

Assessing Fitness to Drive

Don't just sign on the dotted line



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Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Utilise the updated 2022 Assess Fitness to Drive Austroads guidelines whenever driving fitness needs consideration
- Appropriately triage patients with mild to moderate cognitive impairment in regard to their driving fitness, using simple screening tools
- Conduct difficult discussions around driving fitness with older patients, explaining the legal and moral responsibilities of medical practitioners around assessing fitness to drive, the impact of medical conditions on safe driving with patients and recognising the impact that the driving restrictions will have on patients' lifestyles

Assessing Fitness to Drive

- Legal responsibilities
- Moral responsibilities
- Driving is a privilege, not a right





Case 1

Larry, aged 76, presents with a medical report form for his drivers license renewal.

His license is expiring tomorrow.

Case – Poll 1

Q: How do you approach Larry's request?

- 1) Ask him to come back to get a driver's license medical with his regular doctor on Friday, and just address his other concerns today.
- 2) Complete the driver's license medical certification after careful chart review and physical examination.
- 3) Draft the driver's license medical certification after careful chart review and physical examination but only sign off after talking to his regular doctor on Wednesday.
- 4) Perform and document an appropriate examination for a driver's license medical but explain the form needs to be completed by his regular doctor, and arrange an appointment on Friday.

<http://www.austroads.com.au/drivers-vehicles/assessing-fitness-to-drive>

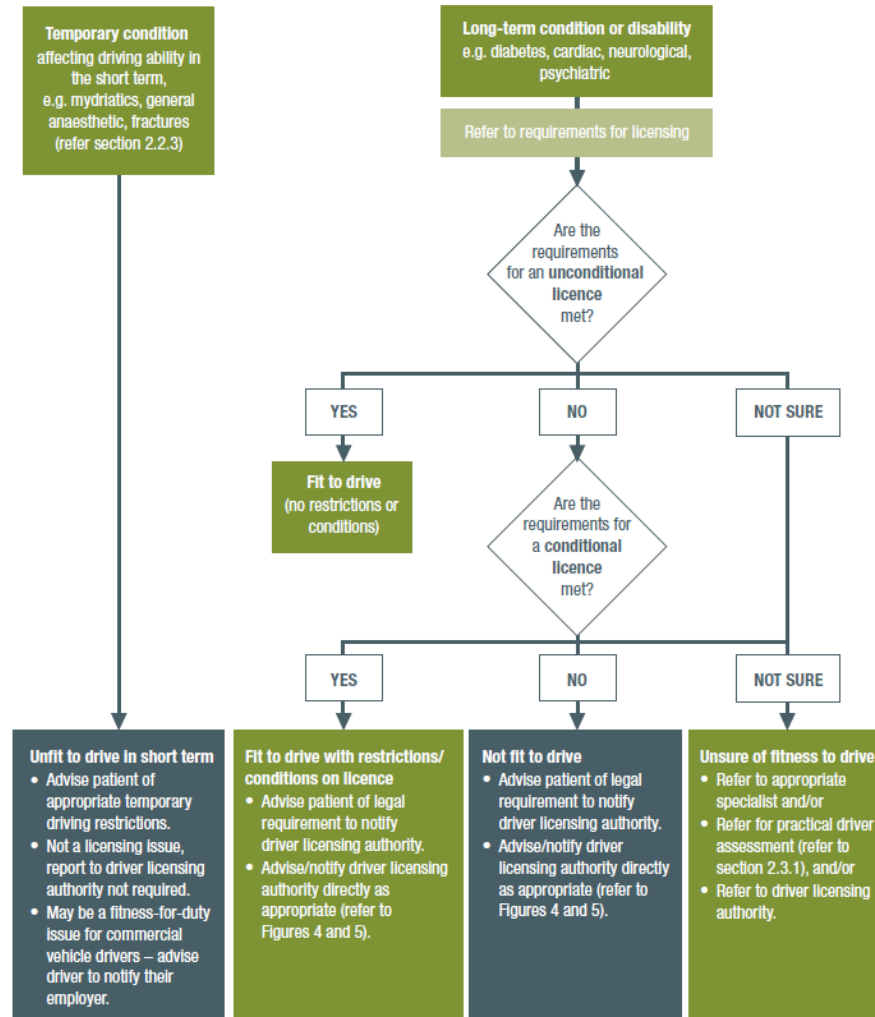


“Routine use of these standards will ensure the fitness to drive of each patient is assessed in a consistent manner. In doing so, the health professional will not only be contributing to **road safety** but may **minimise medico-legal exposure** in the event that a patient is involved in a crash or disputes a licensing decision.”



