

Roundabouts

Roundabouts can be confusing or frightening to the new driver. The best way to understand how to negotiate roundabouts is understand their purpose.

Roundabouts give aid to the flow of traffic from all directions when they converge onto one point (the roundabout).

On approach to a roundabout, there will be signs or warnings of a roundabout ahead.

A triangular warning sign telling you of a roundabout looming up pretty quickly. It may be just around a bend or on a blind spot on approach.

An information board showing how many exits the roundabout has, giving a rough guide on where the exits are placed on the roundabout.

It does not matter how many exits the roundabout has, the process on how to negotiate it can be simplified. So let's discuss a straightforward 4 way roundabout.

The routine to use is the appropriate parts of MSPSL

Taking the 1st exit.

1. Mirrors - Interior mirror and left door mirror.
2. Signal - Indicate left
3. Position - Maintain your 1 metre distance from the edge of the road. If the roundabout has 2 or more lanes approaching it, keep to the left lane.
4. Speed - Use your brakes to gently bring the speed down (harsh braking will put you at risk of being rear ended). Then change gears to match the speed you are travelling. Ideally, you need to be in 2nd gear when you are about 4-5 car lengths away from the roundabout with your speed still decreasing.
5. Look - Firstly, check to see if the road in front of you is clear. If so, check to your right. If the roundabout is clear, proceed on to the roundabout, heading for the exit you are indicating to.
6. Once clear from the exit, check to see if indicators have cancelled, check mirrors and progress on your journey.

Taking the 2nd or any other exit placed up to and including the 12 o clock position.

1. Mirrors - I would check your interior mirror and both your door mirrors.
2. Signal - No signal is appropriate. By not giving a signal is giving communication of the direction you are intending to travel.
3. Position - Maintain your 1 metre distance from the edge of the road. If the roundabout has 2 or more lanes approaching it, keep to the left lane. **UNLESS ROAD SIGNS AND/OR ROAD MARKINGS DICTATE OTHERWISE.**
4. Speed - Use your brakes to gently bring the speed down (harsh braking will put you at risk of being rear ended). Then change gears to match the speed you are travelling. Ideally, you need to be in 2nd gear when you are about 4-5 car lengths away from the roundabout with your speed still decreasing.

5. Look - Firstly, check to see if the road in front of you is clear. If so, check to your right. If the roundabout is clear, proceed on to the roundabout, heading for the exit you are intending to go to. It is important that you maintain "Lane Discipline" as you are driving towards your exit. Failure to maintain it, could result in cutting in front of other vehicles or crash.
6. As you just start to cross in front of the exit before the one you want, check your left hand side, signal left and proceed to exit the roundabout.
7. Once clear from the exit, check to see if indicators have cancelled, check mirrors and progress on your journey.

Taking an exit placed after the 12 o clock position including going all the way round, and coming back on to yourself.

1. Mirrors - Check your interior mirror and your right door mirror.
2. Signal – Indicate right. By giving this signal is giving intent of the direction you are intending to travel. This should also pre warn other road users you may be changing road positions
3. Position - Position your vehicle to just left of the centreline. If the roundabout has 2 or more lanes approaching it, position to the right. **UNLESS ROAD SIGNS AND/OR ROAD MARKINGS DICTATE OTHERWISE.**
4. Speed - Use your brakes to gently bring the speed down (harsh braking will put you at risk of being rear ended). Then change gears to match the speed you are travelling. Ideally, you need to be in 2nd gear when you are about 4-5 car lengths away from the roundabout with your speed still decreasing.
5. Look - Firstly, check to see if the road in front of you is clear. If so, check to your right. If the roundabout is clear, proceed on to the roundabout, heading for the exit you are intending to go to. It is important that you maintain "Lane Discipline" as you are driving towards your exit. Failure to maintain it, could result in cutting in front of other vehicles or crash.
6. As you just start to cross in front of the exit before the one you want, check your left hand side, signal left and proceed to exit the roundabout.
7. Once clear from the exit, check to see if indicators have cancelled, check mirrors and progress on your journey.

Lane Discipline

When you are looking at a roundabout, you will know if the road is wide enough to allow two vehicles to travel side by side. If so, it is very important that Lane Discipline is maintained. If the roundabout has a narrow road way, which does not give enough room for two vehicles, Lane Discipline is not important. However, carrying out correct routine is still paramount.

Busy roundabouts

If the roundabout is busy, you may be feeling anxious about moving off. Always remember that no one is expecting you to pull out in front of oncoming cars. If the roundabout is busy, it is busy! However, you are expected to move off safely when it is safe to move off. So what clues are there to know it is ok to move off without interfering with other road users progress?

Blockers – Look further up the roundabout. Is there something preventing the vehicles approaching your right? Will it give you an opportunity to move off safely?

Body language – It is not exclusive to the animal world. Vehicles can also give body language (direction of travel, wheels pointing, speed, signals, other vehicle interactions, and so on). With practice and experience you will develop a crucial skill in understanding when to go.

The moment the other vehicles start to give you these clues, it could only give a very short window of opportunity to move safely. You need to be prepared to move off as soon as you see it. If you miss it, don't panic. Look for the next one.