

Part 2: Gaining the skills

Key points:

- Gaining ability will take time, and involves exercising the new skills out on the road.
- As you build the set of eight skills, your overall level of competence is governed by the weakest link.

Now to the real meat of the matter - how to gain the skills. As you would expect, this is the major part of the book.

To get the most from this section, you should first have read [Part 1: Defining the skills](#). It gives a new structure to the task of driving, and explains not only what the skills are, but also why. With this firm grasp, it is easier to:

set about learning the right things,

that will be effective in what you are trying to do.

Recall from before, that safe driving is a mainly thinking task. And this thinking is about active risk management, and how you reach your decisions about what to make the car do.

In the last chapter a deliberately broad definition of “skill” was taken, to build a complete picture. And this gave us eight skills:

- **Knowledge and Beliefs**
 1. **Beliefs**
 2. **Sense of Danger**
 3. **Rules and Regulations**
- **Thinking Processes**
 4. **Learning from Experience**
 5. **Fitness Check**
 6. **Observation**
 7. **Risk Assessment and Control**
- **Physical Actions**
 8. **Car Control**

These were also mapped on to a five-stage learning curve of overall safe skill.

Of these skills, **Observation** and **Risk Assessment and Control** have by far the biggest coverage in the following pages. At the expert level, they have the highest ultimate contribution to safety. Firmly underpinning these are **Beliefs, Sense of Danger** and **Learning from Experience**. Taken together, these five skills are:

the core of your “eyes and brain” ability.

The more traditional skills in **Rules and Regulations, Fitness Check** and **Car Control** are outlined more briefly because these three are already extensively covered in basic training. Some important points are still made, though.

Recall too, that all eight skills are components of the single “compound skill” of safe driving.

Because of this:

one weak link can badly limit your overall ability.

So this section examines each skill in turn, and how to improve it. But remember that reading a book can only do so much.

Gaining genuine skill and reaping the reward lies in what you do. And the true aim is in the practice and exercise of the skills out on the road.

With all of the information and techniques, though, apply them progressively, rather than impatiently. Expect that absorbing a fresh skill to the point where it becomes instinctive will take time. And don’t suddenly throw your attention on to something new to the exclusion of all else.

Let the base of skills build steadily and solidly - at its own pace.

Also don’t forget, that if you are waiting for where this book gives you specific instructions to follow in all the various driving situations, stop looking. It does not do that. Instead, the aim is to equip you with the thinking to make your own good decisions, and take control of your own safety. This is much more effective, and some would say is an overdue departure from the traditional approach.

In truth, it increasingly becomes a freedom to enjoy!