Figure 3: Medical decision-making process for assessing fitness to drive

Part A: 5



Online process - NSW

- Integrated into Best Practice, Genie, Medical Director and MedTech.
- Or register for and use the online forms via [HealthLink portal](#), by emailing register@healthlink.net, or by calling HealthLink on 1800 125 036.
- Draft saving function
- Real-time confirmation
- Patients don't need to submit paper form.

9. Completing the Form

- Once you have generated the form, any pre-existing medical conditions that are recorded on the patient's Transport for NSW record will be **pre-selected** within the form for easy processing.

DIABETES

Does the patient have diabetes?*

Yes No

Please select the relevant condition(s): *

Diabetes controlled by diet only

Tablets and/or other non-insulin agents

Diabetes controlled by Insulin

Does the patient have any end organ effects that may impact safe driving?*

Yes No

EPILEPSY

Does the patient have epilepsy?*

Yes No

NEUROLOGICAL CONDITION

Does the patient have vestibular, neurological or other neurodevelopmental disorders?*

Yes No

SLEEP DISORDER

Does the patient have sleep apnoea or narcolepsy?*

Yes No

Please select the relevant condition(s): *

Narcolepsy

Sleep Apnoea

Is the condition well controlled?*

Yes No

Does the patient need to be referred to a specialist for further review?*

Yes No

- If you click on the **i** icons, you will be provided with a link to the 'Assessing Fitness to Drive' standards or helpful information about individual conditions.

Information



Please refer to [Assessing Fitness to Drive](#) Standards.

Ok

11. Recommendations

The Recommendations section provides 3 options for you to provide your opinion about the patients medical fitness to drive.

- Meets the medical criteria for an unconditional licence – no further review required. *This option is only available if your patient has **no** relevant medical conditions.*

RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Meets the medical criteria for unconditional licence - no further review required
- Meets the medical criteria for a conditional licence
- Does not meet the medical criteria for a driver licence - unfit to drive

- Does not meet the medical criteria for a driver licence – unfit to drive. *To be used when your patient is temporarily unfit or permanently unfit to continue driving.*

RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Meets the medical criteria for unconditional licence - no further review required
- Meets the medical criteria for a conditional licence
- Does not meet the medical criteria for a driver licence - unfit to drive

Permanently Unfit means TfNSW will cancel the driver licence. Temporarily Unfit means TfNSW will suspend the driver licence until further medical clearance is obtained. Please select the duration*

- Permanently Unfit
- Temporarily Unfit

12. Recommendations continued

- Meets the medical criteria for a conditional licence. *To be used for a customer with medical conditions that will require ongoing review and/or additional assessments/licence conditions.*

RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Meets the medical criteria for unconditional licence - no further review required
- Meets the medical criteria for a conditional licence
- Does not meet the medical criteria for a driver licence - unfit to drive

Review recommendation (if applicable)

TfNSW will use the default review period if review period recommendation is left unselected. Recommended review periods will be assessed by TfNSW.

