

Gavin House Instructor

Meeting





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Assumptions:

You know about the priority system – if not, read the document on my website 'The Priority System'.
You know about controlling your speed – if not, read the document 'Use of Speed and Limit Points'.

Let's listen to RoSPA

This is an excerpt from The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents about 20 Zones in built up areas.

Drivers who travel at higher speeds have less time to identify and react to what is happening around them. It takes them longer to stop, and if they are involved in a collision, it is more severe, causing greater injury to the occupants and any pedestrian or rider they hit.

The purpose of 20mph limits is to create conditions in which drivers naturally choose to drive at around 20mph as a result of the nature of the area.

In 2017 overall compliance with speed limits remained broadly level, which it has done since 2011, but there were minor increases in vehicles exceeding the speed limit between 2016 and 2017. However, on 20mph roads, most car drivers (86%) exceeded the speed limit under free flow conditions. It is important to note that this may not be typical of most 20mph roads, as the data is collected from a sample of 116 automatic traffic counters.

Almost half of car drivers exceeded the speed limit on motorways in 2017, and just over half of car drivers exceeded the speed limit on 30mph roads, with some (6%) exceeding the limit by 10mph or more.

Most pedestrian casualties occur in built up areas:

19 of the 22 child pedestrians and 338 of the 448 adult pedestrians who were killed in 2017, died on built-up roads.

Over half of cyclist deaths (62 of 101) and most casualties (16,886 of 18,321) also occur on these roads.

For pedestrians struck by cars, the risk of being killed increases slowly until impact speeds of around 30mph, but above this speed, the risk increases rapidly. A pedestrian hit by a car travelling at between 30mph and 40mph is 3.5 to 5.5 times more likely to be killed than one struck by a car travelling at less than 30mph.

Elderly pedestrians have a much greater risk of suffering fatal injuries than other age groups.

For car occupants, the risk of being in a collision with another vehicle also increases with speed. The risk is much higher in a side impact than in a frontal impact.

Even a small amount above the speed limit makes a big difference.



So what do we do then?

The issue is that accidents wouldn't occur if people knew they were going to happen. We can therefore assume that accidents have occurred as a result of something appearing 'out of the blue'.

In my experience, abnormal things generally don't just appear from nowhere (apart from idiots on the road of course). Most situations can easily be anticipated; if you can anticipate something will happen, you can start doing something about it before it becomes a problem.

If you knew something would be hot as it comes out of the oven, you would put oven gloves on! It's just common sense.

As a driver, we have 3 things that we can use to help us:

1. Information (In and Out)
We need to get in as much information as possible and give it off as required. This means looking around in all directions, seeing what people are doing and, if necessary, give off information to alert them to our presence (horn or flash of lights).
2. Position
If you position your car wide or a good distance away from the potential danger, we can't get hit!
3. Speed
If we stay close to something, there is a chance that if something bad happens, we may end up caught in the middle of it. So if there is a chance that a child will run into the road and we can't keep ourselves away from the parked cars, we will have to proceed at a suitable speed to avoid splatting them with our car.

Anticipation

This is the biggest issue with learner drivers, they look but they don't SEE.

Most of the time, learners will fail their test because they are looking at the situation at face value and completely miss the bigger picture. If you don't see what's actually going on, you could well behave in an inappropriate way.



Example:

There is a car waiting for us on the right, we have priority as he is entering our lane. He has difficulty seeing us because of the parked car on the right though. You might be tempted to go through thinking all is well.

I see this and think that the person will edge forward to improve their view or worse still, just pull into our path and cause us to brake.



Of course he did! He thinks he's more important than us and decided to pull in front causing us to have to brake.

Now, because I anticipated he would drive badly (always best to assume the worst-case scenario), I would start preparing to stop or start moving to the left a bit if there's room.

The point is, this would not be an event I wasn't prepared for, so it doesn't really bother me too much. Inexperienced drivers would get annoyed at someone doing this; it's just an every day occurrence.

It's worth noting that if you were car A and you came around the corner like that, you would be marked down on the driving test, possibly even failed, it depends on how you did it.

Especially if you look at what's behind us, a big gap until car C turns up. This driver should have just waited 5 seconds, let us out then he could have entered the road safely and pulled in later on; like car B has behind us!



Should I do it?

This is again a common error. **Just because you can, doesn't mean that you should!**

A good driver will be able to drive safely with consideration for others; an examiner is looking to see if you drive this way. Logically, there will be instances where the safest course of action is to stop, wait for a danger to pass, then proceed when it's safe.

You don't just keep going! It's about a safe, considerate drive, thinking about how our actions affect others.

Well, the previous example is perfect. Car A going around the cars thought that they could fit into the available space, and they were correct! Look:



However, they are now driving very close to parked cars, very close to us and they have forced us over to the kerb. **It is this action of forcing someone, who has priority over you, to move over that is the issue.**

If this person had waited before going around the parked car, we could have moved over to assist them but it would be our decision. The other car forced us over and so is in the wrong – more of this later.

Spatial awareness

I am often asked; 'how do I know if I can fit in the gap?'



Come out early and try to line up with the gap, you will repeatedly find me telling you to 'come out early' in this document.

Now that I am looking directly at the gap, I try to visualise a copy of the other vehicles in the picture and see if I could fit one of them in the available hole, I think it can in this instance.



See, proof!

Cars are similar in size so if I see a car go through a hole, I probably can as well. If I am in any doubt, then either, I don't do it, or I approach at a reduced speed to assess further.



The road side changes shape – look OUT

Well, alright it doesn't actually change shape but there are things by the side of the road that move.

Anything can come at you from the side, such as children, dogs, balls etc. When you are passing a vehicle, a door could open or something could walk around the side of the vehicle. We need to look out for danger and so your eye should be scanning all over to look for it.

When we say to **look out** for danger we mean **Over, Under, Through**.



Looking at the blue car on the right, I can see over the top of the vehicle and nothing appears to be there.

There is nothing approaching from the left or the right of the car.

There is no cat under the car. I cannot see any feet in front of the car. There are no shadows protruding from beyond the car which would imply a person standing in the road. There is no vapour coming out of the exhaust which would imply engine usage.

There are no lights on the car to imply it being active.

There is a potential person sat in the drivers' seat as I can see something that looks like a head.

When I get nearer to the car, I might be able to see a face reflected in the door mirrors.

If the door mirrors are folded in, this is often a sign of a parked and unattended car (modern cars tend to fold door mirrors in when you lock them, just like the Mini on the left).

These are examples of things that you need to scan for, just in case a door opens, or someone walks into the road.

We adapt our position, speed or give off information if we think there is imminent danger.

Remember, if you can't see if there is actual danger, assume there is some and cater for it anyway; better safe than sorry!

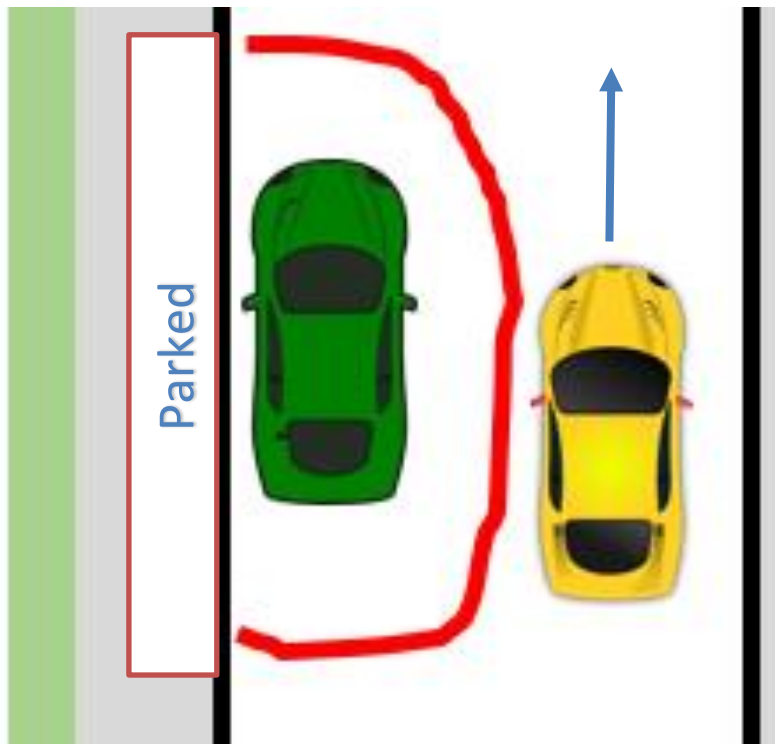


Barriers between us

A good thing to do is imagine a barrier around all parked cars.

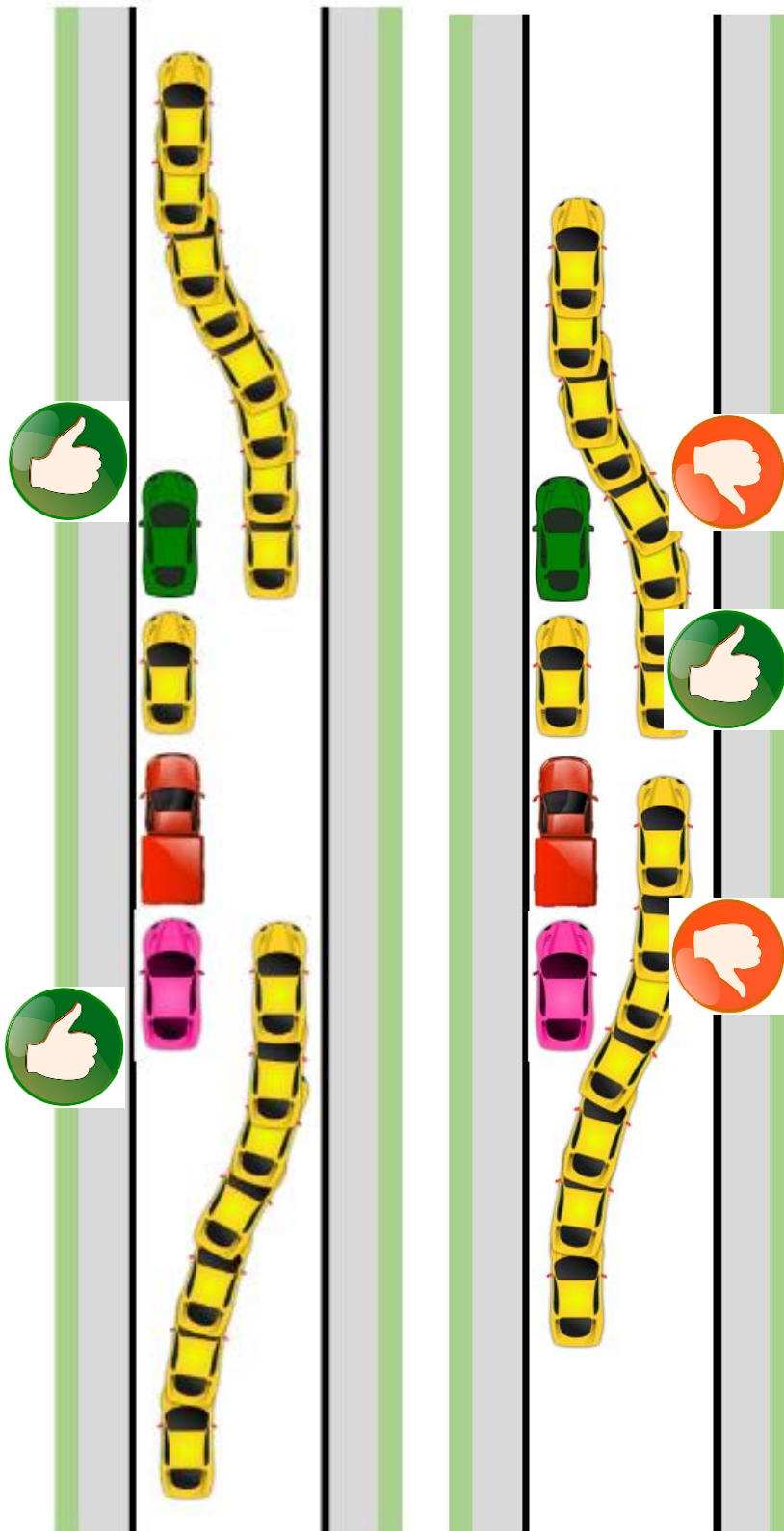


I always pretend that the pavement is shut and these barriers have been placed around parked cars to make a temporary pavement for people.



