snow, ice etc.)

Gear - to suit the speed of the machine and work involved for the engine.

Acceleration - use as much or as little as is required to negotiate the hazard.

At all times seek to optimise your VIEW, but not at the expense of SAFETY (space) or STABILITY (grip).

KEY POINT: - "target fixation" a term that is applied when one's concentration becomes "locked" on one feature. This usually happens when in a "panic/potential collision" situation. To avoid this always "look at what you want to hit". But, do I hear you say "I don't want to hit anything".

OH, YES, you do. You want to "hit" the safe space that is available to you.

SO, LOOK AT IT.

Following road collisions, the notebooks of traffic officers are littered with entries like: -

It came from **nowhere** - **Suddenly** - Well, I **signalled**.

Nowhere is the place you haven't looked.

Suddenly is what you have failed to anticipate.

Signals never make a manoeuvre safe.

KEY POINT: - much has been written, and spoken, about making "eye contact" with other road users.

I have mixed feelings about this.

I only make direct eye contact with another road user if I am hoping they might give priority to me, OR, I am prepared to give priority to them, for example, when pedestrians are waiting at Zebra Crossings.

When a motorist is waiting to emerge/cross my path at junctions and I am on the major road, I will often make a head movement away from them (perhaps pretending to look in a mirror) and use my peripheral vision to watch them - making it appear that I have NOT seen them.

Looking directly at them may, I feel, tempt them into my path.