Review period recommendation*

TfNSW Default ▼

Driving assessment recommendation/s (if applicable)

- Transport for NSW practical driving test
- Occupational Therapist Driver assessment
- None

Recommended licence condition/s (if applicable)

- Downgrade to a lower class of licence
- Daylight hours only
- May only drive automatic vehicles
- Radius restrictions

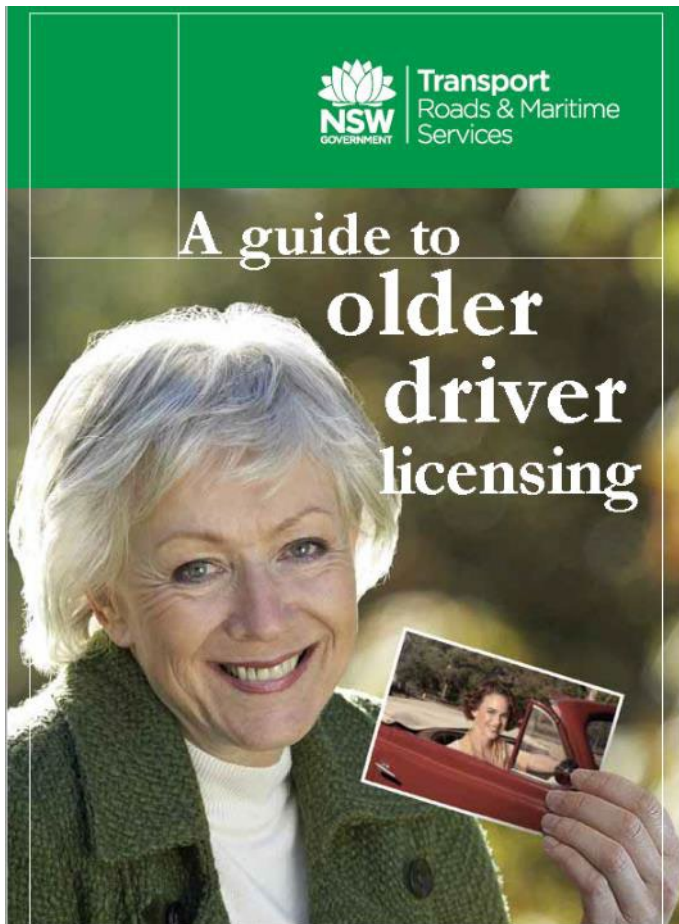
Recommend other licence condition/s

Specialist review recommendation/s (if applicable)

Recommend other specialist/s review.
Click on the box below to show more specialist options

Important Note: Please only select **applicable** additional information in this section. Only fields marked with a * are mandatory.

Drivers over 85 in NSW



Request for a Modified Licence

- To request a modified licence you need to complete this application form and sign the declaration.
- Take the form with your current licence and the required fee to a registry or service centre.
- Please call us on 13 22 13 for further advice. National Relay Service 1300 555 727 or relayservice.com.au

1. Applicant details

Surname

Given names

Residential address

Customer / licence number Class

Date of birth
 / /

Phone number

Voluntary work (*trials on wheels etc*)
Description and length of journey

Frequency of journey

Other (*relatives etc*)
Description and length of journey

Frequency of journey

2. Modification details

Note: Modified licences are only available for essential journeys

Supplies (*groceries etc*)
Description and length of journey

Frequency of journey

Medical (*doctor/hospital etc*)
Description and length of journey

3. Privacy Statement and Declaration

I understand that my personal information is collected and held by Roads and Maritime Services 20-44 Ennis Road, Milsoms Point NSW 2081. I understand that my personal information is being collected as part of my application for a Modified Licence. I understand failure to supply full details and sign this declaration can result in the application not proceeding. My 'personal information' may be disclosed for the purpose of verifying this application. I have a right to access or correct my 'personal information' in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. I declare that the details in this application are true and complete.

Signature of applicant

Date
 / /

Roads and Maritime Use Only

CSM/SCM/Delegate comments



Always think about driving when treating conditions such as:

- Diabetes
- Neurological conditions – stroke, cognitive impairment, epilepsy, "blackouts"
- Cardiac conditions – MI, STEMI, Arrhythmia
- Physical impairment – temporary (e.g. leg in plaster) or permanent
- Visual impairment – acuity, visual fields, monocular vision
- Sleep disorders
- Psychiatric disorders
- Substance abuse/dependency



Temporary conditions

- Anaesthesia/Medications
- Post Surgery
- Pregnancy (complicated)
- Short term/temporary vision impairment
- Trauma/Fractures
- DVT, PE

Private and commercial vehicle drivers should be advised not to drive for at least two weeks following a deep vein thrombosis and for six weeks following a pulmonary embolism

DVT/PE- Poll 2

Q: Which best describes you?