If I can drive down the road not worrying about hitting these barriers then if a door did open, I've already catered for it and don't need to panic.

A word of caution for a very common failure on the driving test, notice the previous diagram has allowed room for someone to walk around the entire car, not just the side. Getting too close to the parked car when moving out or coming back in often results in failure for inadequate clearance.



The left picture shows good clearance around the cars.

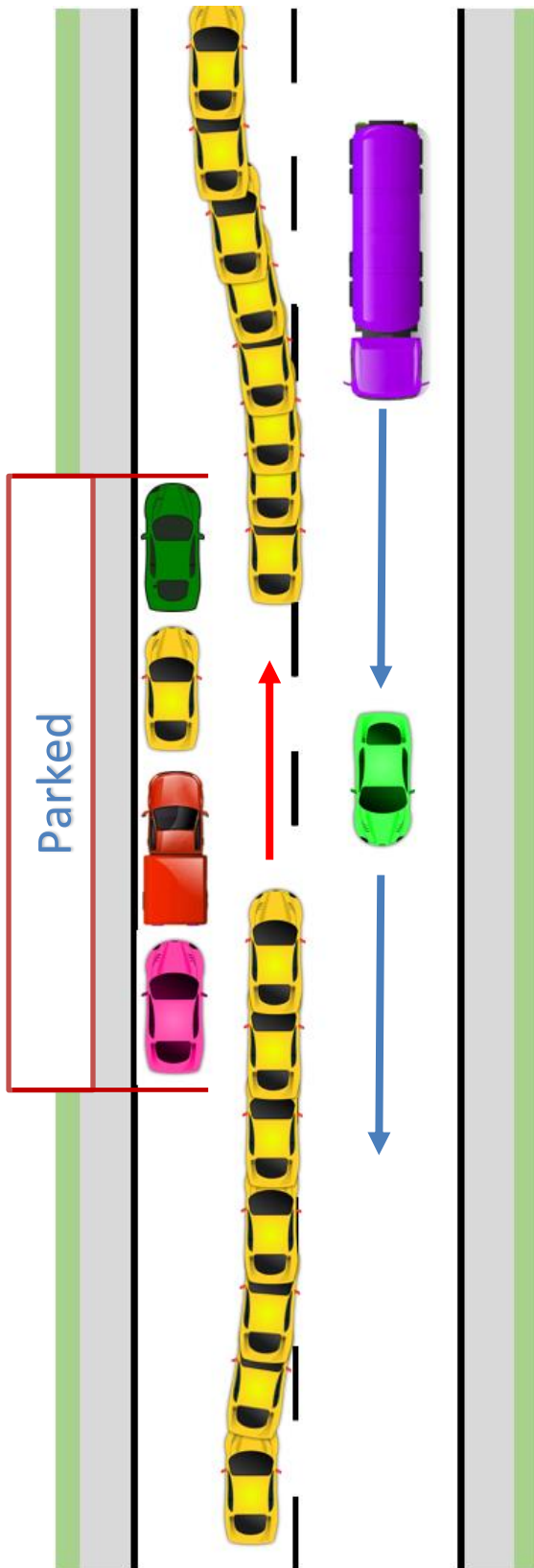
The right picture shows how the yellow car gets too close to the parked cars when coming out and going in. Although maintaining good clearance by the side of the cars, this could well result in failure.

Having said that, you can get close to a vehicle if you're only doing 1 or 2mph because you can react quickly.

As you can see it's:
Speed Vs Clearance,
LESS SPACE, LESS PACE

An examiner once said that it's better to drive near an oncoming car than a parked car because the oncoming car will see you and move; a child will just open a door without looking.

Wide road



This is a wide road.

Notice that I have come out early. The previous pictures showed coming out a bit late but here are the benefits of coming out early:

Your car stays flatter to the traffic thus taking up less room.

You look like you're passing parked cars so you don't need to indicate your intentions.

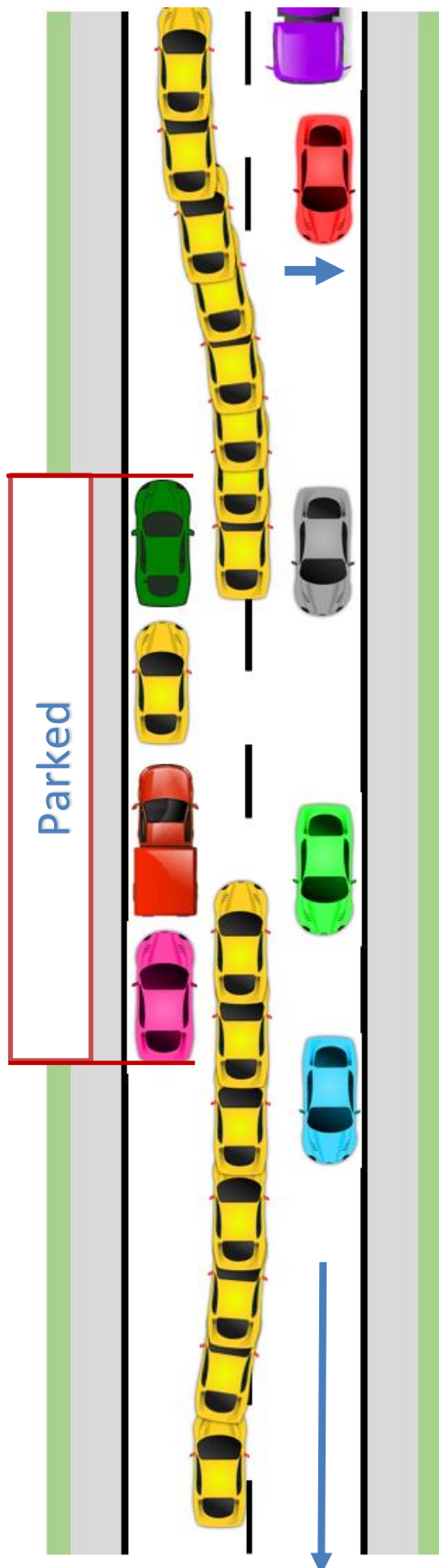
Oncoming traffic will see you and move over to create more room if it's a bit tight.

Parked cars can see you coming in their side mirrors as well so RED, YELLOW and GREEN are unlikely to move off. If you were approaching hidden by PINK, then they might pull off just as you move to pass PINK.

Because I have allowed room for doors to open, people can see me, I get a good view around and oncoming traffic have lots of safe working space, I can keep my speed up.

Come out early, create lots of room, keep your speed up!

Tight space



This road is narrower but still room for 3 vehicles to pass each other.

Same principle as before, **come out early**, but this time, there is less space either side of the car so we reduce our speed, maybe even 10mph.

Because we came out early, BLUE would have seen it and moved over early. Of course, it is BLUE's priority so they don't have to move for us. By coming out early, if BLUE didn't move over, we could abort and let them out before going in.

I refer back to the sections 'Should I do it?' and 'Spatial awareness' in this instance.

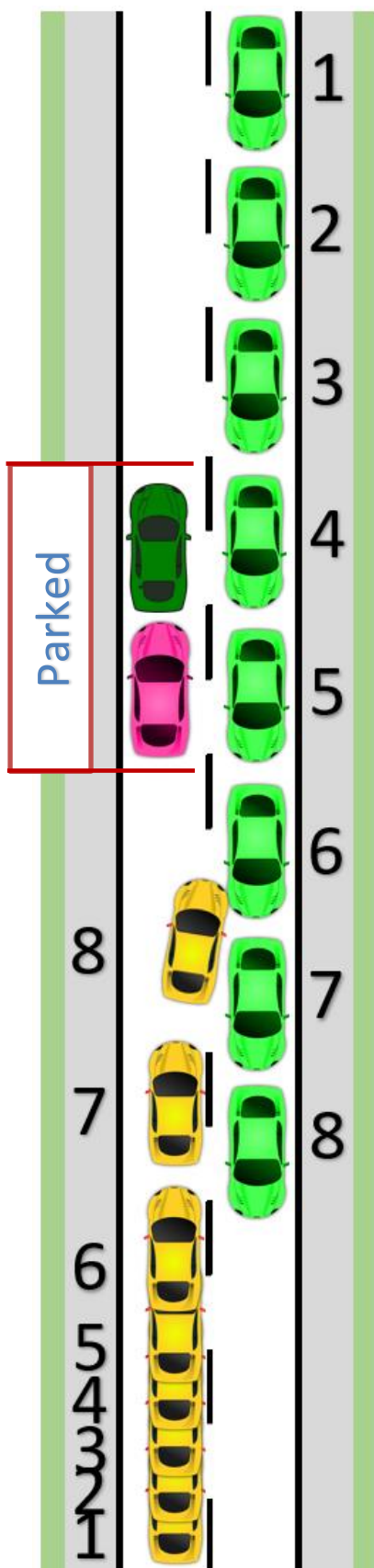
If there's only one or two cars coming at you, the safer thing to do would be to let the cars pass the narrowing before going in. If there are lots of cars coming, you can't just sit there if there is room to get through, so you make progress but because of the proximity to others, you keep your speed down.

Remember to look at the big picture. There is a lorry approaching and they have priority. Even if they did move over for us, there still wouldn't be room for 3 vehicles so you should defer to them. I would only go through if I was certain I could pass the parked cars before causing the lorry to brake.

Come out early, assess space, if you're going into a narrow gap, keep your speed low!

IF IN DOUBT, CHICKEN OUT!

Trailer hitting



On a drive, the only place we WANT to stop is our end destination, every junction and obstacle is just something in the way.

There is a limited amount of road that we all share. Your job is to use the bit of road you need when someone else isn't using it. Don't just turn up and stop, turn up when the bit you want is empty! It's all about timing!

To do this I imagine that all vehicles are towing a caravan or trailer and I try to hit them; not at the tow-ball but the back of the trailer (I want at least a cars length between the car and me).

I approach slowly so I have a sort of run-up and then accelerate into the trailer.

In the picture the numbers are where each car is at the same time, i.e. both cars are at 1, then they're at 2 etc; you can't have YELLOW at 8 when GREEN is at 6!

YELLOW hasn't stopped, they're creeping slowly to allow GREEN to pass the parked cars, (1,2,3,4,5).

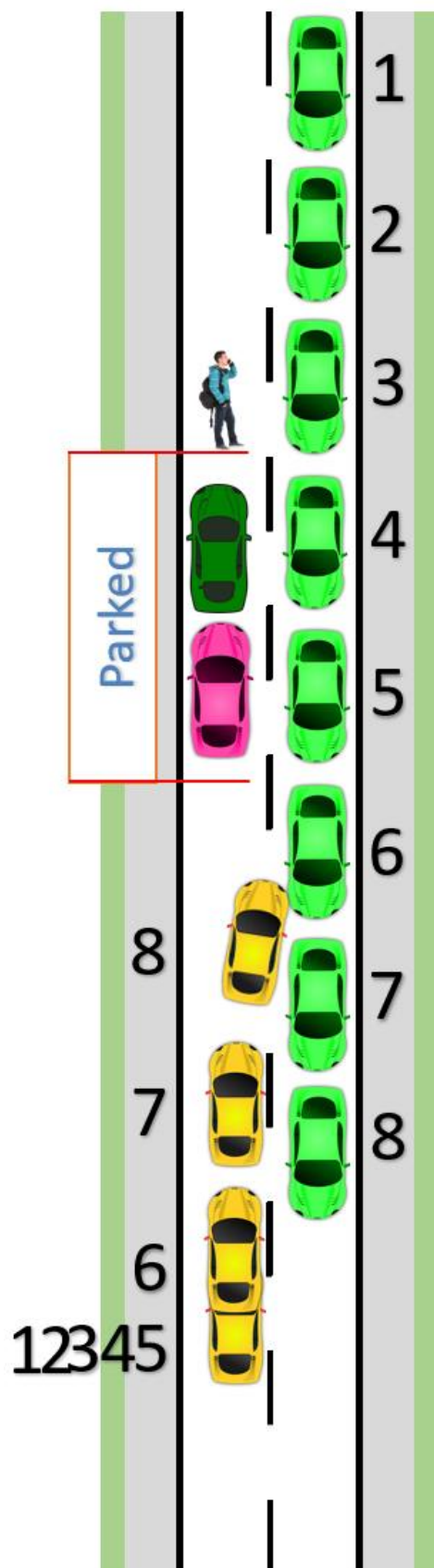
YELLOW starts to accelerate at 6, they pass each other at 7 and YELLOW comes across at 8 thus hitting the imaginary trailer at least a cars length away from GREEN.

