

Future Drivers of America



Written by
Sylvia M. Guillemette

What makes me eligible to teach this?

I've been driving for 28 years. I've never been in an accident that I've caused. I always follow the driving laws.

I've been learning about maintaining vehicles since I was 13 years old. I really enjoy doing that.

When I was in high school, I really wanted to become a mechanic. I was not able to participate in the car shop class, because my old school guidance counselor didn't think women should work on cars. I gave up on that. *(Don't let anyone take your dream from you. Fight for what you believe you want to do with your life.)*

I drove a taxicab in both Connecticut and Massachusetts and never caused any accidents. I'm still a very careful driver and obey all laws in each state. When you learn to drive defensively, you pay attention to everything around you.

I worked in the auto parts industry for many years as a customer service/counter person and later as a commercial parts driver *(no accidents)*. I dealt with a lot of professional people on a regular basis. I did a lot of customer service at work, as well as, on my own time. I showed people how to do things like change wiper blades, the battery or a bulb.

I drove vehicles at the local auction into the auction area to be sold, found and drove vehicles to be inspected by mechanics bay, and moved vehicles to be parked in different areas for the auction or storage. I still do this because it's fun! *(No accidents.)*

I took a class to learn how to be a dealer sales person. I enjoy talking with and learning from the techs and parts people that

work at the dealerships. I also still help people with vehicle information they are looking for. I am very resourceful.

I think it's time the up and coming new drivers learn how to maintain the vehicle that they are going to drive. It's time to learn that responsibility. There are too many people learning to drive, but not

learning to maintain the vehicles that they drive. Later on they become car owners and do not keep up maintenance because they were never taught how to do that.

It's time to change all that. Right Here, Right Now. Just do it.

Sincerely,

Sylvia M. Guillemette

What I remember ...

Driving is the ultimate sense of freedom! We all want to be able to do things for ourselves.

I remember when I wanted to learn how to drive. I wanted to be able to have that freedom to go anywhere I wanted to. I had to take a driver's education class in school.

The class taught us about the rules of the road. The teacher also showed us on the chalkboard, how we had to learn how to park the car different ways, stop and turn. We used a film projector to view how to use lights, wipers, turn signals, gas, brake, looking both ways, and all that.

I was really bored with the details and I just wanted to get to the driving part – and I didn't really care about the informational part.

But ...

The most important part of learning how to drive – is the informational part - to know and follow the laws and rules of the road.

My only thoughts were to get my license and wanting to just drive everywhere and I really wanted that freedom! I know how

to change a tire, add oil to the engine and things of that nature, but not everyone does.

This booklet is designed to help you learn how to maintain the vehicle you drive. It's not just about driving the car – it's about taking care of it too.

You are a future driver and car owner!

Learn to take care of the car now. When you get your own vehicle, you will know how to take care of it.

Be a responsible driver – don't expect your parents or guardians to take care of these little things for you. They won't be around

forever and it's important for you to learn how to do it yourself. You never know when you'll really need to know that stuff.

So ... now your journey begins ...

Welcome to the world of Driving and Maintenance!

My Best to You,



Sylvia M. Guillemette
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Next ... First things First ...

First things First ...

Driving is not just about putting gas into the car. There are a few new drivers out there that don't even know how to put fuel in. We all have to learn how to do it.

Different cars, trucks, crossovers, SUVs have different places where the fuel goes in. It's located on either the left side or the right side. There are gas, diesel, and flex fuel vehicles.

On the newer cars, the gauge that shows you how much gas is in the car, sometimes it tells you on which side the gas door is located and what type of fuel goes into the vehicle.



One of the most important things to remember about these gauges – is that

some will read E (empty) to F (full) or in REVERSE ORDER.



Next ... Owner's Manual ...

Owner's Manual

This is an Owner's Manual. It can be found in the glove box or in some consoles (*located between the driver and passenger seats in the front*).



The index can be found in the back of the book. It has the listings of all of the things you need to know about the vehicle to take care of it.

You will find oil type, power steering, bulbs, and a lot more here.

It also contains a maintenance schedule. It tells you when you

need to do certain things to keep the vehicle in good running condition.

This is usually one of the books enclosed in a black cover with a zipper on it. This is the Owners Guide. Sometimes you will find a stereo guide, or GPS, or other books that are included, to help you with your vehicle.

Next ... engine oil ...

Engine Oil

When you stop to get gas, you should check the oil at least once a week. You check the oil when the car is off and has had a few minutes to cool off while putting gas into it.

