

Driving FAQ Sheet



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What is the purpose of this FAQ sheet?

This FAQ sheet is intended to provide information on Finding the Correct Driving Position. This will vary from person to person, depending on your body size and the vehicle you are in/adjustments available in that vehicle. Following this basic advice will help you to find the best ergonomic position. This may differ from your usual driving position, which will likely seem strange at first, but persevere to reduce the potential of musculoskeletal stress arising from driving.



What is the correct Seat Reach?

Seat Reach is the distance of the seat from the pedals. You should adjust the seat forward or back until your left foot is resting comfortably on the clutch without overstretching and your legs (back of your thighs) are comfortably supported by the seat pad, along most of their length.

Pedal Operation

Depress and release the clutch pedal (in an automatic fully depress and release the accelerator/brake) making sure your legs do not pivot on the seat edge, lifting your bottom out of the seat...AND, ensuring you can comfortably and fully depress the pedals, without over-reaching. Adjust your SEAT REACH again to suit, if required.



What is the correct Seat Height?

Note: Some vehicles may not have this adjustment feature - if not, use other adjustment features to get as close as you can to the correct driving position. If available, adjust the seat height to the highest position available, that still leaves space of approx. 3-4 inches between your head and the internal roof of the car. A seat tilt function may be available, - if so, tilt the seat pad forward, so the front edge is lower than the back of the seat.

What's the correct Seat Rake?

Seat Rake is the recline or tilt of the car seat backrest. You should recline the seat back until your shoulders and upper back, rest comfortably on the seat back and your arms are slightly bent when you hold the steering wheel in the 9 and 3 position (see overleaf). The whole length of the spine should feel supported by the backrest, rather than the body being held too upright, which will place most of your weight through your spine, pelvis and hips, possibly leading to unnecessary pain/discomfort and a feeling of instability when cornering.

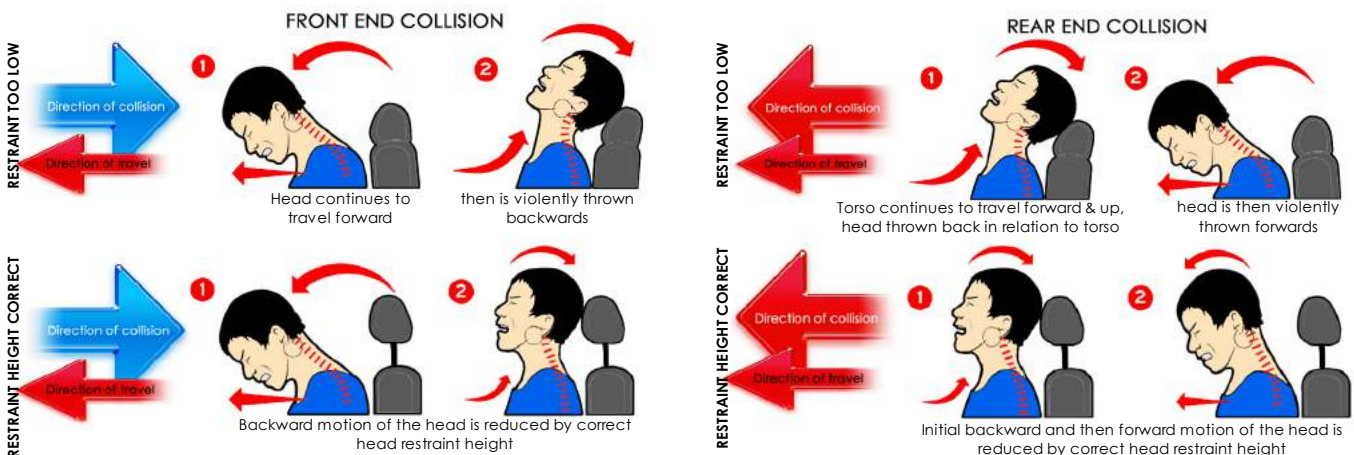


What's the correct Head Restraint Height?

You should adjust the vehicle head restraint to ensure its base (bottom part) is level with the base of your skull. If the head restraint also has a tilt function, you should tilt it forward towards the back of your head. The head restraint is designed to prevent your head from travelling too far backwards, in the event of a collision (especially, a rear-end shunt, although it will also help in a front-end shunt). The lesser the distance of the head restraint from the rear of your skull, the lesser the "whiplash effect".