Notice, YELLOW hasn't encroached on PINK, they will still leave room for a person to walk around PINK. (See 'Barriers between us' about this).

YELLOW also approaches positioned near the central white line to get improved view – again, they came out early.

Come out early, get the timing right, hit the trailer by accelerating into the hole.

Holdback position



Sometimes you will have to stop; maybe there's a long line of cars coming at you.

You should stop in a place where you get good vision, like near the centre line.

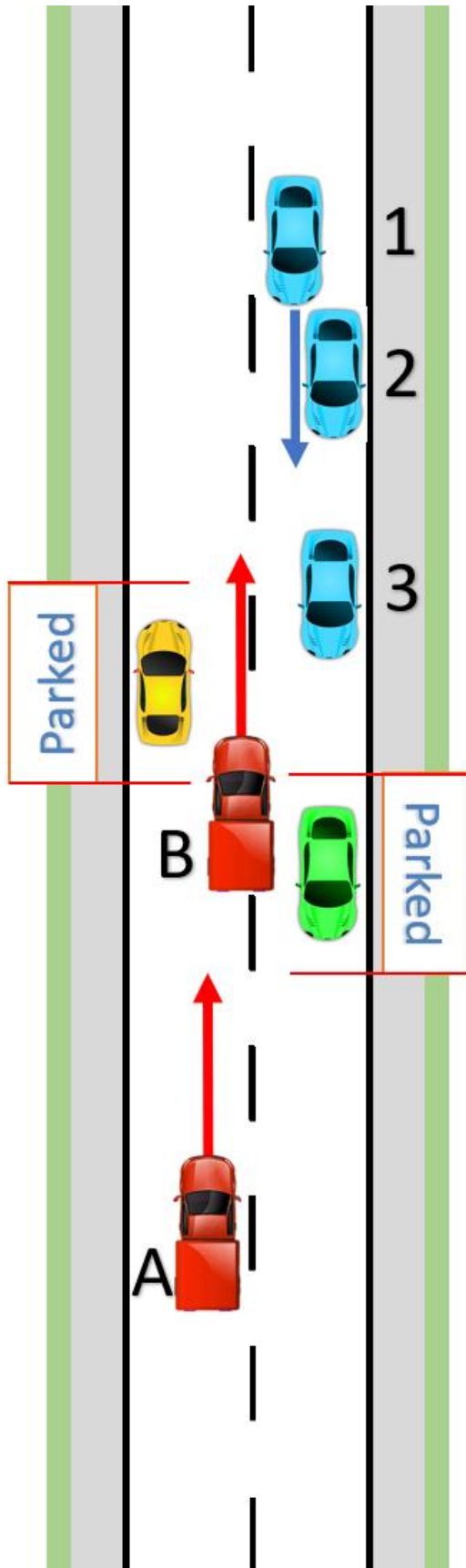
You should stop a good distance back, at least 2 but ideally 4 or 5 car lengths, so that you can start to take a run-up and trailer hit the last car that comes through.

This is basically the same as the previous page except that, rather than creeping, we are stationary for numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, this is known as the Holdback Position.

As we are stationary though, this is often the moment that people might get in or out of parked cars, or walk across a road, so make sure you keep 'looking O.U.T.' for danger.

Come out early, stop in the Holdback Position, get the timing right, hit the trailer by accelerating into the hole.

Cars parked both sides close



Sometimes, you will come across cars parked on both sides of the road with cars approaching each other (A and 1).

At YELLOW, BLUE gets priority. At GREEN, RED gets priority. Combined, nobody gets priority, it is worked on a first come, first served, basis.

The safest thing to do is always give way. If you give way, you are guaranteed not to be in a collision. We do not know if the car approaching you will give way and we cannot take the risk.

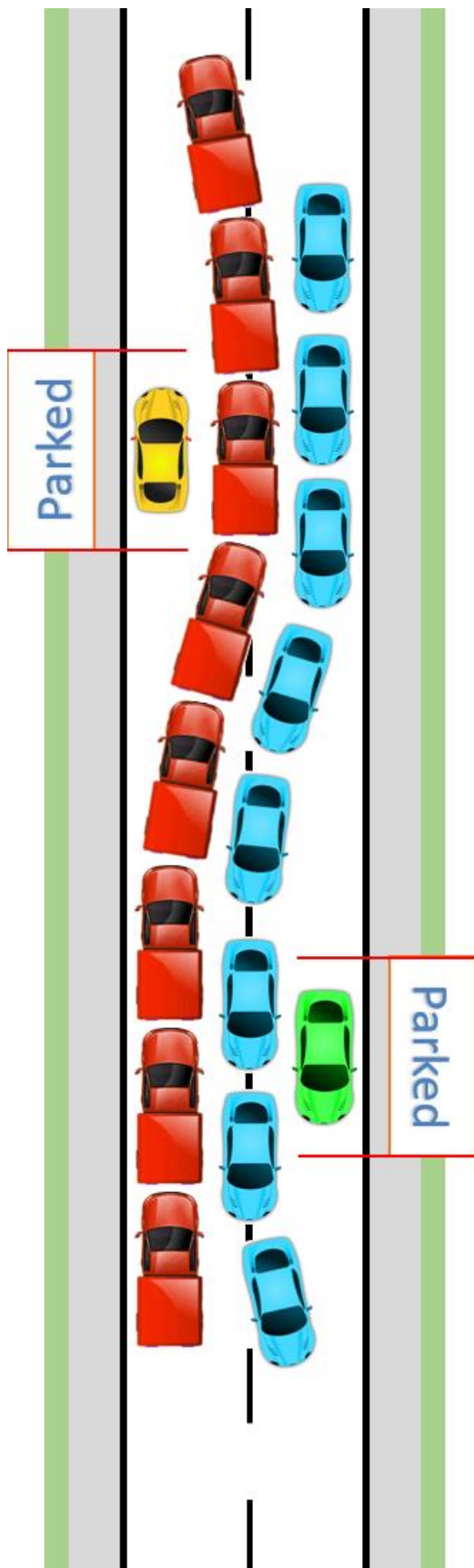
Having said that, if you find the approaching car gives way to you (2), then take up a dominant stance in the middle of the road and drive through (B), don't forget to thank them.

If it turns out that you get there before the other vehicle by a couple of seconds, again, take up a dominant stance by driving down the centre white line so that the oncoming vehicle is in no doubt as to your intentions (B).

The diagram shows BLUE in positions 1, 2 and 3. You could stop at 1 and allow RED through (Holdback position). You could also move to 2 if RED was a large vehicle and needed more room. 3 would be okay-ish but make sure you don't get too close to GREEN.

Go when you can but always err on the side of caution!

Cars parked both sides apart



When parked cars are separated by a large gap, approaching vehicles can move to the left of their lane to allow the oncoming vehicles to drive down the centre line.

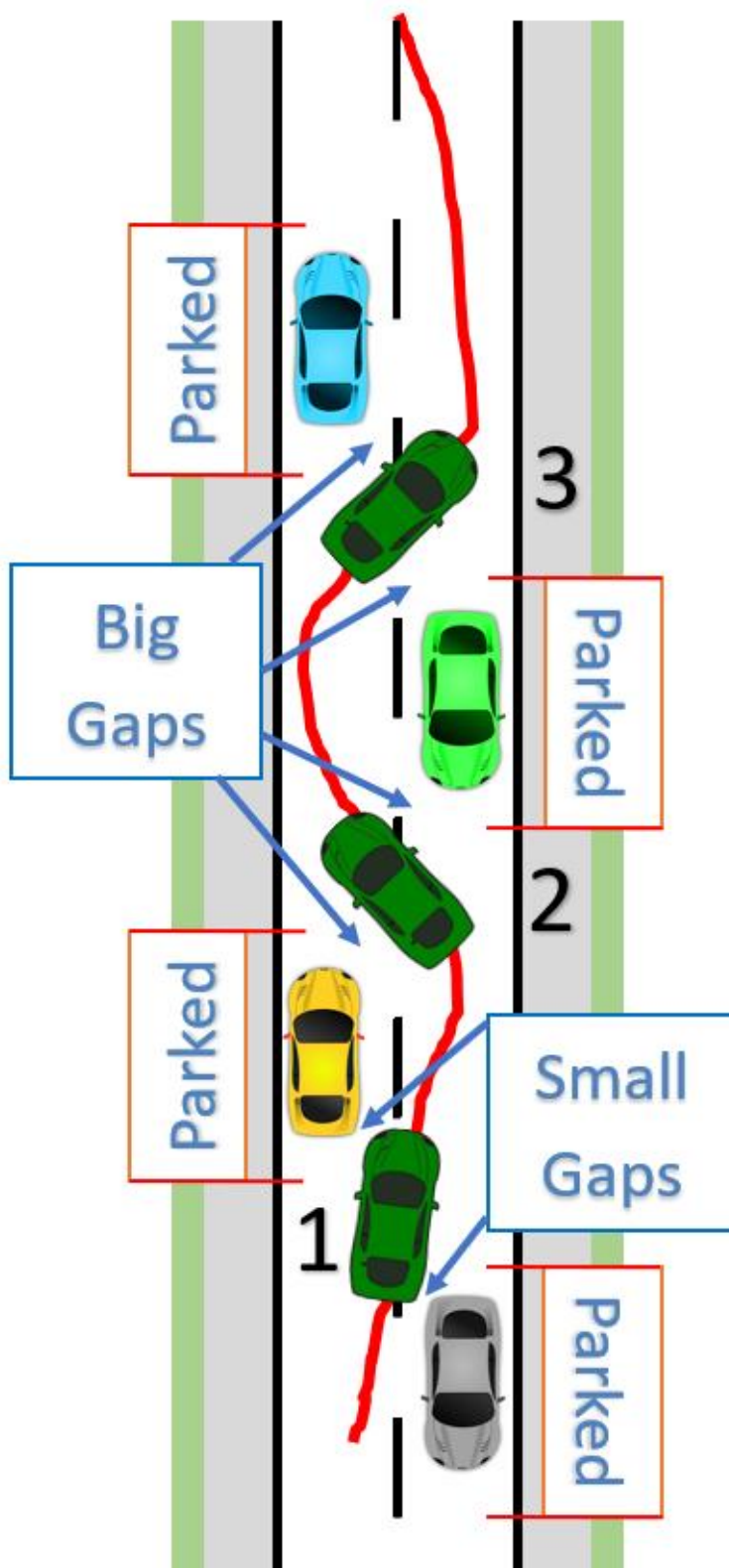
Once they are between the parked cars, they can then move to the centre line themselves, and both cars effectively go behind each other.

What we are demonstrating here is consideration for others and the routes they might need to take. By slightly adapting our route, all parties are able to continue their journey unhindered.

As usual, keep looking O.U.T for danger coming from the sides.

Plan ahead and consider other people, could we adapt to help?

Angle for space



Here the road is narrow.

DARK GREEN is having to weave around parked cars.

At 1, the angle they've gone through isn't much at all and subsequently, they have poor clearance on GREY and YELLOW.

At 2 and 3, the angle is much better and so they have much better clearance.