The first thing you should know is where to find the oil dipstick.

Most vehicles still have the Owner's Manual still in the glove box. Go to the index at the back of it and find the listing for oil or maintenance.

If the oil light comes on – you may need to add two quarts of oil to it. Always stop, let the vehicle cool off a bit first and then check the levels.



Next, you should get a paper towel or one from the box by the fuel pump. The oil dipstick is usually near the place where you put the oil in and can be different colors.

Take the dipstick and wipe it on the paper towel. Now stick it back in the place you pulled it out. It looks like a small open pipe.

There are level lines on the dipstick as shown below. The lower line shows that you will need to add a quart of oil. The other line shows that it's full.



The one on the left and that is black means it needs to be changed. It also needs another quart to be added.

The other one on the right is the way the oil is supposed to look. It's full so you don't need to add any oil.

You will find the oil cap on the engine. There is sometimes a listing of oil type on the cap or a picture of oil can.



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These pictures have both the oil can and the oil type. You have to make sure you use the right oil for the vehicle. Please refer to the Owner's Manual for the correct oil type for that vehicle.

The cap will turn to the left or right (*depending on the vehicle*) to loosen it. Add the correct oil if needed, and then turn to the

right or left to tighten it. Sometimes the cap is very tight. You may have to ask for help in opening it.

Next ... power steering fluid ...

Power Steering Fluid

Each vehicle has its own power steering fluid. Where to put the power steering fluid may also be found in different places. You will have to check the Owner's Manual for the location and fluid type.

The power steering reservoir also has a dipstick. It is very small. It also has low and high levels on it.

Honda uses a special one as does BMW, as examples.



When you pull the dipstick out of reservoir, this is how it looks.

It has two lines on it to tell you if you need to put any fluid in or not. You must check this while the engine

is running! Otherwise you will not get the proper reading and you don't want to overfill it.

Next ... coolant ...

Coolant

Coolant for each vehicle can vary. VW uses a pink one, Honda a blue one, Ford varies from green, to orange (*Dexcool*) or gold, and some cars can use the yellow one. Check the Owner's Manual for that information.

The coolant tank is where you put coolant when the car is cold and it is low. There are level markings on the container. There is a line for cold and hot.



top line.

The older cars you will have to put coolant in through the radiator cap on the radiator. Newer cars have a sealed system, so it will go into the coolant tank.

In this photo, you need to fill it to the



In this photo, the jug is just about full. I would not add any more to it.

The fluid is pink, so I am guessing that this is a VW of sorts.

NEVER OPEN WHEN HOT!! YOU CAN GET BURNED REALLY BADLY BY THE STEAM OR A GUSH OF COOLANT. COOLANT IS TOXIC!! DO NOT BREATHE IT IN!

Next ... automatic transmission fluid ...

Automatic Transmission Fluid



You can check automatic transmission fluid with the dipstick (*on older cars. The newer ones have a sealed system*), usually located at the back of the engine. The dipstick itself will be a different color than the oil one. Fords usually have a red one, as the fluid is red.

This has to be checked when the vehicle is running. It has to be hot to get the correct reading.

The dipstick levels are similar to the oil ones. One is low and the other one full.

The only difference with the levels is that this is not measured in Quarts but in Pints (*half a quart*). So if your dipstick says add – it means you only put in a pint. I usually add a little at a time and then check the stick. You do not want to overfill this as you could have transmission slipping issues or worse.

This shows a low reading on the dipstick. The full mark is on the lower right hand side.



You get a paper towel, pull the dipstick, wipe it off, put it back in, and take it out slowly and look at it in good lighting. If you have trouble reading it, ask someone else to check it for you. If it's got fresh

transmission fluid in it, you may not be able to see it very well.

****Manual shift transmissions have to be checked a different way. When I was young, there was a hole in the transmission where you had to put your finger to make sure the fluid was at the top.**

Next ... windshield washer fluid & reservoir ...

Windshield Washer Fluid & Reservoir

This is necessary especially in the winter time to keep the windshield clear of dirt and debris. There are different types of washer fluid.



The blue one is the most commonly used one in most vehicles today.

It's sold in most stores. It's usually a couple of bucks.



This is bug wash and it's usually used during the season when all the bugs come out.



This is the RainX De-Icer type. It's mostly used in the winter time. It helps to de-ice and keep the windshield and wipers from freezing up. *(I use this one.)*

Be careful what you buy! They make one specifically for RVs! You know ... those big mobile homes on wheels. That is a special one and should NOT be used in a normal automobile.



