

## Top Tips for Discussing When it's Time to Stop Driving

As someone you care for ages, you may become worried about their ability to continue to drive safely. Some people can drive competently well into their 80's and even beyond, while other people may have difficulties in their 60's or even younger.

When you're responsible for an older adult's safety, you may wonder when it's appropriate to start talking about how safe they are behind the wheel.

Your first step in this process is to observe them while driving. The following situations can indicate possible driving problems:

- Getting lost, even when driving short, familiar routes
- Failing to obey traffic signs or signals
- Cutting off other drivers, straddling lanes, or making wide turns
- Reacting slowly to emergencies
- Falling asleep behind the wheel or appearing inattentive
- Becoming easily angered or agitated
- Using poor judgment, such as not yielding right-of-way
- Forgetting to use mirrors or turn signals or check for blind spots
- Having trouble judging distances

**It's important not to comment on or to criticize the older driver's behavior during the drive. Instead, have a chat once you're both out of the car, and review any problems you observed. Be sure not to sound judgmental or angry. Just calmly state any unsafe actions you witnessed. Be specific.**

**If you observe that the older driver had problems like the ones mentioned above, consider taking these steps:**

**Take them to see their healthcare provider for a check-up.**

A healthcare professional can tell you whether the older adult is physically able to drive safely. The provider can also advise you as to whether the older adult is taking any medications that could affect their ability to drive safely.

**Get their vision tested.**

An eye care professional, such as an optometrist or an ophthalmologist, should test the older driver's vision to make sure they are visually able to drive safely.

<b>Have a professional evaluate the older adult's driving skills.</b>	The best person for this is typically a qualified driving instructor or an occupational therapist who specializes in elder driving issues, says C.T. Scialfa, PhD, and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. Recently, Dr. Scialfa published a study about older drivers and safety in the <i>Journal of the American Geriatrics Society</i> .
<b>Know when to have the conversation.</b>	Ask yourself: Do you feel comfortable letting the older adult drive you somewhere? The answer may be a signal that it is time to start the conversation.
<b>Enlist support.</b>	Talk to others in the older driver's circle. Ask them if they share your concerns about the older adult's ability to drive safely. Rehearse the discussion with them so you can be calm and caring. Depending on the circumstances, you may even want one or more of them to be present when having the conversation with the older adult about driving.
<b>Make it a compassionate conversation.</b>	You don't want to make the older adult feel like "everyone is ganging up on them," so make certain to frame the conversation in a supportive, concerned way. Don't let your anxiety or fear about having this conversation let you sound angry.
<b>Discuss specifics, but avoid blame.</b>	Explain to the older adult why you're worried about their driving. Cite examples: "Dad, you went right through a stop sign last time we drove together. And you forgot to use your turn signals." Or, "You got lost on the way to the supermarket."
<b>Be prepared for their anger.</b>	A healthcare professional can tell you whether the older adult is physically able to drive safely. The provider can also advise you as to whether the older adult is taking any medications that could affect their ability to drive safely.
<b>Schedule time for another talk.</b>	If the older adult resists what you're saying or gets agitated, gently end the conversation. Let them take in what you've said, then revisit the topic a day or two later.
<b>Ask for their opinion.</b>	Make sure to take the time to hear what the older person thinks about their driving ability. Ask them how secure they really feel behind the wheel. It's very possible that if you've noticed problems, they have too, and may feel vulnerable.
<b>Enlist the older driver's sense of responsibility.</b>	If the medical professionals and the driving instructor you consulted agree that it's time for the older adult to stop driving, appeal to their sense of responsibility. Remind the older driver that they're not the only one at risk. They could potentially injure others – or worse – should they have a crash. Ask them to think about how they would feel if they were to cause an injury.