



FACT SHEET

Module 3.1 Developing Good Habits and Judgment

HABITS

Habits are defined as a behavior pattern acquired as a result of frequent repetition. Due to the frequent repetition and competence of performance, the behavior becomes involuntary. This is the basis of vehicle operation and why procedures are used to perform basic operational tasks.

Behavior patterns must be practiced correctly at least 28 times before the behavior becomes a habit. To establish a good habit, you must practice the behavior correctly, know what is correct and incorrect, and have a desire to establish the habit.

Six steps to Positive Habit Development:

1. Identify the behavior and desire to do it.
2. Demonstrate ability to perform the behavior.
3. Overcome resistance of "this is the way I do it".
4. Understand and identify when the behavior is performed correctly or incorrectly.
5. Practice the behavior correctly at least 28 times.
6. Perform the behavior correctly without thought.

JUDGMENT

Judgment is defined as the process of forming an evaluation based on identifying situations and comparing risks of performance. While habits are the foundation of vehicle operational skills, judgment is the foundation of decision-making skills. Judgments are formed by the combination of learned responses and positive as well as negative experiences.

Driver behavior is based on operational skills combined with decision-making skills influenced by guided experiences. The driver must have consistent practice to form habits and a system for driving designed to develop responsive decision-making skills. When good operational skills and good decision-making skills are combined with a courteous attitude, drivers will exhibit competent roadway behaviors.

Drivers must develop a system to develop good habits and good judgment levels. It has been observed that drivers perform at four levels.

1. The appropriate action is taken without consciously thinking about it, (good habit)
2. The correct action is taken after thinking about it, (learning)
3. An incorrect action is taken, even knowing it was wrong, and (learning)
4. An incorrect action is taken without consciousness of the behavior, (bad habit)

Good Driving on a Habit Level

A driver will be an efficient operator of the vehicle if a well-thought-out system for operational tasks based on controls, size, weight, and balance of a motor vehicle within operating spaces is developed. Unfortunately, many drivers never attain this level of driving but assume they are capable because they can efficiently maneuver the vehicle.

Good Driving on a Judgment Level

A well-thought-out system of the action to take based upon the condition of the areas around one's car can make one an efficient and precise user of time and space. Like the professional athlete or driver, one will seem to instinctively know what to do without hesitation and often on a judgment level of awareness. All drivers can learn how to become efficient and precise. The more often the appropriate experiences take place, the more likely a correct response will be initiated with the least amount of evaluation time used for assessment. Driving does not need to rely upon luck, fate, or maneuvering skill.

Which of these levels would most likely lead to a crash?

- Habit level of awareness with an acceptable performance;
- Judgment level of awareness with an acceptable performance;
- Judgment level of awareness with an unacceptable performance; and
- Habit level of awareness with an unacceptable performance.

You are correct if you said the habit level of awareness with an unacceptable performance; but why is this the most dangerous level? How many drivers may operate on this level and feel that there is nothing wrong with their performance? Many driver actions are made on a habit level of performance. They could be at fourth level with an unacceptable performance, or they could be at first level with an acceptable level of performance.

You may ask, "What is considered an acceptable performance?" That is what procedural tasks are all about. When the driver can manipulate the vehicle within the procedural standards, the acceptable level of habit with acceptable performance is met. Most driver actions are made on a judgment level of performance. They could be at third level with an unacceptable performance or they could be at second level with an acceptable level of performance.

You may ask, again, "What is considered an acceptable performance?" What system gives standards for very specific moments that can be assessed as being either acceptable or not acceptable. That is what levels 2 and 3 are used for; they are the levels at which we learn. In order to learn, it is necessary for us to receive feedback of what we do well or what we do that is not done well.

Getting Feedback for Acceptable/Unacceptable Performances

Use an example of a driver driving into a hillcrest situation or a curvature which creates a **sightline and travel path** area change, at approximately 15 mph over the speed limit with the radio playing loudly, having fun with a few friends. What level of performance feedback did the driver receive? Did the driver **feel anything was wrong?**

We often get acceptable performance feedback for unacceptable performance situations. For the previous situation, what would have happened if a sudden stop was required while coming over the hillcrest? What would have happened to the passengers? The vehicle security should have been improved by the securing of the occupants of the car. The area closed due to the sightline problem created by the hillcrest should have been improved by the proper management of speed.

The driver who is habitually programmed to maintain a set speed or position may not be mentally prepared to make a judgmental adjustment until the potential hazard develops to a point where it cannot be ignored. With a **forced action** created by ignoring the early developments of the situation, the driver is placed into a surprise situation that becomes less controllable and certainly more stressful than it needs to be.

Some of the options available in this hillcrest or curvature situation are:

1. to alter the intended travel path (lane position),
2. make an adjustment in speed control, or
3. establish some form of communication with others at a time prior to that which would demand an action be taken.

Coping with area changes is rarely difficult when a response is initiated early enough. Failing to recognize the area changes or closures, therefore delaying a corrective response, could place greater stress on the driver and the vehicle, making it more likely to exceed the limitations, which could result in a failure.

Suppose a driver does something that the Space Management System and he/she identifies as being unacceptable — that is that person's judgment! That person is cursed with the plague of bad decision-making. How can that poor judgment be changed? How long does it take to change habits or judgment? How can that internal resistance to change be overcome? **Practice! Practice!**

Practice! In order to become the best driver an individual is capable of becoming, it will take practice. Driver Education allows a driver to have **meaningful and appropriate practice** which enhances experiences and creates acceptable habits and judgments.

The novice driver will need to understand that two levels of driver performance are intended to be developed. Habit levels of performance are skills and techniques used to perform tasks in sequence without thinking about which to do first. The reason for training procedural tasks is to perform these tasks without thinking about each step as the driver becomes experienced. An example would be starting the car or keeping it in lane position 1.

Judgment levels of performance are tasks that need decision-making to change speed and position of the vehicle based on changing circumstances. Developing a driver process or system allows the driver to become efficient in making timely decisions affecting speed and position, and reduces the risk of collision with another vehicle, person, or object.

For more information refer to Mottola, F. R. 1999. "Empower Yourself with Zone Control Driving." Interactive Driving Systems, Inc. Cheshire, CT.



FACT SHEET

Module 3.1

10 Good Driving Habits

Living With 10 Good Driving Habits

1. Get driver and vehicle readiness to drive;
2. See a clear path before moving the vehicle;
3. Keep the vehicle in balance;
4. Use reference points to know where your vehicle is;
5. Search for line of sight and path of travel restrictions;
6. Develop strategies for decision-making and action;
7. Safely navigate intersections;
8. Control the rear zone;
9. Control the front zone; and
10. Drive with courtesy.