This is where the washer fluid goes ...

The washer fluid bottle is located on the right hand side of the vehicle most times. There are some vehicles that it's in a different place. The cap will usually tell you what it is if you look.

If you are not sure where it is, and the cap doesn't have anything on it, ask someone or look in the Owner's Manual.

This is what a washer fluid bottle cap looks like. Sometimes it comes in different colors.



Next ... wiper arms and wiper blades ...

Windshield Wipers Arms & Wiper Blades

To clean the glass on the windshield properly, you must have the right size wiper blades. The vehicle may require a special blade, because of the design of the glass.

There are different types of wiper arms, and ways to put the wipers on.

Pin type – these are 80's style cars and older that used these.

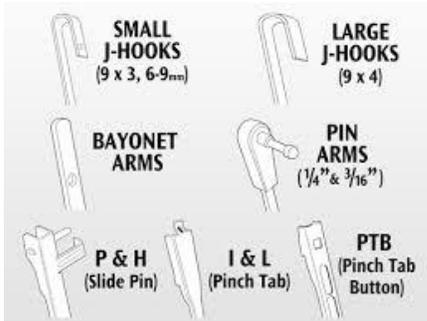


J Hooks – they come in two different sizes. Some are small and some are large. Larger ones I know are used by vehicles such as older Jeep and Chrysler vehicles.



The larger one will require another piece to be snapped into the wiper blade in order for it to stay in place.

There are other types as well ...



You change the blades out if any of these problems apply.



These are different types of blades. The companies like Firestone, Midas, and Goodyear for example, have their own company wipers. Even the Dealerships have their own as well.



This is a Bosch blade that is recommended usually for BMW or Saab cars because of the way that they go on and because of the windshield design.

These blades are just normal, everyday blades.



They are different designs but they do the job.

The winter blade is designed with rubber completely covering the blade so that the ice does not form up.

These are good for pushing a lot of snow away from the windshield, especially in a winter storm.

Next ... tires ...

Tires

You should know if a tire needs to be replaced or if it just needs to have air put into it.

If the tire(s) need to be replaced or need air

Tire Wear Diagnostic Chart

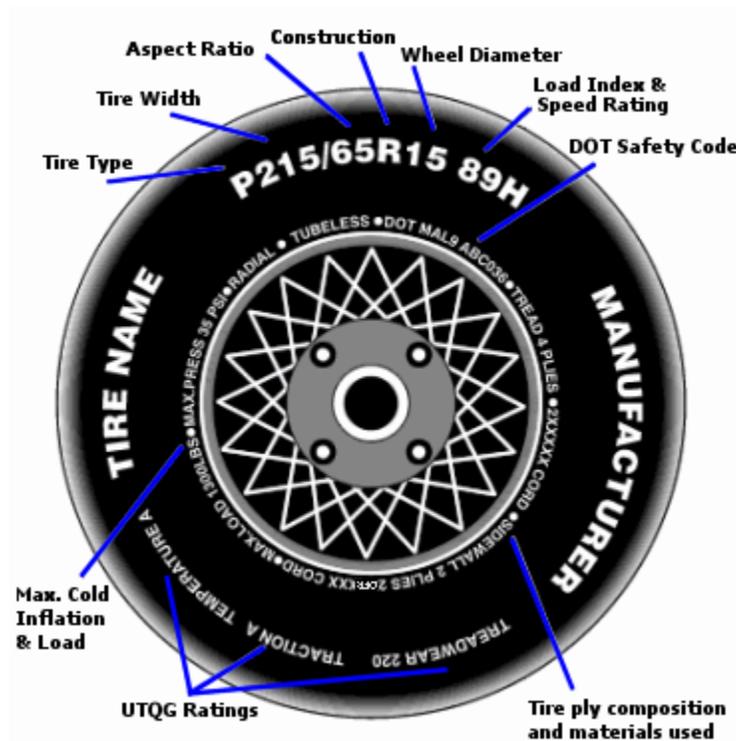
Wear Pattern	Cause	Action
 Center Wear	Over Inflation	Adjust pressure to particular load per tire catalog
 Edge Wear	Under Inflation	Adjust pressure to particular load per tire catalog
 Side Wear	Loss of camber or overloading	Make sure load doesn't exceed axle rating. Align at alignment shop
 Toe Wear	Incorrect toe-in	Align at alignment shop
 Cupping	Out-of-balance	Check bearing adjustment and balance tires
 Flat Spots	Wheel lockup & tire skidding	Avoid sudden stops when possible and adjust brakes

Tire Gauge

Tire gauge is used for measuring the amount of air in the tire when it's cold. This is the best way to get a reading and know how much more air you need to put into it.



