

Senior Scene



What aging drivers can do to improve their driving skills

Motor vehicles have come a long way since the days of the Model T. Safety features in particular have undergone significant enhancements over the last several decades. Improvements in airbags, structural modifications like crumple zones and technological features like automatic emergency braking have helped to make modern vehicles far safer than the cars and trucks of yesteryear.

While there's no denying that modern vehicles are safer than ever, the human element remains an unpredictable variable. Even in an era marked by vehicles with greatly enhanced safety features, distracted or impaired drivers can compromise the well-being of everyone on the road. Age is another

variable unique to each driver that merits consideration when considering road safety. The National Institute on Aging notes that certain conditions associated with aging, including increased stiffness of muscles and joints, can make it difficult for seniors to safely operate motor vehicles. Seniors who want to ensure they're safe to drive can take various steps to ensure they are not compromising their own safety or the safety of others when getting behind the wheel.

- Have your driving skills assessed by a trained professional. The NIA notes that the American Occupational Therapy Association maintains a database of driving specialists who can help seniors assess their skills behind the wheel. These trained professionals may

assess existing skills and offer advice about how to overcome any issues aging drivers might be having.

- Take a driving course. Safe driving courses can help drivers of all ages stay up-to-date on the latest safety protocols and advice on how to drive safely. Modern driving is vastly different than it was when many current seniors became licensed drivers. A safe driving course can refresh drivers' memories about safety protocols, and some may even offer advice on how to navigate modern roadways, which may be marked by distracted drivers and feature vehicles with brighter headlights that can make it more difficult for older drivers to drive at night.

- Speak with your physicians about

your medications. A recent study from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration found that the average adult age 65 and older now uses roughly four medications. Medications produce side effects that can affect every area of a user's life, including their ability to drive. Those effects might be heightened when taking more than one medication, and interactions also can lead to side effects that might not manifest if individuals were taking just one prescription. Aging drivers can maintain an honest and ongoing dialogue with their physicians to ensure they're aware of the effects their medications might be having on their ability to drive safely. Report any new side effects the moment they appear.

Aging can compromise seniors' ability to

safely operate motor vehicles. But aging adults can employ various strategies to improve their skills behind the wheel.



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