



Ross Bentley's High Performance Driving Tips - #12

THE PERFECT DRIVE

In this article I would like to do something a little different. I want to challenge you to drive the "perfect drive".

Now, the "perfect drive" can take place anytime or anywhere - on your way to or from work, a holiday trip, a Sunday drive, or just going to the corner store. What makes a "perfect drive" is many things - most of which I've mentioned in previous articles.

I, personally, have been trying for years to achieve the "perfect drive", and even came very, very close late one evening. And yet, even though I've never quite made it, I feel it is one of the most effective tools I use to both increase the enjoyment I receive from driving, and make me safer on the road.

Just imagine the concentration and attention required to achieve the "perfect drive" and you begin to understand how much better a driver you will be while striving for it. And, anytime you can make your driving more challenging, the more you will enjoy it - even if you are sitting in rush hour traffic!

Defining what goes into a "perfect drive" is difficult. Just when you think you have covered, and perfected, everything, the road ahead changes - someone cuts in front of you, the weather changes, the road gets rougher, or...

Some of the key aspects that I strive for in my "perfect drive" are: proper visual tracking - looking well ahead to where I want the car to be placed on the road; planning, and thinking, well in advance about where I want to go, and what is the absolute best way to get there; making every start (clutch engagement) smooth, and yet, with no excessive clutch slippage; every shift perfectly smooth - upshifting or downshifting (using the heel and toe technique *always*) - matching the revs so well that a passenger in the car never feels a single shift; returning the clutch foot to the dead pedal immediately after each shift - never riding the clutch pedal; turning the steering wheel smoothly, gently, and as little as possible (keeping the front wheels pointing straight as much as possible) - gradually building up cornering forces, and then unwinding out of a corner;

always holding the steering wheel in the 9 and 3 o'clock position; always looking ahead to pick out and predict potential collision situations; always driving with an escape route in mind; driving the ideal line through every corner; braking smoothly and efficiently - and modulating the pedal so that the point where the car actually comes to a complete stop is never even felt; every lane change made smoothly without running over the lane separating reflectors; reading road conditions and the other drivers; controlling the weight transfer and balance of the car to my advantage; and finally, before even starting, to ensure the car is prepared to handle a "perfect drive".

Practising these techniques, and many more, will improve your driving both from a speed and safety point of view. The increased awareness level necessary to achieve the "perfect drive" will definitely make you a safer driver, and the work on smoothness will make you quicker (when you want to be). And, I guarantee, you will enjoy the challenge of everyday driving much more while striving for the "perfect drive". Please let me know if you make it.

P.S. By the way, the reason I didn't make my "perfect drive" that evening is that I ran over a sunken manhole cover, which I knew was there. I should have avoided it. Oh well, maybe tomorrow night will be perfect...

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