



# Road Smart Teacher Toolkit

Lesson Plan 6 - Under pressure: Removing stress from learning to drive

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# Lesson 6 - Under pressure: Removing stress from learning to drive

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## Student Outcomes

In this interactive lesson, students will explore how stressful learning to drive can be, and develop communication strategies to manage (and lower) that stress.

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify how language use can affect people
- Describe how reacting with extreme emotion may impact on effective communication
- Use communication strategies to engage with and work effectively with a supervising driver
- Communicate effectively with peers to ensure their own safety as a road user

## Suggested Timing

45 - 55 min

## Materials and Preparation

- A computer and projector, and/or digital whiteboard for the teacher to show the opening video.
- A printout of the *Resource 1: Communication Techniques* for each student, and writing implements to complete it.
- A copy of the scenarios from *Resource 2: Driving Scenarios*, cut into pieces so the scenarios can be distributed (one to each group).
- A copy of *Resource 3: Stressful Driving* for each student, OR a way to project a copy so the class can see it.

## Lesson Description and Background

Both supervising drivers and learner drivers agree that learning to drive can be stressful... for everyone! Most people have personal experiences confirming this.

In this lesson, students begin learning how they can manage and lower that stress by building partnerships with supervising drivers and developing in-car communication skills.

Students examine materials to show how stressful learning to drive can be.

They then undertake a group activity to dissect different types of communication, and reflect on personal experiences that show how certain types of communication can increase or decrease stress.

Students then apply what they've learned and deepen their knowledge by undertaking scenario-based role play to practise and refine their skills in in-car contexts.

## Coaching Tip

Give students the communication techniques handout to take home and discuss with their supervising driver(s).

## Curriculum Mapping

Health and Physical Education

Content Description

- Plan, rehearse and evaluate options (including CPR and first aid) for managing situations where their own or others' health, safety and wellbeing may be at risk (VCHPEP144)
- Evaluate situations and propose appropriate emotional responses and then reflect on possible outcomes of different responses to health and wellbeing (VCHPEP147)

Achievement Standards (excerpt only)

- By the end of Level 10, students ... evaluate the outcomes of emotional responses to different situations.... They compare and contrast a range of actions that could be undertaken to enhance their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing.

## Lesson Part 1 – Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Show students the first sixty seconds of Video #1 from VicRoads 'Lessons from the Road'.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkhtWhDMYcE>
3. After showing the video, show the one-page Stressful Driving (Resource 3) handout included in this resource (it can either be projected, or a copy distributed to each student).
4. Note to students that both the video and the handout reflect the reality that learning to drive can be stressful. Ask students to discuss two questions:
  - a. **Why** can learning to drive be stressful for both parents/supervisors and learners?
  - b. What can emotion and stress do to **judgement and behaviour?** (You may ask students to reflect on a time they've been stressed or angry, and think about what it did to their decision-making?). It is important to reiterate and make clear that **stress and anxiety impact our ability to make good decisions and judgements**, which is why it is important to learn to manage stress when learning to drive. It is also important to keep a good relationship with your supervising driver so that you get as much and varied practice as possible.
5. Tell students that today they will be learning about effective communication and how to reduce stress and anxiety (for both them and their supervising driver) when learning to drive.

## Lesson Part 2 – Student brainstorm – “Styles of communication” (10 minutes)

1. Divide students into groups (up to four per group).
2. Distribute to each group a copy of the Communication Techniques worksheet (Resource 1). This sheet describes different elements of communication (e.g. tone of voice, choice of words, volume of speech, body language etc):
3. As an optional extra, to help students understand each of the individual elements of communication, you may request students to ‘demonstrate’ it for the class. (i.e. say something very loud and then very soft, to demonstrate ‘volume’; or talk to someone standing far too close, to demonstrate ‘body language’). This can be a fun and humorous way to introduce these concepts.
4. Ask students to discuss in their group how each element of speech can have positive or negative impacts on levels of stress. Give examples (for instance, speaking loudly can increase stress, speaking more softly can lower stress). Students can provide personal examples where appropriate.
5. Ask each group to share their responses with the rest of the class.

