

DRIVING TIPS

3/2005

The INFO SERIES has been developed to provide you with general information. The descriptions do not describe the full extent of information available. Please contact one of our Independent Living Specialists for more information.

As we all age, changes occur in physical functioning, vision, perception, and processing abilities that could require making modifications to our vehicles and how we drive. While changes are inevitable, they occur at different rates in each individual, and age alone is not a good indicator of driving skills. Most often these changes occur slowly and over a long period of time, and the individual is able to compensate for minor deficits. There are also many devices available to assist with making driving easier. Consider some of the following Tips.



NON-TECH IDEAS

- Use your **remote key entry** to locate your car by pressing the lock button for the horn to sound.
- To assist with **exiting the car** and to get extra leverage, roll down the window so the door can be used to support the person as he/she gets up.
- To assist with **getting out of the car seat** you can sit on a plastic bag that will ease your ability to rotate.
- **Assistance pumping gas.** **KNOW THE LAW:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires self-serve gas stations to provide equal access to their consumers with disabilities. If, necessary, to provide access, gas stations must provide refueling assistance (without any additional charge beyond the self-serve price) upon the request of an individual with a disability. Gas station management must let patrons know (with appropriate signage) that customers can obtain refueling assistance by either honking or otherwise signaling an employee. However, a service station or convenience store is not required to provide such service at any time that it is operating on a remote control basis, with a single employee, but it is encouraged to do so, if feasible.



- Consider a **car that offers design features** that make it easier to get in and out. Here are some ideas.
 - Cars with two doors often have doors that are wider and it is easier to enter.
 - Vehicles that sit up higher make it easier to get in and out.
 - Cars that have seats that slide back farther make it easier to get in and out.
 - If your legs are stiff, you will need room to swing them in with the least possible bending. Two-door cars usually have wider doors. Remember that wider doors need more space to open into (This can be a problem in garages.), and you have to reach further to close them.
 - Watch out for bulky door pockets that get in the way. It may be possible to remove them.
 - The more space between the seat and the door the better. Look for seats that slide back some distance if you need a lot of room.
 - The higher the door, the less you have to duck to get in.
 - It's easier to lift your legs over shallower and narrower sills. Avoid having a low seat and a high sill.
 - Seats that adjust up and down help you get in and out and find a comfortable driving position this feature is available in most manufacturers' price ranges, at least for the driver's seat. Electrically adjustable seats are fairly easy to find on more expensive cars.
- **Avoid unfamiliar routes**, and plan your route ahead of time.
- **Keep the radio off** so you can focus on your driving.
- **Avoid bad weather and heavy traffic.**
- **Take frequent breaks** when driving for long distances.
- **Drive with a copilot** whenever possible.
- Visit the State Department of Motor Vehicles to receive a disabled **parking permit**.
- Use a driver rehabilitation specialist for a **comprehensive evaluation**.



LOW TECHNOLOGY

- **Lanechanger I** is a unique blind spot mirror that attaches to your existing rear view mirror with adhesive tabs in seconds, removing dangerous blind spots, improving driving and child safety. LANECHANGER provides a wider field of visibility on both sides of the vehicle. This unique feature allows the driver to see the view provided by a

normal rear view mirror and at the same time check blind spots at a glance and keep an eye on back seat passengers (\$12.95)

- A **Spinner Knob** can be attached to the steering wheel to allow controlled steering with the use of one hand. (Costs less than \$20.00)
- **Swivel Seat** can help you turn to easily get out of the car. This “lazy susan” is a relief if you have stiff joints, you can just sit, and swivel your legs into the car. (\$24.99)
- **Leg lifters** help you lift your legs over the sill. A simple do-it-yourself solution is to loop a stiff length of webbing over your foot and pull on it. Some people use a hooked walking stick or a plastic bag. (Step into it and use the handles to pull your leg up.)
- The **Handy Bar** provides the extra leverage you need to push off your seat and help you stand. It is a super strong support handle that slips into the ‘U’ shaped piece of the doorframe that is a part of your doors locking mechanism. (\$39.99)
- The **Car Caddie** is something you can pull down on to help yourself stand up. This portable handle offers stability and ease when getting out of a car, van or truck. (\$19.99)
- Forgot where you left the keys? Forgot where you parked the car? Need more leverage to turn the ignition? Try one of the many unique **Key Chains And Identifiers** available on the market. (Costs between \$7.99 to \$20.00)
- **Backup Assistance Devices** offers an enhanced rear view. The system helps the driver to have better control when reversing or parking in tight spaces and greatly improves safety and judgment. (Costs between \$90 to \$150)
- **Talking Digital Tire Gauge** - - Rather than squinting and having to twist your neck to read the tire pressure, press the button on this small gauge to hear a clear voice speak the pressure in .5 pounds per square inch. The gauge comes in a clear carrying pouch with a visor clip.
- **Gas Cap Turner Device** places over your gas cap to make turning it easier. (Free)
- Is it hard to grasp small knobs? With a large, easy to grip handle, the **UNIVERSAL GRIP** works well and is small enough to fit in your glove compartment. (\$17.99)
- **Remote Control Start** - - This system is either purchased with the car or it can be installed by a mechanic. (\$150.00 installed)
- **Bioptics** - - This is a system with a telescope attached to prescription glasses that allows a driver with very low vision to be able to drive by glancing briefly and intermittently through the special lenses.



