

# Know Your Car - Part Three

## Brakes

Pressing the brake pedal activates the brake system. Pulling the hand brake usually affects only the rear wheels.

### *What do I do?*

The ball of your right foot should operate the brake pedal while your heel rests on the floor. This will allow you pivot your foot on your heel from the accelerator to the brake. Pressure should be applied gently at first to take up any 'free movement' in the system. Pressure should then be continually increased to reach the desired speed.

Just before the vehicle stops take some pressure off the pedal then gently reapply the pressure to bring the vehicle to a complete stop. This will stop the car jerking backwards it will also show your supervisor and instructor that you understand the braking procedure and you know how to control the brakes.

### *What is covering the brakes?*

Covering the brakes is when you ease your foot off the accelerator and swivel it over the brake pedal so that you are prepared to apply the brakes if necessary. The vehicle will slow and will cut down the amount of time needed to apply the brakes in an emergency. This should become habit.

### *What should the car feel like?*

Braking should be smooth and progressive. The car should not throw you forward or jerk you back when you stop.

### *My car has ABS (antilock braking system) brakes what does this mean?*

ABS locks and unlocks wheels for maximum braking and steering. ABS brakes are designed for continuous heavy pressure, so you should not ease the pressure on the pedal if the wheels start to skid - the system will do it for you. Make sure you know what type of braking system is fitted to your vehicle and learn how to use it.

#### **Quick checklist:**

- ✓ Uses brakes as the main means of slowing the vehicle.
- ✓ Chooses best part of the road surface for braking.
- ✓ Uses gears to assist with braking when going down hills.
- ✓ Varies brake pressure according to the road surface.
- ✓ Braking is smooth, steady and does not jerk or make the vehicle skid.
- ✓ Uses the right foot on the pedal.



## **Handbrake**

The hand brake or park brake is used to hold the vehicle stationary once it has stopped.

### ***How do I use it?***

Most vehicles have a hand operated park brake operated by a lever next to the drivers' seat. To apply the hand brake press in the button on the hand brake and lift the hand brake upwards. Try not to let it click constantly as you pull it up as this will place undue wear on the brake locking system.

To release the hand brake use one hand motion, pull up slightly and press the lock button in then lower the lever. When you release the hand brake make sure you either have your foot on the brake pedal or the vehicle is held in position by the clutch at friction point. Do not let the vehicle roll back or forward. Some modern vehicles have a foot operated park brake – you will not be allowed to take your Practical Driving Assessment in this type of vehicle. A vehicle used for a Practical driving assessment must have a centrally mounted hand brake so the assessor can reach it in an emergency. Which ever types of park brake system you have make sure you know how to use it.

Never apply the hand brake when the vehicle is moving as this may cause the vehicle to veer out of control.

### ***When do I use it?***

#### Stop signs:

- When parked or stopped.
- When moving off and the road is not level and there is a danger you might roll backwards.
- When there is a lot of traffic at an intersection or traffic queue and you won't be able to move off for some time.

#### Give way:

- When moving off and the road is not level and there is a danger you might roll backwards.
- When you have to give way to a number of cars and may be waiting a while.

#### Traffic lights and traffic queues:

- If you will be waiting for the lights to change for some time.
- If you are on a hill or slope and you think the car will roll backwards.

#### Parking:

- To secure the vehicle when parked.

Using the hand brake at intersections is not compulsory if you maintain control of the vehicle and stop it from rolling. Don't keep the car at friction point while you give way to a lot of traffic as it will damage the clutch. Using the hand brake at intersections is a safety precaution in case another vehicle hits you from the rear and pushes you into the intersection.

**Quick checklist:**

- ✓ Release hand brake before moving off.
- ✓ Apply hand brake only when vehicle is at a complete stop.
- ✓ Hand brake is applied securely and correctly.

## Indicators

When your hands are on the steering wheel you should be able to flick the indicators using your fingers.

### *When to use indicators*

You should indicate at least 5 seconds before moving off or leaving a parked position and at least 30 metres before turning. Use your indicators to give sufficient warning to other road users before pulling over, changing lanes, merging, or changing position on the road by more than 1 vehicle width, so other road users know what your intentions are. Sufficient warning – will depend on the circumstances. Longer indication may be necessary on high speed roads. After you have completed the manoeuvre, check that your indicators have cancelled.

**Quick checklist:**

- ✓ Indicate to give sufficient warning to other road users.
- ✓ Give correct indication.
- ✓ Turn indicator off after completion of manoeuvre.