This is where to find the information on tire size, how much air is supposed to be in it. The P on the tire represents that it is a Passenger tire for a regular vehicle.



Next ... headlights and other bulbs ... Headlights & Other Bulbs

Headlights are very important. They help you to see another vehicle on the road. They are not just for use at night.

If it's raining, foggy, overcast (cloudy), sleeting, and freezing rain, snowing, or dark – BY LAW – you need to use all your lights. The daytime running lights are just for days when it's sunny.

Headlights come in different sizes, brightness, and sometimes colors. Stick with the white ones; you'll see more with them.

To find out what headlight you need, you can either look in the Owner's Manual, or go to the nearest auto parts store to look them up. *(The Owner's Manual, most of the time, will show you how to change out the bulb.)* In some cases, you may have to visit a mechanic to change it out.

Headlights can be glass enclosed like the old 80's and older cars. They come in round and square sizes.



To change these, you will need a screwdriver to loosen the framing around them in the front, outside of the car. Then pull the plug out from behind the bulb. Put a new bulb inside the framing, plug it in, and align the frame to the holes and put the screws in.

Newer bulbs are just that, bulbs. They go inside and behind the bulb. You have to open the hood to get at them. Look up how to do

it in the Owner's Manual. If it isn't there, ask someone at the auto parts store to assist you.



These are Silverstars. They are exceptionally bright and not the usual replacement bulb.

You have to be very careful with brighter bulbs because they burn hotter and you could melt the plastic outer bulb

case. (Like the glass bulb, only it's made out of plastic).

Some higher end cars will have what's called HID headlights or High Intensity Discharge.



These are very expensive, but they have a much longer life than the regular bulb.

The companies that make these have aftermarket HID kits for those who want to replace the regular bulbs with the HID headlights.

Next ... turn signal, stop, and marker light replacement bulbs ...

Turn Signal, Stop and Marker Lights

These lights are just as important as your headlights. You need the **stop bulbs** to work to let others know you are slowing down or stopping. If they don't work, you may get hit from behind because the person behind you doesn't know that you are slowing down or stopping.

ALWAYS use your turn signals!

The **turn signals** are not on the car to look pretty. They will keep you from getting into accidents. Not everyone is an intuitive driver.

The turn signal was designed to help other drivers to know where you are going. It's considered a SAFETY FEATURE.

Example:

If someone doesn't know you're turning (*they are one side of the road*) and you are going the same way (*on the other side of the road*), you may collide into each other. That is a useless and unnecessary accident waiting to happen.

Side marker lights are sometimes reflectors or in use as lighted parts or as turn signals in the front and rear sides of the vehicle.

If any of these bulbs do not work, you should change them. They will help others to see you and keep you safe.

To change any bulb, refer to the Owner's Manual, the auto parts store personnel, or a repair manual. The Owner's Manual will tell you what bulb numbers are for what bulbs in those areas of the car. Interior lights, headlights, turn signals, dash lights, dome lights, etcetera.

Next ... distracted driving ...

Distracted Driving

The biggest issue right now with driving is accidents from **distracted driving**.

Connecticut is a Hands-Free – No Texting State.

You do not need to use the cell phone or text while driving. No cell phones, setting up the GPS, no computers, Nooks, Kindles, putting make up on, radios too loud, or things that *TAKE YOUR EYES FROM THE ROAD*.

You need to pay attention around you at all times. If you take your eyes from the road for one second – that's all it takes to get into an accident.

The only people who are *EXEMPT* from this law are First Responders – Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Technicians, Ambulance people, and Taxicab/Livery (Limo) drivers.

Next ... new laws ...

New Laws

There are new laws on the books that you will have to know when you go to take the driving test. It has to do with the new cell phone and texting laws and other age restricted laws.

You can download the driver's manual directly from the Department of Motor Vehicles site and print it. You can also access the new laws there that you will have to know as well.

I want you to remember something very important ... every time you get into a vehicle; you are *literally* taking your life in your hands. That vehicle can give you an immense amount of freedom if you are responsible and careful or it can kill you and your friends if you are careless. *You are not invincible!*

Next ... learn more ...

Learn More

Would you like to learn more? Please visit Learn Basic Car Care here: <https://car-basics-for-women.com>.

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Be Safe!