



## Ross Bentley's High Performance Driving Tips - #2

# VISION LEADS THE WAY

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Of all the sensory inputs we receive while driving, visual inputs are the most plentiful and most critical. Vision is *the* most important factor in driving. At least ninety percent of our reactions are a result of what our eyes report to our brain.

There is a big difference between good vision and good eyesight. Eyesight is what your doctor checks, and can be corrected or improved with glasses or contact lenses. Vision is the ability to see, not just directly in front of you, but all around you. Vision is being "aware"; using your eyesight to know what is going on around you. Vision can be improved through practise, experience and a few key techniques.

One of the first steps in refining your vision skills is learning to look further ahead. No matter who you are or what your driving experience is, I bet your driving can be improved simply by looking further down the road. The better you are prepared, the sooner information gets to your brain, the better your mind's picture of what you have to deal with up ahead, the more accurate and appropriate your physical actions will be.

Now, have you ever heard of the word "potholism". I bet many of you have experienced "potholism". This is where you are driving down a road, see a pothole, and no matter how hard you try to steer around it, you hit it. It's because *the car follows your vision*. If you focus on an object - in this case the pothole - you will most likely hit it.

Think about it. How many times have you seen a driver look into the next lane to change lanes, and the car automatically go there? It is practically impossible to look at something and **not** steer towards it.

Try it for yourself. Without the car moving, while seated behind the wheel, look to the right and try to turn the steering wheel to the left. Pretty awkward, right?

So, *look where you want to go, not where you don't want to go*. Concentrate and focus on where you wish to be. Practise this. When travelling in a marked lane, focus in the centre of the lane, well ahead. This will keep your vehicle in the centre of the lane and reduces lateral wandering.

This also helps you drive a smoother arc through the turn, rather than making many steering corrections throughout the turn. If you are negotiating a 90° corner, look as far ahead around the corner as possible to avoid any potential hazards and ensure your vehicle follows the path you wish. Keep your head upright and focus or target your eyes in the direction you want to go.

Perhaps the most important time to remember to look where you want to go is in a potential collision situation. It's not uncommon these days for a car to pull out directly in front of you. If you look to either side of it, you will automatically steer around it; if your vision locks onto the car – which is certainly human instinct - it's almost impossible to steer anywhere but straight at it.

Or, how about driving in the winter. While going around a corner, the car begins to slide off the roadway. A natural reaction is to look at where you might crash - and guess what you do with the steering wheel? Right. Steer towards the crash. Instead, look down the road where you want to go, at all times, and chances are you will control the car.

And finally, do not concentrate on any one particular object in front of you. Look well ahead, and watch for anything coming into your overall field of vision. Pay attention all the time. And don't just look further ahead, *think* farther ahead.

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