

# Conversation Tips

Are you worried about  
someone's driving?



**moving  
rightalong**

Are you worried about someone's driving?



**Government of South Australia**

Department of Planning,  
Transport and Infrastructure



Many people experience situations where they are concerned about another person's driving. Approaching the conversation with sensitivity can help, however, not all conversations about driving go smoothly and the person may be reluctant to talk. It may be helpful to plan the conversation first.

### General conversational tips to remember:

- Avoid the use of 'absolute' wording i.e. always, never
- Use 'I' statements instead of 'You' statements
- Paraphrase their response to help you clarify your understanding. Try summarising what they've said back to them to make sure you've understood them correctly.

These are some examples of how you might begin a conversation. Tailor your conversation to reflect your own concerns:

*"Mum, I'm worried about you driving at night. How do you feel you handle night driving?"*

*"Sometimes I do get a bit nervous driving at night. It can be a bit tricky."*

*"So you have some concerns as well..."*

OR

*"Dad, it looked to me the other day like you were quite nervous driving. Is that right?"*

*"No... what do you mean. I'm fine driving..."*

*"So you're not worried about your driving then... What I noticed was that you didn't check before changing lanes and nearly hit another car. That worried me."*

Even with the best preparation for the conversation, the person may become upset and defensive or feel that their driving is being criticised. If you receive an emotional response:

- Stay calm
- Acknowledge what you perceive to be their feelings e.g. *"It seems like this conversation is making you anxious. Is that right?"*
- Ask tailored question in response e.g. *"What is it about what I'm saying that is making you feel this way?"* Work through any issues that the person raises together.
- Consider if you need to pause the conversation and agree to continue it at another specified time.

### Guiding questions to encourage participation in a conversation about their driving:

- Ask questions that provide the opportunity for the person to reflect on their driving ability. Discuss how they feels they handle :
  - driving at night
  - driving in heavy or peak hour traffic
  - driving in rain or fog
  - busy intersections
  - driving on unfamiliar routes
- Ask if they experience any of the issues listed in the 'signs that someone's driving ability may be reducing'.
- Share your concerns. Be specific about your own thoughts on what worries you about the person's driving. They may share some of these concerns.

- Encourage the person to consider:
  - the legal implications of being unsafe to drive
  - whether they're putting themselves and others at risk. This might help them clarify whether their driving is a concern.
  - the benefits of planning for retiring from driving, whether it is straight away or in the future and achieving this in a prepared way, with other transport options in place.

**Below are some scenarios you may encounter when discussing driving ability.**

**You have raised concerns about a person's ability to drive based on age, not by what has been witnessed.**

*"Dad, I don't think you should be driving anymore because you are 80 years old"*

*"What a load of rubbish. I am confident driving... and I keep up to date with changes to the road rules"*

- Acknowledge misunderstanding.
- Continue conversation about the benefit of planning for eventual retirement from driving and how they want to plan ahead.

**The person doesn't see any issue with their driving ability despite raising your concerns.**

- Reflect on your concerns – provide specific examples.
- Ask guiding questions on how they feel they undertake certain driving tasks.
- Help clarify the issue e.g. is it specifically about driving in peak hour or longer trips? Is a change in health impacting on their driving? Could an [Occupational Therapist](#) help to assess whether a mobility aid can address the issue?
- If a medical issue is contributing to their driving ability, discuss the legal consequences of driving with a known condition.
- Reflect on whether you have misinterpreted and there isn't a concern with their driving.
- Continue conversation about the benefits of planning for eventual retirement from driving and how they want to plan ahead.




**The person doesn't see any issue with their driving ability but safety remains your immediate concern.**

- Reflect on your concerns – provide specific examples.
- Ask guiding questions on how they feel they undertake certain driving tasks.
- If a medical issue is contributing to their driving ability, discuss the legal consequences of driving with a known condition.
- Strongly encourage the person to make an appointment to see a health professional to discuss their driving ability. Offer to accompany them to this appointment.
- If they aren't willing to discuss their driving ability with a health professional and safety still remains as your immediate concern, you can contact Service SA on 13 10 84 to report your concerns about their driving ability.

Once there is acceptance of the concerns, feelings of grief and loss may surface. Acknowledging these feelings as an expected part of transition and change can help support the person.

**You are unsure if the person is up to date with the Australian Road Rules.**

- Use online tools such as [road rules refresher quiz](#) or [hazard perception test](#) on the mylicence.sa.gov.au website.
- Ask guiding questions on how they feel they undertake certain driving tasks.
- Suggest booking sessions with a qualified driving instructor to refresh skills, update road rules knowledge and help identify any concerns.



**What** will the next steps be? It can help to identify this together and ask the person to make a commitment to these actions. Set a goal and be specific.

**What** will the back-up plan be, if a planned transport arrangement doesn't work, unexpectedly?

### Negotiating an agreed way forward:

- Come to an agreed way forward
- Be specific and include a timeframe e.g. *"I will see my doctor on Friday to discuss my driving capability."*
- Create a back-up option if things don't go to plan i.e. taxi or contacting someone identified within their support network.

**Below are some scenarios you may encounter when supporting somebody to make change.**

#### Making a commitment to meet with a health professional.

- Gain a commitment for the person to contact the relevant health professional to make an appointment by the end of tomorrow (rather than a general commitment to making an appointment).
- You could try calling their doctor together. You could also offer to drive them to the appointment and accompany them.

#### The person is overwhelmed or unsure on how to undertake the committed action.

- Create a plan and/or list of actions and who and how they will be completed. Break this into smaller steps if need be.
- Consider what tasks you can complete to support the person.