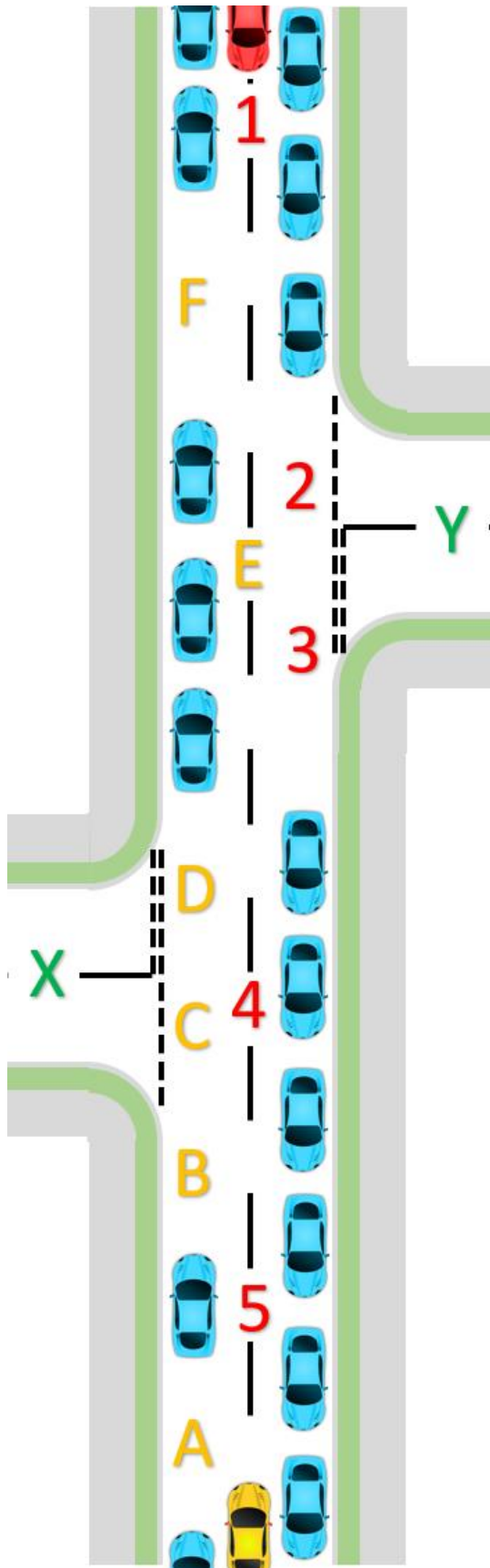
Don't just aim for a hole, think about how much room there is.

Could you adapt your drive to improve your situation?

Obviously each situation is different, sometimes you have no choice but to drive close to something; just drive slow to compensate.

Shallow angle means poor clearance, big angle means good clearance.

Cars all the way down the road both sides



For the purpose of this, assume all blue cars are parked cars.

RED and YELLOW want to pass. They have to meet at a part of the road where there's only one parked car.

When meeting, you pull to the left or stop at a place to allow them to pull to their left. The only possible exception is if an emergency vehicle approaches and it's easier for me to park on the right than for them to try and squeeze passed.

Try to make as much progress up the road as you can, if YELLOW can get to F before meeting RED, then they should.

If allowing people to turn into or out of the side road, only do this if you gain an advantage or you are having to wait anyway. **Don't just flip priorities.**

Options to consider:

RED can wait at 1 for YELLOW to get to F.

RED can wait at 2 to let someone out of Y or to allow YELLOW to pass.

RED can wait at 3 to let someone go into Y whilst allowing YELLOW to pass.

RED can wait at 4 to allow YELLOW into B, C or D.

RED can wait at 5 to allow YELLOW into A.

YELLOW can wait at A to allow RED through.

YELLOW can wait at B if RED were turning into X or to allow someone to exit X or to allow RED through.

YELLOW can wait at C to allow RED through or allow someone to exit X.

YELLOW can wait at D to allow RED through.

YELLOW can wait at E to allow RED into 2 or 3.

YELLOW can wait at F to allow RED through.

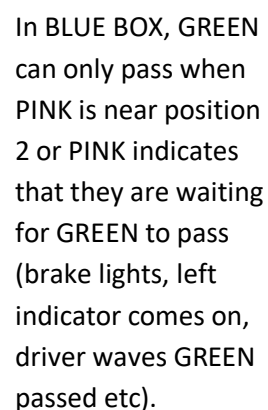
Consider both cars options, meet at a wide point, wait if you have to, make progress where you can.



In the RED BOX, GREEN comes across PINK trying to park.

Initially GREEN is cautious but the road is wide and PINK can be passed without any risk of being hit as GREEN can allow loads of room.

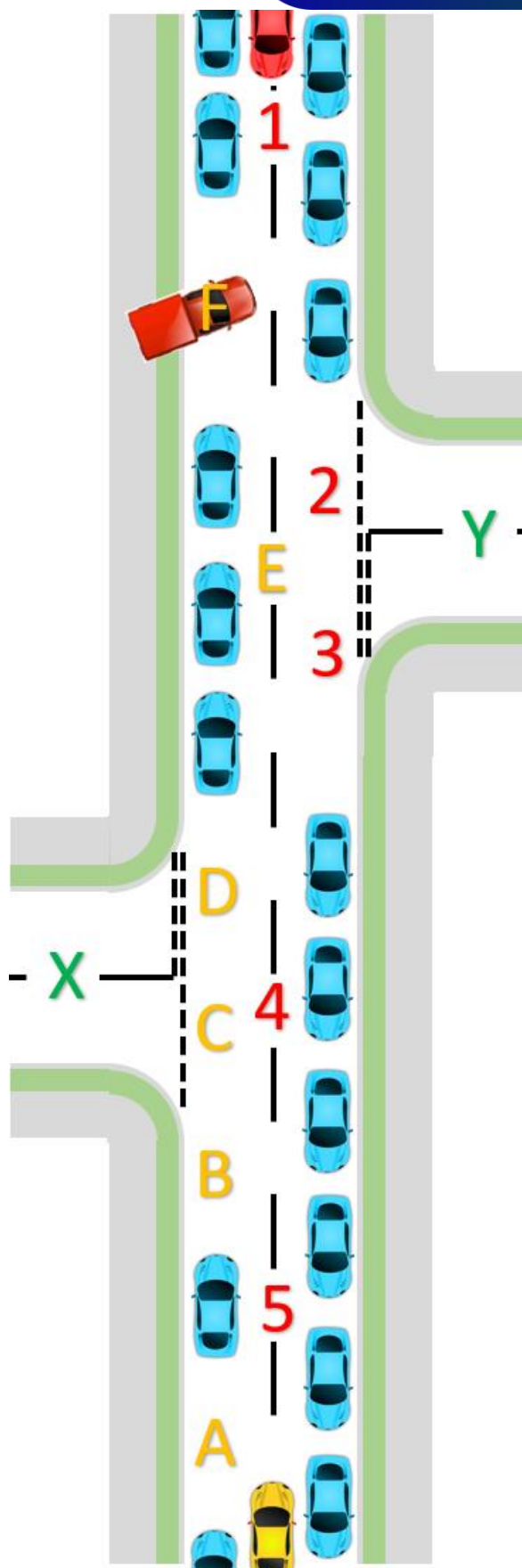
GREEN should carry on and not wait. Waiting would just block people behind.



When people are parking, they are busy doing that and are not focussed on you.

You can see that the front of PINK swung into GREENS path so it would be stupid to attempt to pass if there's no room.

Go when there's no danger but be happy to wait if needed.



Same picture as earlier except this time, at F, there's a lorry trying to reverse into a driveway.

This happened on a driving test once.

The lorry was going back and forth as they had a trailer on the back and were having trouble getting through the gateway.

The student attempted to squeeze passed the lorry and even mentioned 'oooh, that's a bit tight'. The examiner also thought that was a bit tight and failed them.

The issue was that the lorry didn't know we were there, they weren't even looking at us, and at any moment they could have come forward again.

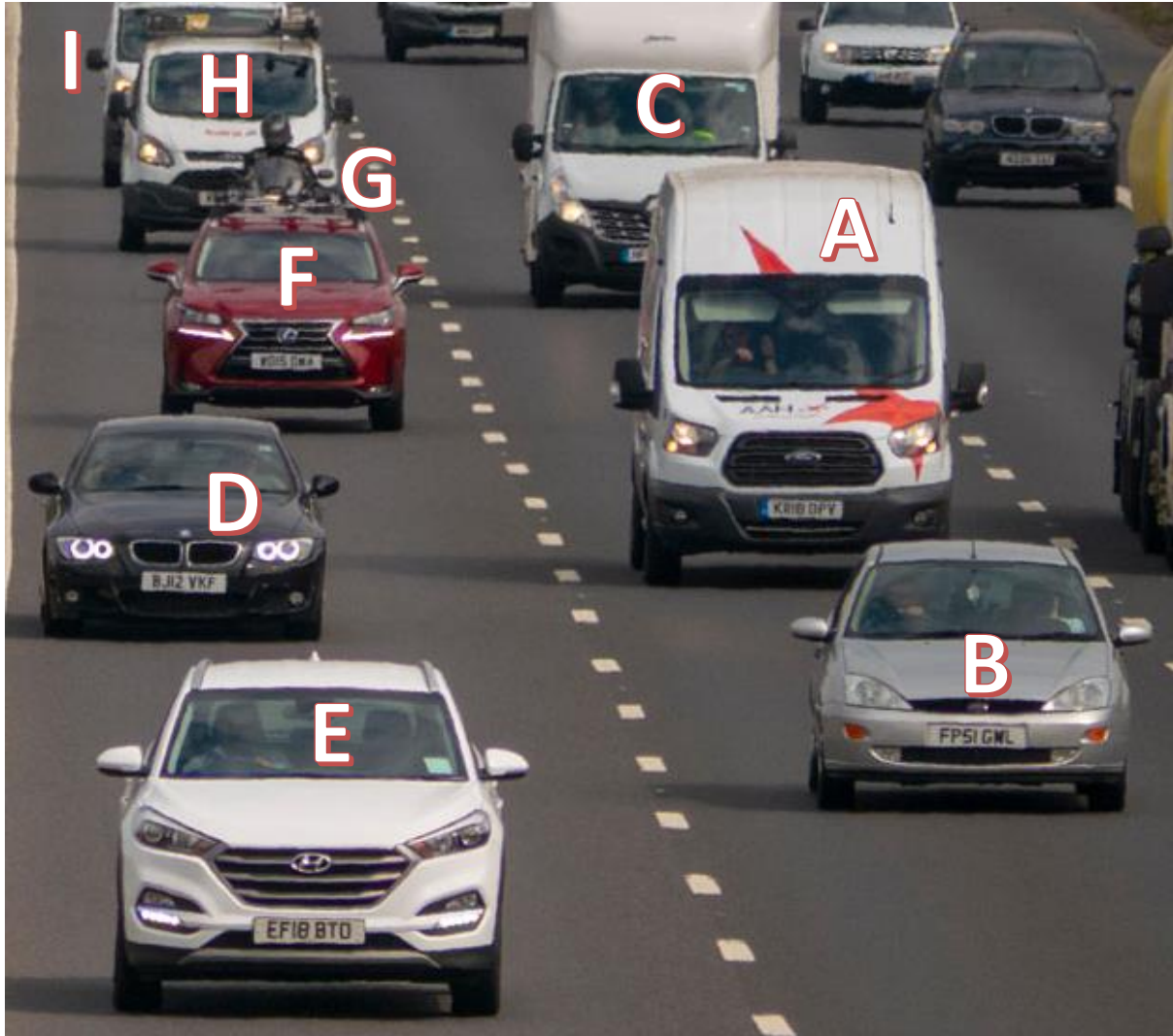
The examiner is thinking:
It's a high risk situation,
Option 1, wait until the risk has subsided either by the lorry waving us through or by finally getting into the driveway.
Option 2, try to squeeze through and risk being damaged.

The student chose option 2 and demonstrated that they are a risk taker rather than 'safety first'.

We don't want risk takers, we want nice considerate drives where the car starts and finishes in the same shape and colour.

Following cars through

Lots of people make this mistake, full licence holders and learners alike.



Van A can see around and over the car B. Van C cannot see the road ahead much, because van A is blocking his view.

Car D has moved slightly to the right to gain a better view around car E therefore his view is partially blocked. Car F can see around, through and over car D. Motorbike G and van H get good views but van I is driving too close with poor visibility, he can only see about one car length ahead.