The "Whiplash Effect"

This information emphasises the importance of your vehicle head restraint being appropriately positioned!

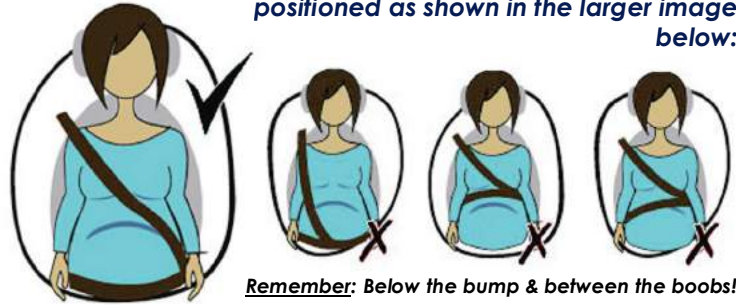




What's the correct seat belt retainer height?

The seat belt retainer should be adjusted up or down until the belt is felt to apply an even pressure (firm, but not excessive) over the front of your shoulder and chest.

The 'waist' part of the belt should do the same (apply firm but, not excessive pressure) over the front of your pelvis.



Remember: Below the bump & between the boobs!

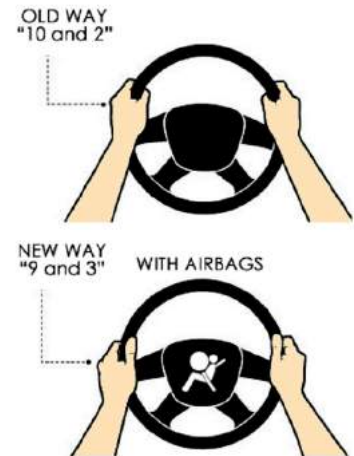


What is the correct Steering Wheel Position?

If the steering wheel has height or depth adjustment, move it into a position where your shoulders feel comfortable and relaxed - not hunched up to your ears. To find the correct depth, with your arms stretched out straight, your wrists should rest on the top of the steering wheel, then when you take hold of the wheel in the correct manner (see opposite), your elbows will be comfortably bent, ready to react to any obstacles on the road.

If you started driving pre-1990, before airbags were common, it's likely that your driving instructor's "hands at 10 to 2" command still influences the way you grasp the steering wheel. It remains a popular misconception, but there's a safer way to grip the wheel.

The recommended position of your hands is now at 9 and 3 (on a clock face), with the thumbs placed along the rim rather than hooking around it. In the event of an accident, the force of airbag deployment can send hands at the top of the wheel into your head or even break your thumbs.



Similarly, never rest your hand on the hub of the steering wheel or use an underhand grip while turning, as this is a great way to end up with a broken arm in an accident.



What about Lumbar Support?








If the car has an adjustable lumbar support, inflate or position it so that it is resting comfortably at your waistband or belt level. A rolled up towel can double as a lumbar support in cars that don't have one, or you can do a web search on "Lumbar support in car seats" to see the range of additional lumbar supports that are available.

What about my mirrors?

Changing your seat position will almost always change your view of the road behind, via your mirrors. Once in the new seat position, be sure to adjust the interior rear view and exterior wing mirror positions.



What else can I do to make driving as comfortable as possible?

-  Any posture, no matter how good it is can cause discomfort if maintained for too long. It is important to alter position, even if only in minor ways, when driving to avoid or delay the onset of discomfort.
-  Think about your posture. Don't hunch over the wheel. If there is little or no support to your lumbar region in the car you drive, fit a cushion (rolled-up towel) or a proper additional lumbar support.
-  Keep your chin in rather than sticking it out. Don't grip the wheel too tightly as this tenses the muscles and can add to stress. Relax your shoulders and keep your head upright.
-  Adjust the interior rear view and wing mirrors to suit your posture and use your mirror view to recheck your sitting position after driving a while (view will change if you start to slump). Use your mirrors to cut down on having to twist round.
-  Don't drive for long periods without a break. If on a long journey, make frequent stops. The Highway Code recommends stopping at least every 2 hours to rest. Take the opportunity to walk around to stretch your legs and your back.
-  When getting in and out of the car try to avoid straining and twisting. When getting in, sit onto the seat first before taking both legs into the car. Reverse the process for getting out of the car.
-  Remember when you adjust your seat to the optimum driving position you may experience some discomfort as your body adjusts to this new position. Don't worry, it will only last for a few days, so please persevere - it will be worth it.