- 1) I have never specifically discussed driving recommendations in a patient with DVT or PE
- 2) I have sometimes discussed driving recommendations in a patient with DVT or PE.
- 3) I have routinely discussed driving recommendations in a patient with DVT or PE but only in general terms
- 4) I have routinely discussed driving recommendations in a patient with DVT or PE, using the recommendations in the AFTD guidelines.
- 5) I have never treated a patient with DVT or PE

DVT/PE- Poll 3

Q: In the future, I plan to specifically discuss driving recommendations in a patient with DVT or PE....

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Maybe



Back to Case 1, Larry

Larry, aged 76, presents with a medical report form for his drivers license renewal.

His license is expiring tomorrow.

Last month his usual GP noted *"wife concerned about memory loss – review next visit"*

Collateral information -Poll 4

Q: Which of the below is somewhat predictive of driving fitness in an elderly person with memory problems?

- 1) Family member who expresses concern about the person's driving ability
- 2) Family member who reports that the person is a capable/safe driver
- 3) Both of these
- 4) Neither of these



Driving and Dementia

- Driving is a complex instrumental activity of daily living
- Difficult to determine driving fitness in general practice setting.
- For the “frail aged” and those with mild dementia an important GP role is to *triage* identifying those who need further assessment.

But how?

Physical Frailty

No strict cut offs but can help triage.

Physical tests eg Five-Times Sit-to-Stand Test (FTSS) (>10sec) and the Timed “Up & Go” Test (TUG) (>9sec)

Frailty screening eg

<https://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/programs/frailty/>

Hyuma Makizako, Hiroyuki Shimada, Takehiko Doi, Kota Tsutsumimoto, Sho Nakakubo, Ryo Hotta, Takao Suzuki, Predictive Cutoff Values of the Five-Times Sit-to-Stand Test and the Timed “Up & Go” Test for Disability Incidence in Older People Dwelling in the Community, *Physical Therapy*, Volume 97, Issue 4, April 2017, Pages 417-424, <https://doi.org/10.2522/ptj.20150665>

FRAIL SCALE RISK ASSESSMENT

	QUESTION	SCORING	RESULT
F	FATIGUE How much of the time during the past 4 weeks did you feel tired? A = All or most of the time B = Some, a little or none of the time	A = 1 B = 0	
R	RESISTANCE In the last 4 weeks by yourself and not using aids, do you have any difficulty walking up 10 steps without resting?	Yes = 1 No = 0	
A	AMBULATION In the last 4 weeks by yourself and not using aids, do you have any difficulty walking 300 metres OR one block?	Yes = 1 No = 0	
I	ILLNESS Did your Doctor ever tell you that you have? <input type="checkbox"/> Hypertension <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer (not a minor skin cancer) <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic lung disease <input type="checkbox"/> Heart attack <input type="checkbox"/> Congestive heart failure <input type="checkbox"/> Angina <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma <input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis <input type="checkbox"/> Kidney disease	0 - 4 answers ✓ = 0 5 - 11 answers ✓ = 1	
L	LOSS OF WEIGHT Have you lost more than 5kg or 5% of your body weight in the past year?	Yes = 1 No = 0	
TOTAL SCORE			
SCORING: ROBUST = 0 PRE-FRAIL = 1-2 FRAIL =>3			

Principles 1:

- Those with mild dementia may be safe to drive but can't hold an unconditional drivers licence
- MMSE scores are not predictive of driving risk
- Co-pilot is not a safe or recommended approach
- OT on-road testing is gold standard
- Reviews of driving fitness should be 6 monthly for those with dementia.

Principles 2:

Increased risk of unsafe driving in dementia patients with:

- a carer's rating of a patient's driving ability as marginal or unsafe,
- a history of reported traffic offences and/or crashes,
- reduced driving mileage,
- self reported situational avoidance,
- aggressive or impulsive personality characteristics.

NOT helpful:

- self assessment of driving ability.