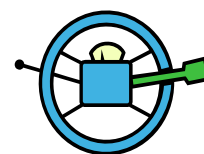
- **Siren Detector** - - This device electronically detects the high decibel sound waves of an ambulance or fire truck for a driver who is hearing impaired.

HIGH TECHNOLOGY

There have been many advances made in the area of adaptive driving equipment for persons with disabilities. With the appropriate adaptive aids, individuals with most types of physical disabilities can continue, or learn, to drive safely. Adaptive equipment is frequently used for physical problems. A left gas pedal may be used if you are unable to use your right foot to accelerate or brake. Training is essential with any equipment to be safe with your new adapted driving method.

There are several levels of driving control technology to compensate for the loss of strength and/or range of motion. Some of these include:

- **Reduced effort steering systems** compensate for reduced strength in your arms.
- **Head Operated** switches activate headlight, horn, and other accessory controls for persons with limited hand function.
- **Brake and accelerator controls** compensate for reduced range of motion and strength. Extensions and left foot gas pedals are included.
- **Joystick driving systems** allow one hand operation of brake, accelerator and steering.
- **Ramps** - - They range from portable to fold down to fully automatic lifts. These vary greatly in price and are based on many factors involving the users abilities, and the type and age of the vehicle.
- **Driver Seat Adaptations** - - Power driver seat base can move 20 inches back and raise up. Seat base rotates with power bearing swivel.
- **Specialized seating transfer modifications** can allow a person to transfer to the driver seat from a wheelchair. It is generally safest to transfer to a vehicle seat and use the vehicle restraint system that complies with federal safety standards. The wheelchair should then be secured or stored.
- Vehicles (vans, trucks, minivans) can be equipped for **driving from a wheelchair**. It is very important to secure the wheelchair to the vehicle and to restrain the rider in the wheelchair with crash-tested belt restraints.
- **Vehicle Modifications** include a raised roof, lowered floor, and rear entry van. Adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications are available for some vehicles, although all vehicles are not suitable for modifications. Contact an Independent Living Coordinator for more information on modified vehicles.



SAFE DRIVING

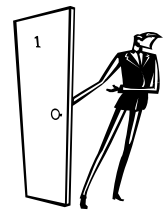
Warning Signs of Unsafe Driving.

- Doesn't observe signs, signals or other traffic
- Needs help or instructions from passengers
- Slow or poor decisions
- Easily frustrated or confused
- Frequently gets lost, even in familiar areas
- Inappropriate driving speeds (too fast or too slow)
- Poor road position, or wide turns
- Follows the yellow lines for road position
- Accidents or near misses



Here are some questions to ask when observing older drivers.

- Is he/she alert to real or potential hazards, pedestrians, and traffic signals?
- Can he/she see things from the side of the car as well as the front?
- While driving does he/she hear oncoming horns, cars, emergency vehicles?
- Can he/she manage the steering wheel, pedals, and gear lever?
- Does he/she make good decisions?
- Does he/she respond quickly and appropriately to sudden situations?
- Can he/she get to the proper destination?
- Can he/she drive and carry on a conversation at the same time?
- Is he/she driving faster or slower than they once did?



TECHNOLOGY CLOSET

Society's Assets operates a "technology closet" that currently has about 500 items. Equipment can be tried out before making a purchase. Over the years assistive technology has played an increasingly critical role in assisting individuals to live independently in their homes. Contact an Independent Living Coordinator at Society's Assets to see if we have the item you are looking for.



RESOURCES

- **Stores** - - Many of the items recommended are available at stores in the area.
- **Catalogues** - - Check with Society's Assets. Catalogues on assistive technology are available in the resource library.
- **Used equipment** may be available. Keep in mind that some equipment is very specialized to an individual's needs. Contact the Independent Living Coordinator for a list of resources. There are some local organizations that offer equipment recycling, as well as, state organizations and Internet sites. For mobility equipment there is a Wisconsin Wheelchair Recycling project.
- **Info Sheets** - - Society's Assets has Info Sheets that list resources of where to order items. There are Info Sheets for telephones, clothing, driving, hard of hearing equipment, visual aid equipment, and physical limitations.
- Check **web sites**. If you don't have a computer, the libraries have computers you can use.



FUNDING

There are many funding sources. Each source has its own regulations, limits and eligibility requirements, and each situation is different. Don't overlook the possibilities of combining funding sources to reach your goal. Here are some options to check out.

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| ▪ Medicaid | ▪ Workers Compensation |
| ▪ Medicaid Waivers | ▪ Family Support Program |
| ▪ Medicare | ▪ Disability Organizations |
| ▪ Private Insurance | ▪ Private Grants |
| ▪ Veteran's Benefits | ▪ WisLoan |
| ▪ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation | ▪ County Funded Programs |

The listings on this Info Sheet should in no way be construed to constitute an endorsement of an agency or organization or its service, nor should exclusion be construed to constitute disapproval. The information that appears in this publication was obtained from the agencies/organizations listed above.



Racine Office
 5200 Washington Ave. #225
 Racine, WI 53406
 (262) 637-9128 V/TTY
 (800) 378-9128 V/TTY

Kenosha Office
 5727 6th Ave
 Kenosha, WI 53140
 (262) 657-3999 V/TTY
 (800) 317-3999 V/TTY

Elkhorn Office
 615 E. Geneva Street
 Elkhorn, WI 53121
 (262) 723-8181 V/TTY
 (800) 261-8181 V/TTY

Alternative Format Available Upon Request