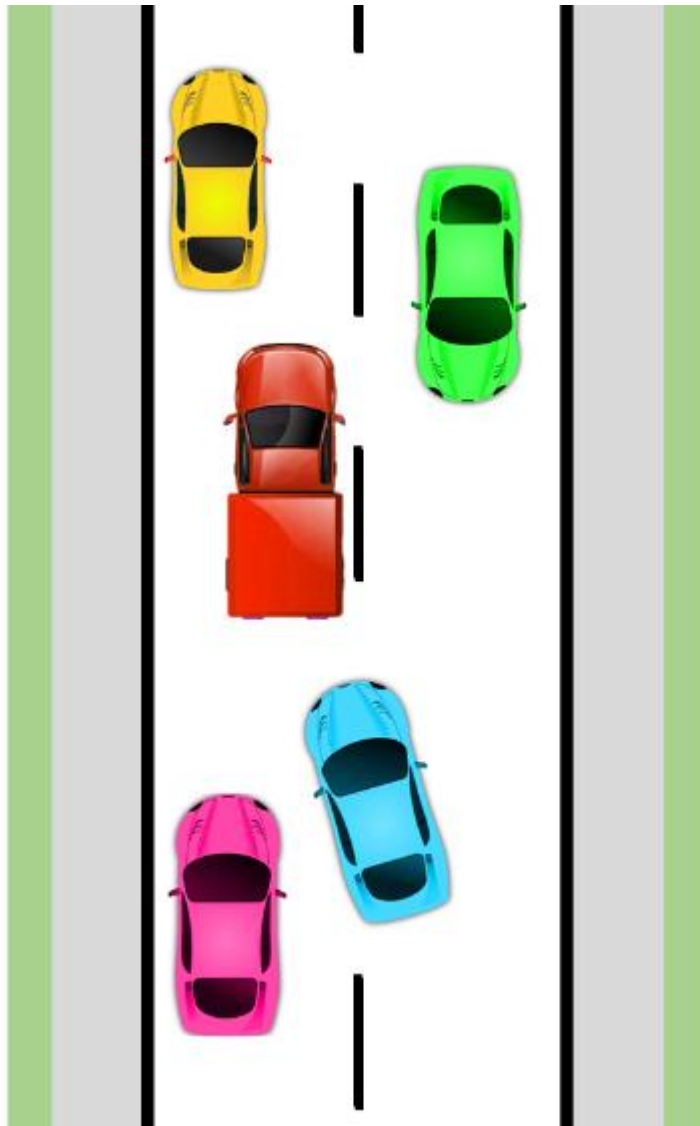
This picture demonstrates a few things, all of them are driving too closely to each other but the ones with poor vision are risking their lives as they can't see danger approaching until it's too late. If something were to fall off a vehicle, people who are blind to the road ahead will crash.

I was driving on the M25 once when a bike rack with 3 bikes attached, fell off a car in front of me about 10 cars ahead. Because I was staying at a safe distance to the car in front of me, I could see that cars were braking and lane changing ahead. In anticipation of a hazard, I moved into the right hand lane and overtook.

People couldn't see the danger coming because of tailgating, the cars in the middle lane started to brake, then the cars behind had to brake even harder, then the car behind them broke harder still and swerved to avoid hitting the car in front. Finally, the car I was following originally, swerved into the barriers, and spun across the motorway; it was shut for hours.

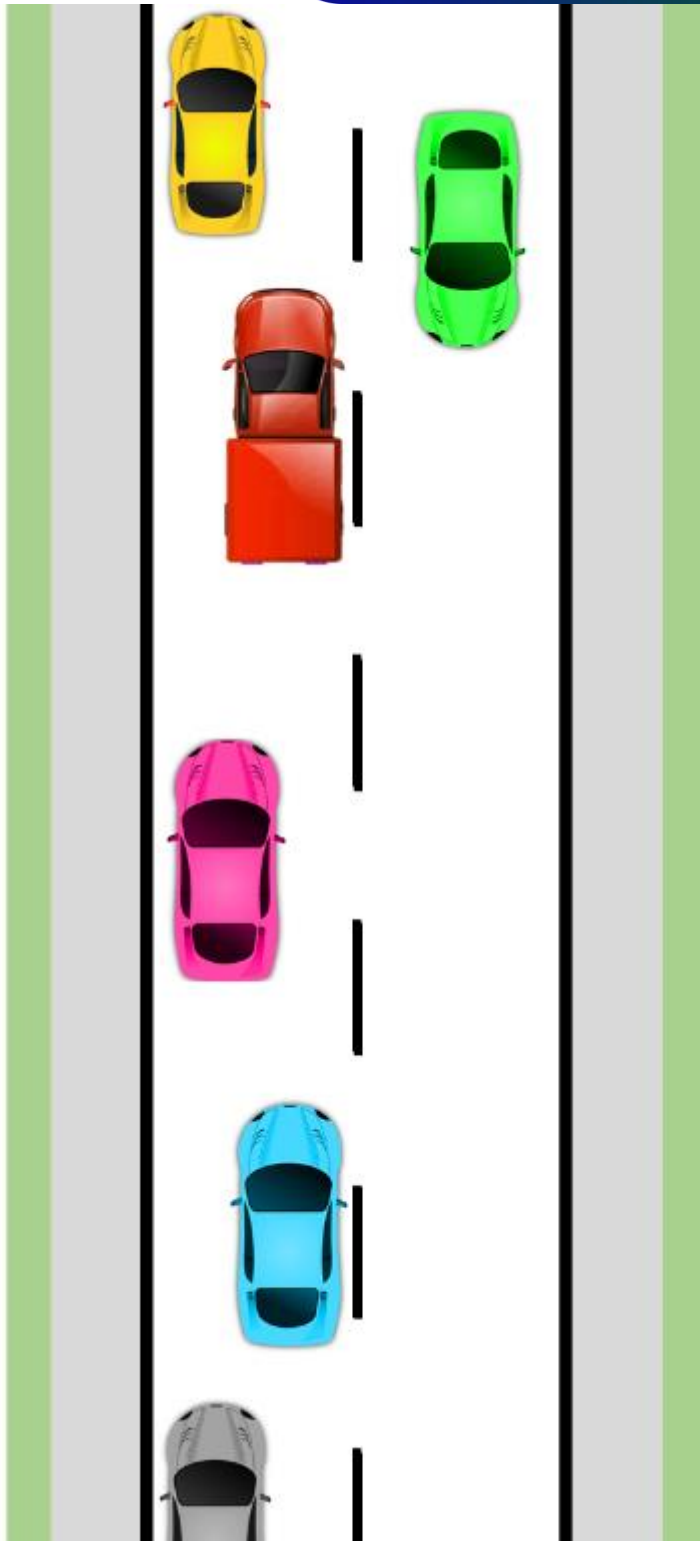
The point is that none of that had to happen if people just drove able to see the road ahead and not just the vehicle ahead.

You must always drive able to see the road ahead. Always look beyond the car or cars in front of you, and always assume that there is danger ahead until you know better.



Here, RED has pulled in between the YELLOW and PINK parked cars to allow GREEN through.

BLUE followed RED around PINK unable to see that GREEN was coming or indeed that YELLOW was there. BLUE is now blocking the road.



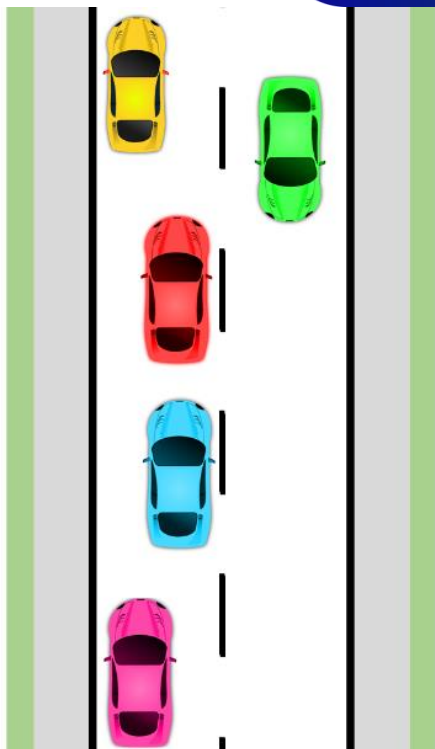
This is what BLUE should have done.

BLUE needed to get around PINK but couldn't see ahead because of RED.

BLUE let RED go.

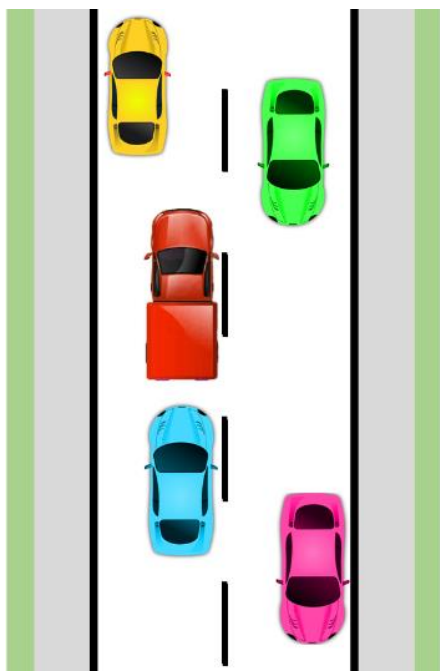
Only when there is room for BLUE after PINK will BLUE go around PINK. In this example, that means waiting for GREEN to pass so that RED can overtake YELLOW.

Of course, if there is nothing following GREEN then BLUE can follow RED and pass PINK and YELLOW in one move.



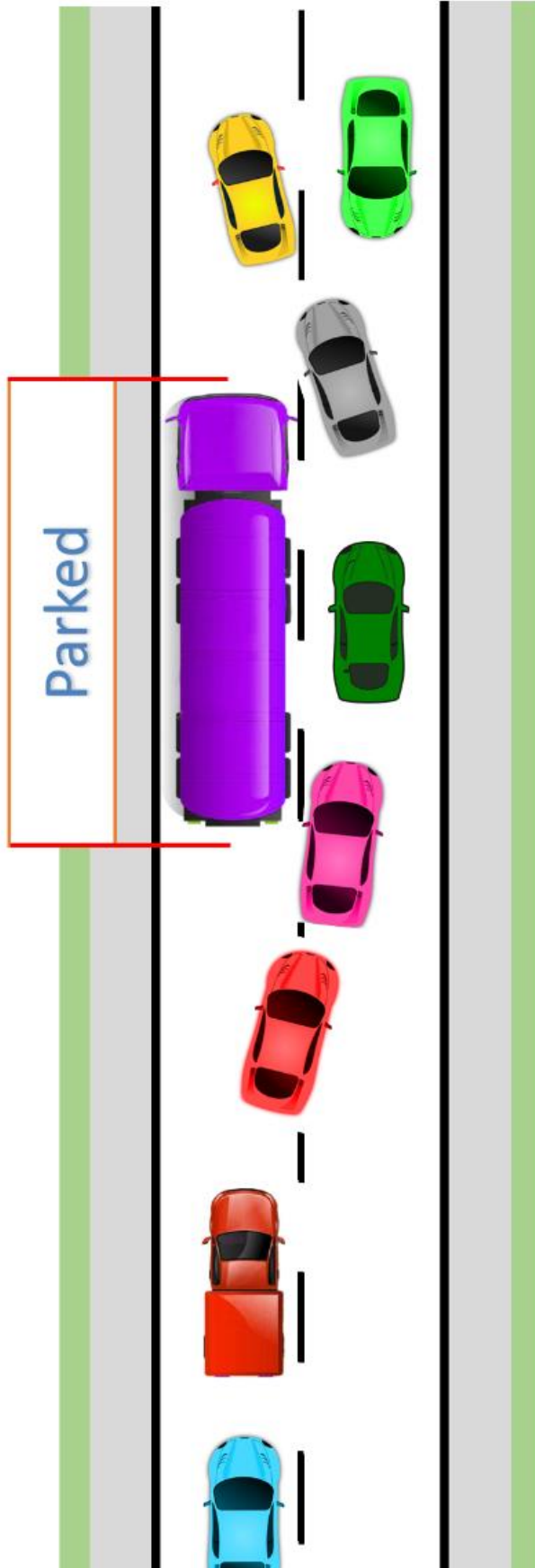
Here, BLUE was able to see around and through RED and see that there was enough room for both cars.

Both RED and BLUE could get around PINK without causing GREEN to have to slow.



Here, BLUE is following RED and couldn't see that parked YELLOW was coming up.

RED has to stop to allow GREEN through so now BLUE has blocked the road.