Not All Older Adults Have Insight Into Their Driving Abilities: Evidence From an On-road Assessment and Implications for Policy

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³Centre for Research on Ageing, Health and Wellbeing, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

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Purpose. To compare self-reported driving ability with objective measures of on-road driving performance in a large cohort of older drivers.

Methods. Two hundred and seventy community-living adults aged 70–88 years recruited via the electoral roll completed a standardized assessment of on-road driving performance and questionnaires determining perceptions of their own driving ability, confidence, and driving difficulties. Retrospective self-reported crash data over the previous 5 years were recorded.

A practical approach from family practice in Canada...

- Based on an accredited memory clinic training program developed by the Centre for Family Medicine Primary Care Collaborative Memory Clinic

Articles published in 2017 and 2018:

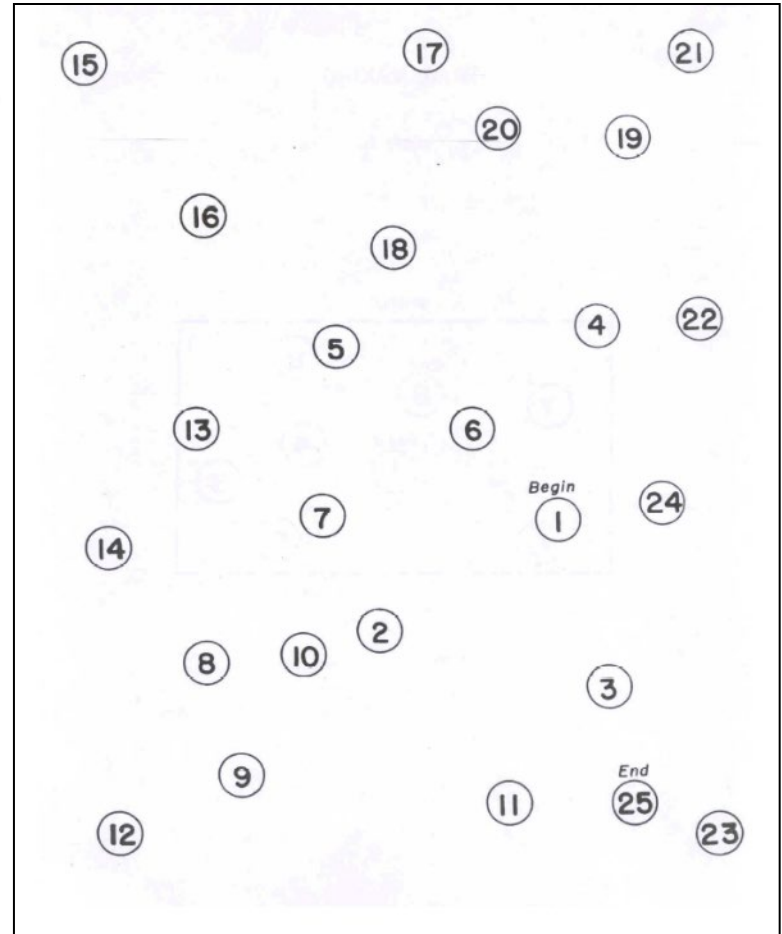
- Lee & Molnar; Driving and dementia: Efficient approach to driving safety concerns in family practice [Canadian Family Physician](#). 2017 Jan; 63(1): 27-31.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5257216/>
- Lee & Molnar Driving assessment for people with dementia, [Canadian Family Physician](#). October 2018, 64 (10) 744;

Checklist for Driving Safety in Dementia

- History of accidents/ near accidents
- Family member concerns
- Clock-drawing test
- Copying intersecting pentagons
- Trail Making A and B (tests processing speed, task switching, visuospatial and executive function)
- Cognitive test scores (*possibly* helpful)
- Dementia severity – inability to independently perform 2 instrumental activities of daily living or 1 basic activity of daily living.