## Lesson part 3 – Interactive role play – “Taking the pressure down” (20-30 minutes)

1. Inform students that they will now apply those techniques to different driving scenarios by demonstrating them through role play.
2. Keeping students in their groups, distribute to each group a different scenario from the Driving Scenarios (Resource 2) template.
3. Give students 10 minutes in their group to:
  - a. Read and discuss the scenario.
  - b. Create a 30-60 second role play, using the communication techniques discussed, that demonstrates a *high-stress* approach to that scenario.
  - c. Create a second role play using the same techniques that demonstrates a *lower-stress* approach to that scenario.
  - d. It may be useful to ask two students in each group to perform the ‘high-stress’, and two-students to perform the ‘low-stress’ version (so everyone has a turn to role play).
4. Bring the groups back together and have each group perform their high-stress and low-stress approaches to the rest of the class.
5. After each group, ask observing students to describe how the communication of the participants in the role plays affected stress and emotion, referring to the communication techniques. Encourage students to offer suggestions for improvement.

## Lesson Part 4 – Conclusion (5 minutes)

1. Ask students to reflect on the most important parts of communicating effectively with supervising drivers and peers in the car.
2. Suggest that students take home the communication techniques handout and discuss it with their supervising driver(s) how they would like to communicate when learning to drive. If desired, this activity can be set as homework, with students to report back during the next lesson.
3. Direct students to the Road Smart Supervising driver eLearning module for additional information.

## Resource 1: Driving scenarios

(Note: Cut these up and distribute **one per group** – pick whichever scenarios you think are most interesting and relevant for your students)

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*An L-plate driver is on one of their first drives with their supervising driver, and the supervising driver wants the learner to self-navigate to their destination. The L-plater needs to discuss how they will drive and how to listen to the supervising driver and navigate to their destination.*

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*An L-plate driver is driving and their supervising driver is speaking really loudly on the phone, making it hard for the driver to concentrate.*

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*An L-plater is driving a car with their supervising driver in the front seat and two other passengers in the back seats. There is a robust conversation that is bordering on an argument about a reality TV show. The level of noise is becoming overwhelming and distracting to the learner driver.*

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*An L-plater is stopped at a busy roundabout, waiting for a chance to enter. They are nervous about selecting a safe gap. The supervising driver is getting increasingly frustrated that the learner is missing opportunities to enter the roundabout. The learner is unsure how to proceed.*

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*A P1-plater is driving their new girlfriend home from school. They are going too fast around corners and she is starting to get very uncomfortable. He nearly loses control– although he manages to not skid off the road. She is getting increasingly scared and decides to ask him to slow down.*

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## Resource 2: Communication techniques worksheet

*Directions: This worksheet looks at four elements of communication that can influence stress and anxiety. For each of these elements of communication, brainstorm with your group examples of how each element could **increase** stress and anxiety, and how it could **decrease** stress and anxiety.*

*For example, you might say that 'volume of speech' can increase stress by being very loud and overbearing, and can decrease stress by being soft and calm.*

*It will be useful to come up with real-world examples from your own experience.*

Element of communication	Description	Ways it can increase stress	Ways it can decrease stress
<b>Volume of voice</b>	How loud or soft someone speaks, sometimes called 'dynamics'		
<b>Tone of voice</b>	The 'quality' of someone's voice. For example, a voice can be 'angry', 'soothing' or 'calming'		
<b>Choice of words</b>	The words people use to make a point. Different words can make the same point feel different, and change how people react		
<b>Body language</b>	The way people use their hands (gestures) and their body (for instance, standing very close or far away)		



## Resource 3: Stressful driving

The following excerpt is taken from the VicRoads Learner Kit - Guide for Learners. Read it when asked by your teacher and then be ready to answer some questions.



### Thinking about stress

Most learners and supervising drivers find there are occasional angry outbursts and stressful situations in the car. It's not surprising – learning to drive can be stressful.

Expect a little anxiety sometimes because learning to drive safely is far more complex than most people realise. It's relatively easy to start, stop and steer but developing and applying safe driving skills in complex situations is very difficult.

Don't turn driving into an unpleasant chore. Keep the following in mind:

- If stress or anger affects you or your supervising driver, stop the car and take a short break.
- If the driving conditions become worse and your supervising driver is uncomfortable, stop the practice session and let them drive. Driving sessions should never place you at risk of crashing and learners shouldn't drive beyond their ability.
- You should both be very proud of your decision to work together. Keep reminding yourselves that a few mistakes will happen sometimes, but there will also be lots of progress.