This happened on a driving test and resulted in failure.

My student is represented as BLUE.

There was a lorry parked on the left and cars were going around the lorry.

People often think that if they follow the car in front around an obstacle, then anyone waiting on the other side will also have to wait for them.

This is a very rude and arrogant way of thinking.

BLUE's vision was obscured by all the vehicles in front, and so could not see LIGHTGREEN waiting to come through.

Only as RED VAN finally moved to the left after passing the lorry did BLUE see LIGHTGREEN, but by then it was too late.

BLUE should have let RED VAN clear the lorry before committing to going around the lorry themselves. Had they done that, they would have seen LIGHTGREEN, waited, then gone when safe and passed their driving test first time.

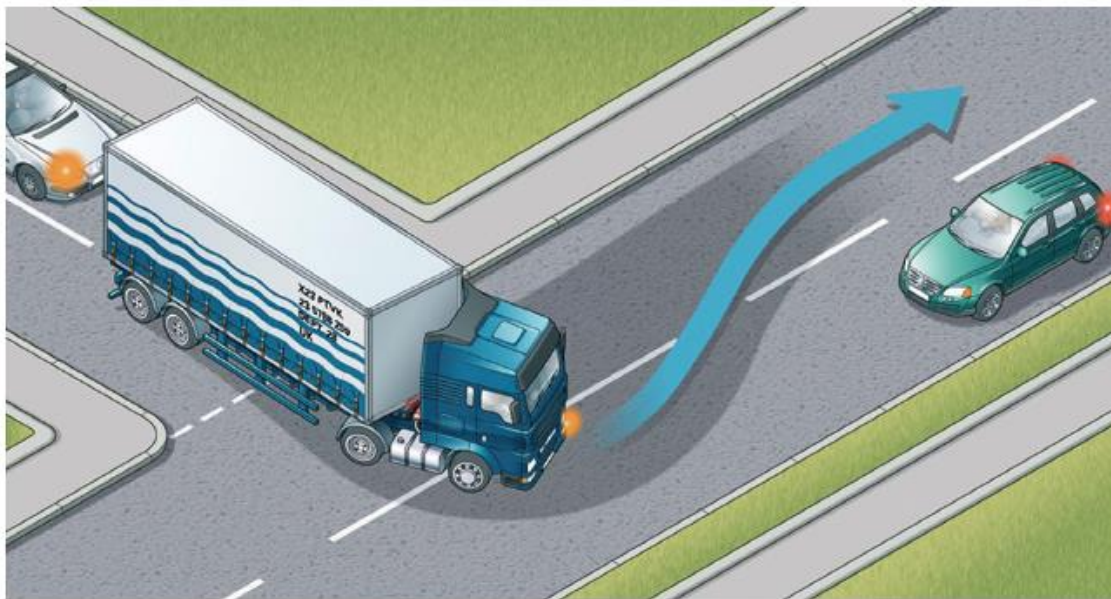
Make sure you are never blinded by vehicles ahead; if you are then drop back to improve your view and only proceed when you know you can do it.

Be nice to large vehicles

The highway Code has rules 221, 222 and 223 for this:

Rule 221

Large vehicles. These may need extra road space to turn or to deal with a hazard that you are not able to see. If you are following a large vehicle, such as a bus or articulated lorry, be aware that the driver may not be able to see you in the mirrors. Be prepared to stop and wait if it needs room or time to turn.



Rule 221: Large vehicles need extra room

Rule 222

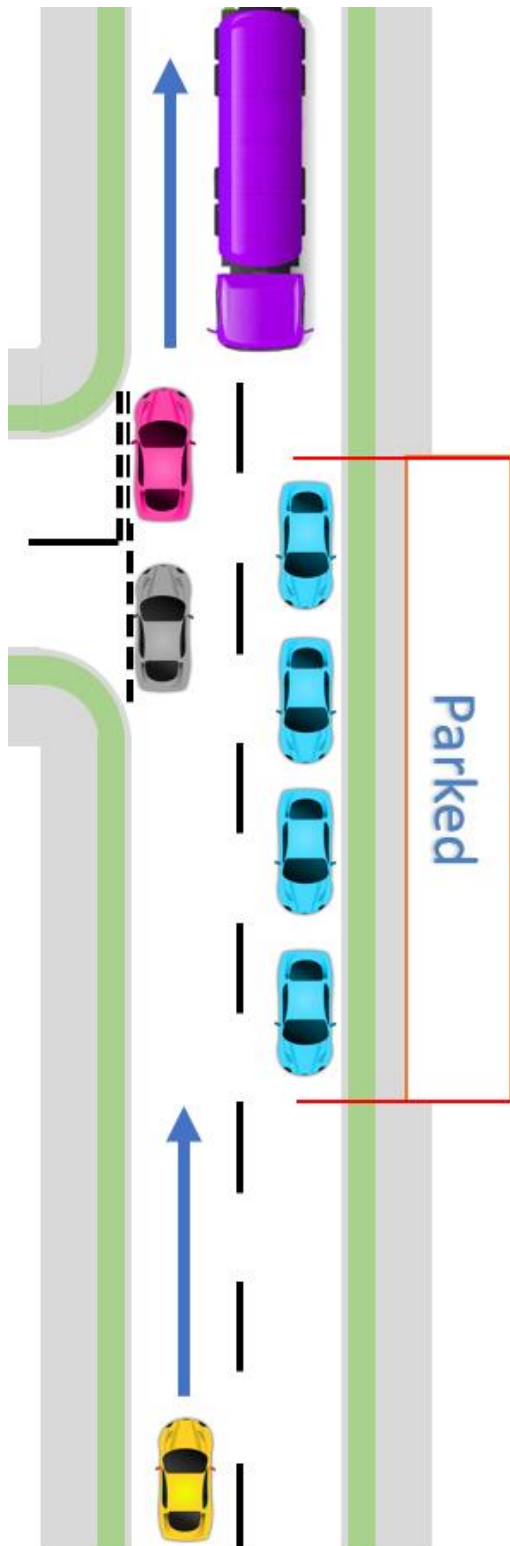
Large vehicles can block your view. Your ability to see and to plan ahead will be improved if you pull back to increase your separation distance. Be patient, as larger vehicles are subject to lower speed limits than cars and motorcycles. Many large vehicles may be fitted with speed limiting devices which will restrict speed to 56 mph (90 km/h) even on a motorway.

Rule 223

Buses, coaches and trams. Give priority to these vehicles when you can do so safely, especially when they signal to pull away from stops. Look out for people getting off a bus or tram and crossing the road.

From this we can infer that they need our help, and we should be considerate to their problems.

Drivers of these vehicles are all professional drivers, they know the rules, they know what they should be doing. However large vehicles are difficult to manoeuvre, slow to accelerate and might have a lower speed limit imposed on them. They will often find themselves stuck.



The following happened on a driving test.

YELLOW comes around a corner and finds a lorry waiting to get around the parked cars. PINK and GREY have moved over to get passed the waiting lorry.

The issue is that YELLOW didn't know how long the lorry had been waiting.

Large vehicles will give way to existing vehicles but often then get stuck because another car turns up.

Yes, YELLOW has priority and the lorry should keep waiting until he can get around the parked cars.

However, I'm now considering human nature. That lorry might have just turned up or they could have been there 5 minutes waiting for a gap – I don't know!

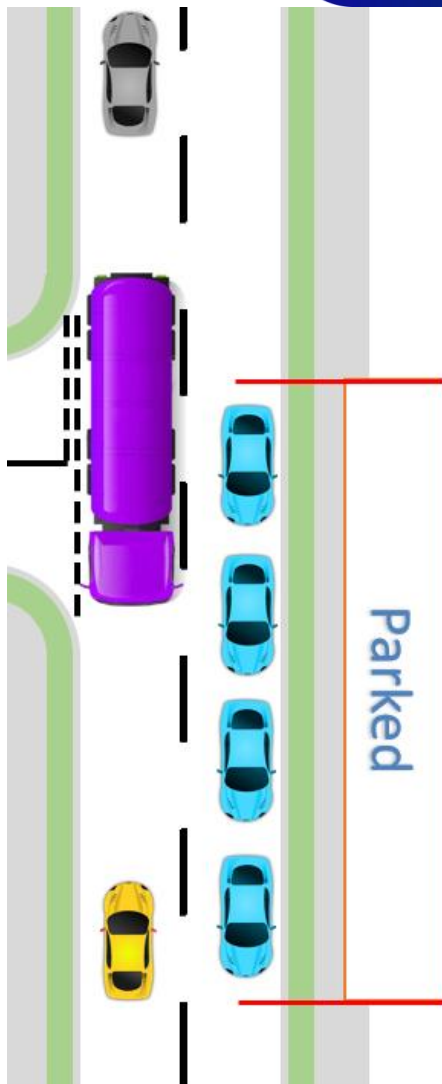
The lorry driver could be going mad in there, swearing at every oncoming driver, because nobody is letting him out. It's just a matter of time until he loses his cool and pushes his way into traffic.

It's unfortunate but totally understandable behaviour and if I meet a large vehicle stuck trying to make progress, I will try to help them out.

I have no idea if that lorry will suddenly drive at me, but I know there's a chance it will, so if I can safely let him proceed, I will. I suggest you also act this way; only if you can do it safely though.

Rule 223 says that we should let buses out if they are indicating but only if we can do it safely. If you are already passing a parked bus, keep going. If you can slow down a bit to let them out, then you should.

Anyway, back to the story.



YELLOW thought the lorry would give way; the lorry driver had had enough and drove at YELLOW.

The lorry driver is completely in the wrong here, but it is an example of an everyday hazard that can attack you if you are not wary.

So, what do we do now?

Option 1. Stand your ground and get the lorry to reverse.

Not recommended. If that lorry drives into your car, you will get a lot of damage and they will suffer none. You now need to prove that he hit you to claim off his insurance, but he doesn't show any signs of an impact. You will lose your claim and have a damaged car.

Option 2. Reverse back. As long as you can safely do this by demonstrating good observation, this is a good solution.

Option 3. Mount the pavement and drive around the lorry.

DO NOT DO THIS! Anyone who has mounted a pavement to continue driving has failed their driving test (unless the examiner tells you specifically to do so).

Rule 144

You **MUST NOT**

- drive dangerously
- drive without due care and attention
- drive without reasonable consideration for other road users.

Law [RTA 1988 sects 2 & 3](#) as amended by [RTA 1991](#)

Rule 145

You **MUST NOT** drive on or over a pavement, footpath or bridleway except to gain lawful access to property, or in the case of an emergency.

Laws [HA 1835 sect 72](#) & [RTA 1988 sect 34](#)

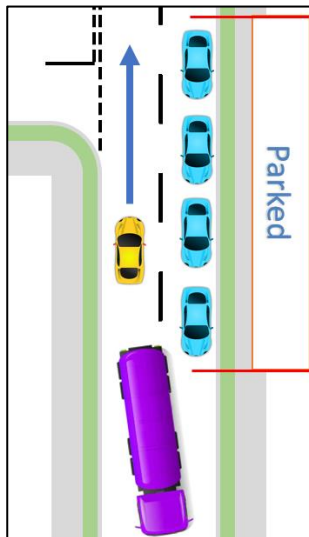
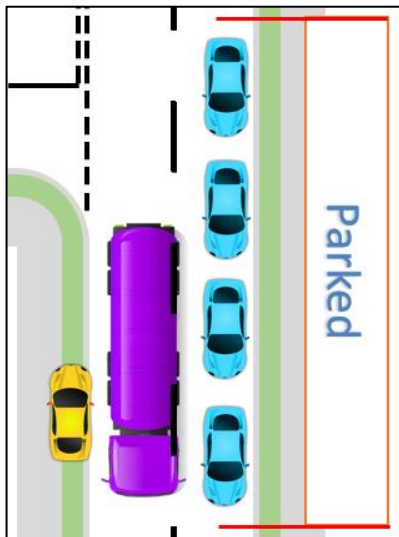
Option 4. Park. This is a good solution and should be considered if you can.

Rule 244

You **MUST NOT** park partially or wholly on the pavement in London, and should not do so elsewhere unless signs permit it. Parking on the pavement can obstruct and seriously inconvenience pedestrians, people in wheelchairs or with visual impairments and people with prams or pushchairs.

