

# Driving in the Countryside

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Road users are twice as likely to be killed on a rural road as on an urban road. Sharp corners, high hedges or trees, a narrow carriageway, lack of pavements, and the occasional presence of debris all add to the dangers for all road users - drivers, walkers, cyclists and riders.

It is the social responsibility of every road user to do all they can to ensure their own safety, but there is an additional onus of care on drivers, who are essentially in control of a lethal weapon on wheels. Children and dogs can be unpredictable, cyclists may wobble, and horses can be startled easily and for no apparent reason.

Yet the perceived absence of other cars on rural roads implies that it is safe to speed, and many drivers either fail to recognize or choose to ignore the risks. Alongside this, the prevalence of commuter traffic and the increase in the use of satellite navigation systems are placing an added burden on our lanes which simply did not exist in the past.

Remember the Two Second Rule. When driving behind another vehicle, notice when it passes a stationary object and recite to yourself, “only a fool breaks the two second rule.” If you reach that same object before you have finished reciting the reminder, you are too close to the car in front.

Always try to follow the line of a bend or corner. If you find yourself having to “straight line” a bend, you are probably driving too fast.

Drive around bends, particularly left-hand bends, as though you know there’s a fallen cyclist in your path - that way you won’t be going too fast to avoid any obstacles you do meet.

Plaxtol is not seen, primarily, as an agricultural community - motorists simply do not expect to encounter agricultural machinery and are unprepared when they do. But there is farming going on in Plaxtol. Particular times of year are more busy than others, but our fields, orchards and hedgerows have to be maintained year-round, and with increasing pressure on farmers to turn set-aside land back into food production there may well be more tractors and farm machinery on our roads in the future. Be patient when you are behind them - they are seldom on the road for long - and remember that a tractor has a wider turning circle, eg, it will often swing left when turning right. If you use our lanes regularly, try to notice where farm entrances emerge onto the road, so that you will be prepared when the busy times come.



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All the dangers of driving in rural areas are heightened at night, and in winter the busiest times on our roads fall in the dark hours of the afternoon and evening.