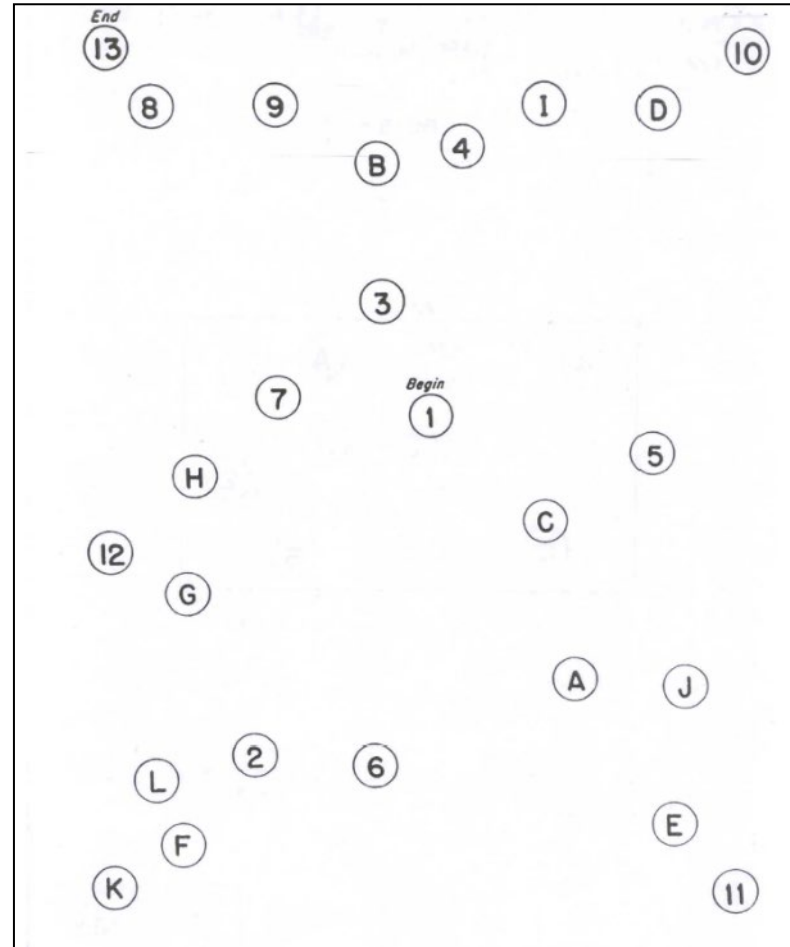
Trail Making Test A

- Inability to complete the Trail A test in 48 seconds might suggest need for further driving evaluation



Trail Making Test B

- Trail B cutoffs - 3 minutes for completion or 3 or more errors—the 3 or 3 rule



Clearly unfit but won't stop driving





Inform RTA?

- The health professional should consider reporting directly to the driver licensing authority in situations where the patient is either:
 - unable to appreciate the impact of their condition, or
 - unable to take notice of the health professional's recommendations due to cognitive impairment, or
 - continues driving despite appropriate advice and is likely to endanger the public.



Legal issues ?

Protected from civil and criminal liability.



Impact of losing license

- Loss of mobility, independence, autonomy
- May affect caregiving role e.g. spouse
- May affect ability to access health care
- May require relocation
- May increased isolation, loneliness, depression and suicide
- May increase financial burden



Potential consequences of driving if unfit

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjosxDZmP5s>



Always remember...

If all of your patients are totally happy with you all of the time, you're not being a very good doctor.

Resources/ references

- Digital RMS NSW forms https://www.healthlink.net/en_US/rms-nsw/training-materials/
- Pecha Kucha Youtube clip - <https://genevieveyates.com/2015/09/03/dont-just-sign-on-the-dotted-line-assessing-fitness-to-drive/>
- <http://thegpshow.libsyn.com/assessing-fitness-to-drive-with-dr-genevieve-yates-gp>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5257216/>
- <https://www.racgp.org.au/afp/2012/april/dementia-and-driving/>
- Trail test www.rgpeo.com/media/53150/trails%20a%20and%20b.pdf
- Drive Safe Drive Aware app <https://www.pearsonclinical.com.au/products/view/563>
- <https://www.pearsonclinical.com.au/files/245101432704685.pdf>
- https://fmf.cfpc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/S183_Driving-and-Dementia_Practical-tips-for-the-family-physician.pdf