Law GL(GP)A sect 15

You will see that outside of London it is only a recommendation to not park on pavements, it is not a law.



I have checked this with an examiner, and he was happy with this solution.

I recommend that if you choose to do this option, you must tell the examiner that you are parking and not just driving on the pavement, he should be in no doubt as to your intentions.

Unfortunately, my student chose option 3 and as a reward for breaking the law, got to do his driving test again!

Yes, I know rule 145 has the caveat of 'or in the case of an emergency' but by now you should realise that they had 3 other options. Well, 2 other options (don't play chicken with lorries), and on top of that, they should have let the lorry out in the first place as per rule 221.

Better awareness of the 'bigger picture' and the problem wouldn't have happened in the first place.

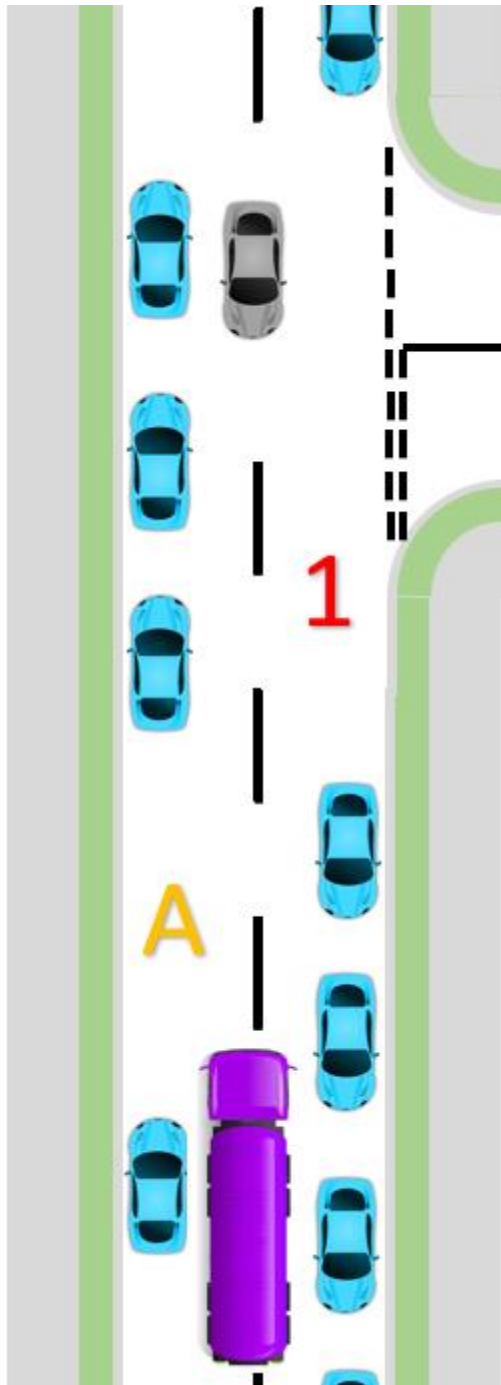
Might is right

It's awareness of the bigger picture – again!

Might comes in various guises, size, importance, numbers, awkwardness.

BLUE cars are parked again.

Size



Simple this, it's easier for small things to get out of the way than it is for big things.

It makes much more sense for GREY to wait at 1 than PURPLE to wait in A.

Once they pass each other, both can continue the journey.



Hazard lights

Vehicles use their hazard lights (all indicator lights flashing at the same time):

- To warn of a hazard ahead.
- To warn that they will be creating a temporary hazard.
- To say that they have broken down.
- To say thank you to the vehicle behind.
- Because they are driving slowly because of a puncture.
- Because they've forgotten to turn them off.
- Some random reason they feel warrants it.

Hazard ahead

You get this a lot on motorways, a sudden change in speed because of a queue ahead and people put hazard lights on to warn the following cars. Some cars automatically put the hazard lights on when you brake suddenly!

I have done this to warn traffic behind of a car crash ahead. Once a car slows behind me, it's up to them to put their hazard lights on to protect the back of their car.

I have put them on when there was a queue just over the brow of a hill, again to slow vehicles behind me until they join the queue.

Temporary hazard

Lorries do this a lot when they want to reverse into a side road or driveway (think dustbin day or a skip being delivered). They will approach, put the hazard lights on, swing to the other side of the road, then reverse towards their target. If you don't give them room, they might hit you when they reverse.

Obviously, anyone can do this, so if you have a car in front with hazards going, start dropping back until you know what they are going to do.

They might be just parking to let someone out of the car, but they might reverse at you any time soon so give them room.

Even a left indicator from the car in front should have you slowing down. Someone might try to turn into a side road on the left, but if they can't get in because there's a pedestrian crossing the road, they will have to stop. If you don't start slowing as soon as you have been warned about them, you might drive into the back of them if they unexpectedly stop.

Broken down

This is the primary use of the lights. If you break down, hazard lights on, warning triangle at least 45 metres before your car (unless on motorway or dual carriageways). Personally, if I go passed a broken-down car, I check to see who is there. If it is a vulnerable person, I will stop and offer help, even if it's just to have someone with them whilst waiting for the AA. It's up to you, and only do it if you feel safe, but I like to think that someone might help if my wife broke down.





Saying thanks

Quite a common misuse of the lights is to thank a car behind for letting them out by flashing 2 or 3 times. Don't do this on your test but be aware that other people do this sometimes.

Travelling slowly

You may come across someone who is limping their car to a garage or is towing/being towed. I had to do this when my locking wheels nuts wouldn't come off, so I had to drive my car slowly to a garage to get them to remove my wheel following a puncture.

Assess and go around when you safely can, or if you are being the hazard, see if you can help people by pulling over if a large queue is forming behind you.

They've forgotten

It happens. Sometimes you come across someone who has forgotten to turn them off, just treat them with caution and go when safe. Obviously, you have no idea what they are likely to do so be careful.

Random reason

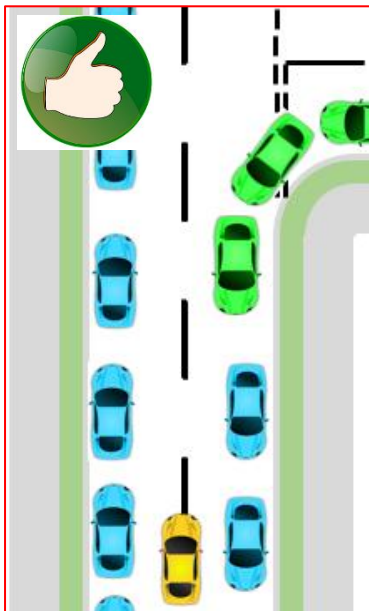
People have weird and wonderful ideas about when they should do things and sometimes, they just don't make sense. Just treat with caution and go when you can.

The point is, a hazard light can mean many things. The person may need help, they may be warning you, they may be looking for a house and not even know you are behind them. The best thing to do is drop back, assess the situation, and only go when it's safe.



Going Into holes (let people out)

I liken this to using the train, you let people out before you go in.



The left pictures demonstrate GREEN just turning into the middle of the road without checking first.

They drive into the path of YELLOW causing them to stop – wrong.

The right pictures show GREEN taking different routes to allow any cars on the main road out before committing to going in there themselves.

There are cars on both sides of the road GREEN is entering.



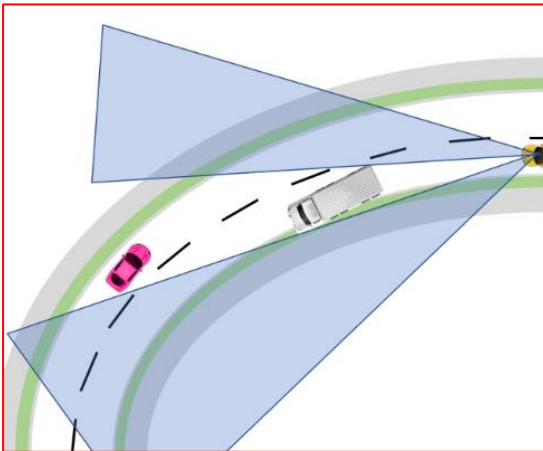
They will have to drive down the middle of the road.

They must assume that someone is already using the road and drive to allow them out before going in themselves.

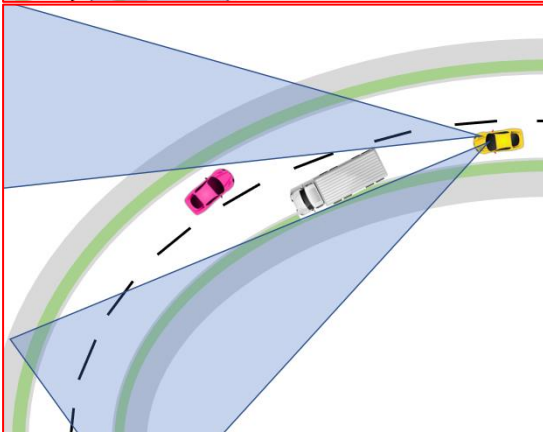
A tale of woe

Now this might come as a surprise to some of you, but I haven't always been a driving god. I actually failed my first driving test when 17 because I didn't 'come out early' and I didn't 'let someone out before going in'. So you can learn from my mistake.

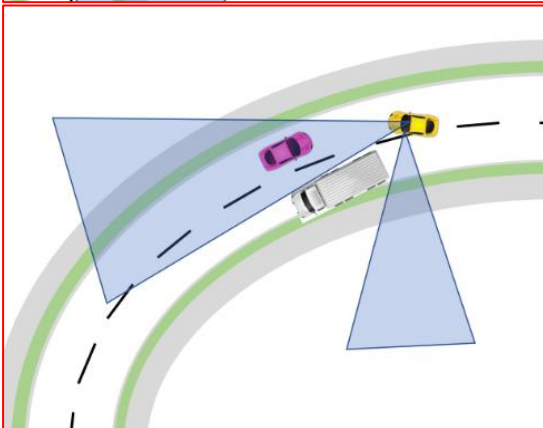
I took my test in Henley-on-Thames. Lovely place, very affluent, nice houses. Anyway, I was approaching a corner and there was a removals van on the left, loading up. I looked across the front lawn of the house and saw no cars coming, I then pulled out as I got to the van and met another car hidden by the van.



I approached, but a bit of the road was obscured from view by the van.

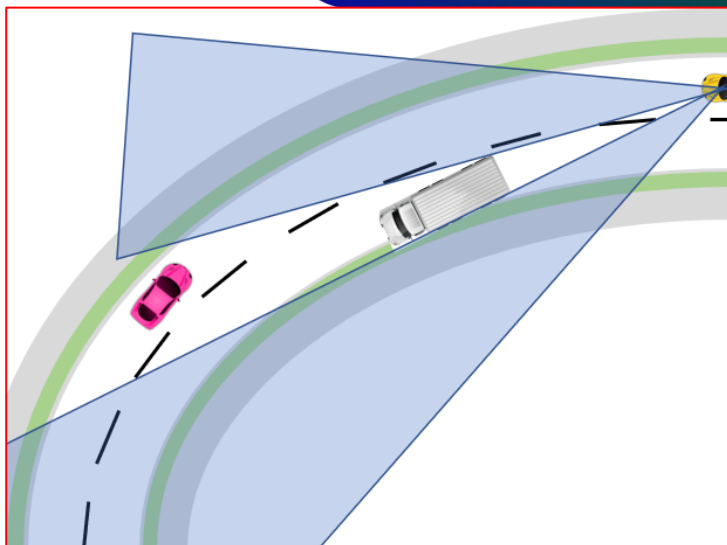


I waited to the last minute before pulling out, still thinking that everything was fine.



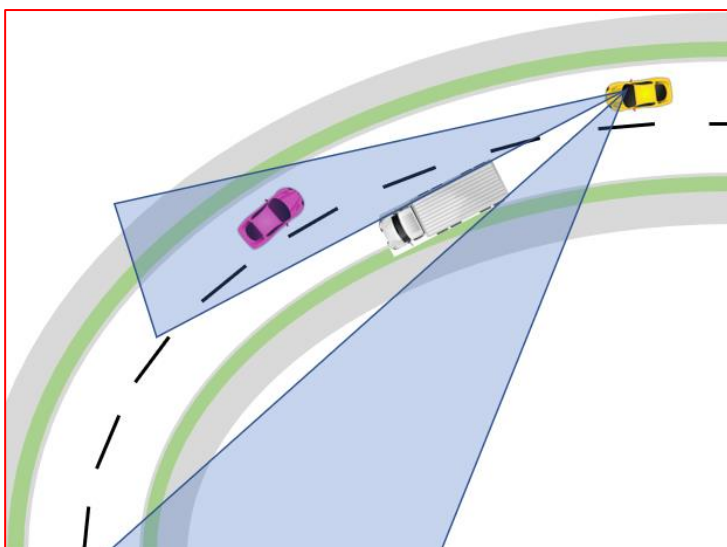
It wasn't fine. We both did an emergency stop and I then had to reverse back. Fail.

What I should have done was.....

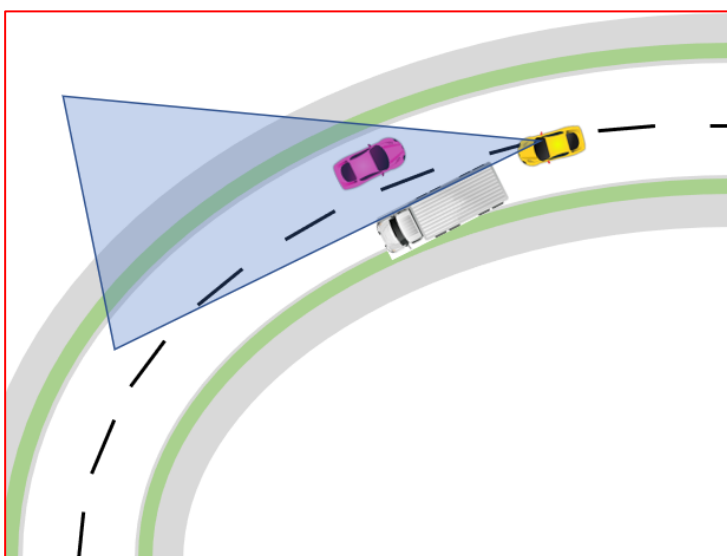


Come out early, after all, no other cars were around.

I knew there were no cars approaching to the left of the van.



I would have been able to check if the van was hiding anyone and discover that there was a car in there.



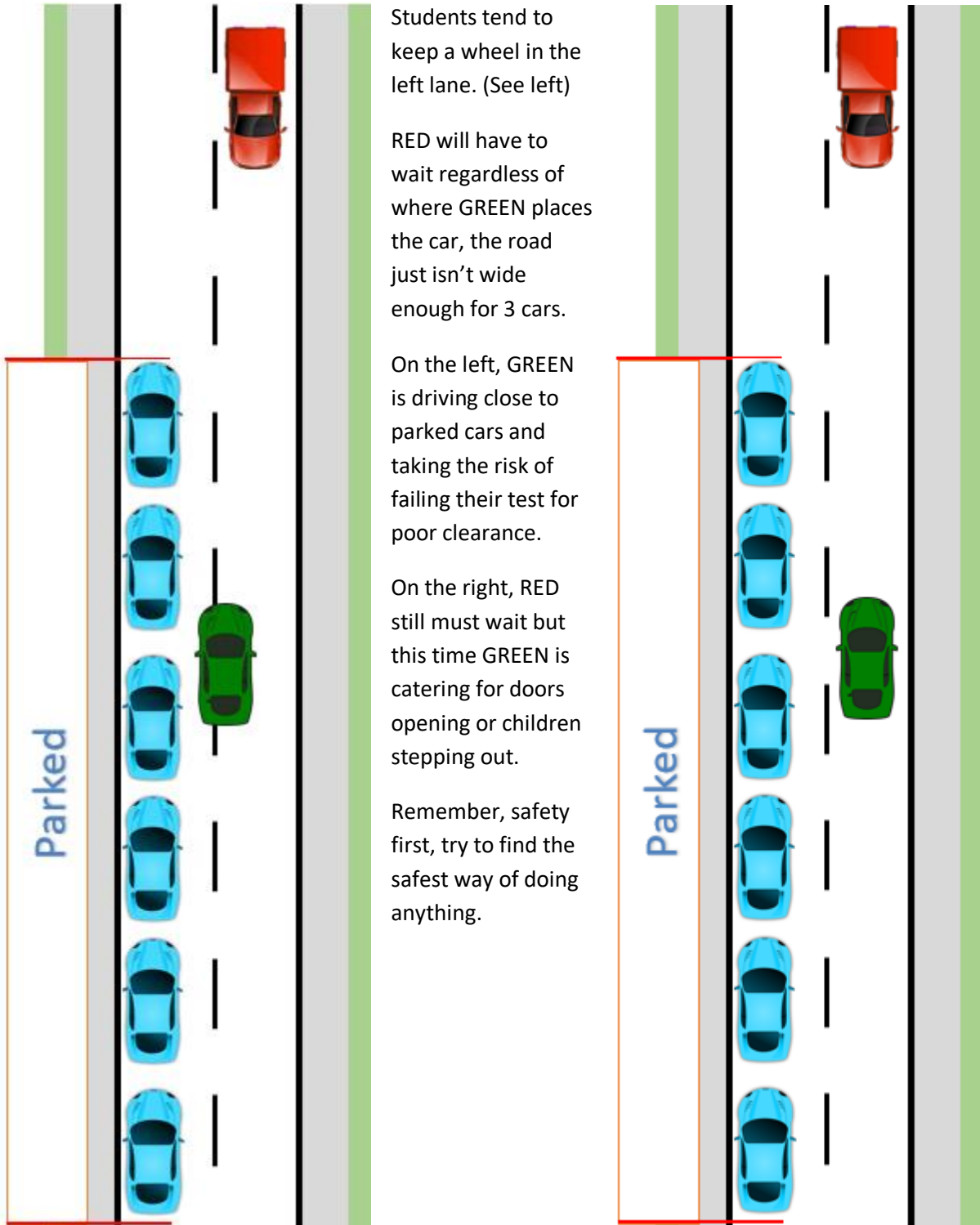
I could then stop, see that the van was only hiding one vehicle and let them out.

Add in the knowledge that there was no-one else approaching to the left of the van, I could then go around the van, I could then pass my test first time.

But I didn't, I was stupid.

Just use the oncoming lane

Again, a very common error.



Countryside passing places

At some point you will find yourself in the countryside. There will be roads that are only wide enough for one vehicle at a time, and therefore, you will be driving directly at oncoming traffic.

The use of speed in the countryside is covered in my document 'Use of speed and Limit Points', make sure you know this document. I'll assume that you have read it and will be driving at the correct speed.



Here we have a road that is wide enough for vehicles to pass each other but notice that the white line ahead is stopping. This is sometimes done when the road isn't wide enough for two vehicles, and so I would be extra cautious.



Here the road narrows even more down to a single lane.

Frightening the think that the national speed limit applies here, so there could be a car driving at us at 60mph.



On the left is a cut out, on the right is a sort of driveway.

Cars can pull in to their left and pass each other here.

There appears to be two more passing places further up the road.



Here's the first.

If cars were to meet, the first car to get here would wait as far to their left as they could.

The second car would then move to their left and each would squeeze passed each other slowly.



Here's the second.

This time there's more room on the right but everyone would still pull over to their left and wait at the widest part to pass each other.

Just a word of caution: If you aren't sure what is to your left, don't go there.

In this picture, there is a ditch hidden by the tall grass on the

left. Many a car has fallen into a hidden ditch so try to stay on the visible part.

Flashing of headlights

Rule 110

Flashing headlights. Only flash your headlights to let other road users know that you are there. Do not flash your headlights to convey any other message or intimidate other road users.

Rule 111

Never assume that flashing headlights is a signal inviting you to proceed. Use your own judgement and proceed carefully.

A flash of a headlight is an alternative to the use of a horn, you are alerting others of your presence.

The problem is that most road users flash their lights for multiple reasons.

- Taxi drivers and bus drivers say hello to each other.
- Some warn you of speed cameras.
- Some warn you of danger ahead.
- Some cars hit bumps in the road and as the bonnet raises it can look like the headlights have flashed.
- Some people flash the headlights by accident when putting the indicator on.
- Friends say hello to each other by flashing

You also can't limit who can see the flash or how they interpret it.

Again, being the Bad Lad Gangsta that I was when younger, I used to flash my headlights just like everyone around me did.

Then one day I was approaching this junction (A).....notice the trees on the left.....



It was a horrible night, dark, raining, winter time. My wipers were on, my lights were on, there was light reflecting everywhere because of the rain. It was rush hour and I was in a moving queue.

A car was pulling from the side road on my right into the main road and was trying to turn right (B).



I was approaching from A, so being the decent sort of chap that I am, I slowed down to create a gap between myself and the cars in front of me and flashed my headlights to let the car from B pull in front of me.

At that point, a woman in a black dress and black coat, black shoes, black satchel, standing under the trees in the shadows out of the rain, suddenly stepped into the road at C, smiling and waving thanks at me for letting her cross the road.

Well, I was startled shall we say, and may have muttered the words 'good heavens, that's a moment for sure', whacked on the brakes, skidded on the wet roads towards her, she suddenly jumped back onto the pavement and had a moment of her own. I probably had to wind the windows down to let the smell out, and breath and relaaaaaaax.....

That taught me that whoever sees a flash of a headlight will interpret it in any way they want to. We can't say, 'this flash is for Dave and it means hello'.

That sort of situation has arisen multiple times, and that's with me looking around to see if there's anyone else there, and still I get bit on the bum.

So this is why we do not flash our headlights unless using a horn would be inappropriate. As far as a driving test is concerned, I can't think of a situation where a flash would be better than a horn because of when and where driving tests take place. **By all means wave a hand to say thanks but DO NOT FLASH YOUR HEADLIGHTS!**

You could well have situations where other road users flash their headlights at you and you will be expected to react correctly to those. Check to make sure it is for you by looking for other people, even if that means waiting for them to flash a second time, then go when safe. **Do not assume that the flash is for you.**

A situation that can arise is emerging from a side road to turn right.

Let's look at the previous diagram again but this time imagine an event that happened on a test:



A student was emerging from B, turning right, to follow the blue line.

A car approached from A indicating to turn into our road. They slowed and flashed their headlights to let us go. At that point the student went and the examiner whacked on the brakes because there was a car approaching from C.

Just because A flashed, doesn't mean it's safe to go. They might have done it by accident when they put their indicator on, they may be saying hi to the car approaching from C!

In this situation, you acknowledge A by giving a thumbs up or waving thanks; that way they know you have seen them. Some people only allow a very short amount of time to let you go, otherwise they drive off again, especially if they think you haven't seen them!

Now they know you've seen them and are about to move, they are likely to give you more time. You check around and make sure it's safe everywhere, then you go.

Don't just go because someone flashes, acknowledge, check, then go; after all it's your life, car and insurance at risk if you move when it's not safe.



Do not wave pedestrians across

Whilst I'm on the topic of flashing and waving, I should mention about not waving pedestrians across. This comes down to the human nature.

Pretend you're in a shopping centre at a door to a shop. You've opened the door and there are people approaching and you decide to hold the door for them. If they are a little way off, people often break into a little jog to get there quicker, they feel obliged to pick up speed so as not to inconvenience you.

Same with a car.

If you wave or flash a pedestrian to cross a road, a lot of people will just step out into the road and wave thanks at you. They won't bother looking the other way first, they just assume it's safe because you've beckoned them out and step into traffic.

And are you responsible for all other road users' actions? Of course not. I've seen a motorcyclist wheelie through a pedestrian crossing with people on it, knocking bags of shopping into the air. All you are saying is that you won't run them over, but it doesn't mean it's safe for them to be in the road.

IF YOU BECKON SOMEONE INTO THE ROAD, YOU HAVE JUST FAILED YOUR DRIVING TEST!

By all means slow down and create an opportunity for people, but do not invite people out.

Pretend you are a pedestrian waiting to cross a road.

There's a car approaching from your right. They slow enough to make you think you have time to cross. You would now look left and make sure it's safe in both directions before crossing.

This is how you allow people across if you want to. Stay back, create opportunities for people, let them make all the decisions, but do not give off any type of invitation.

