

# *Driving in Finland*

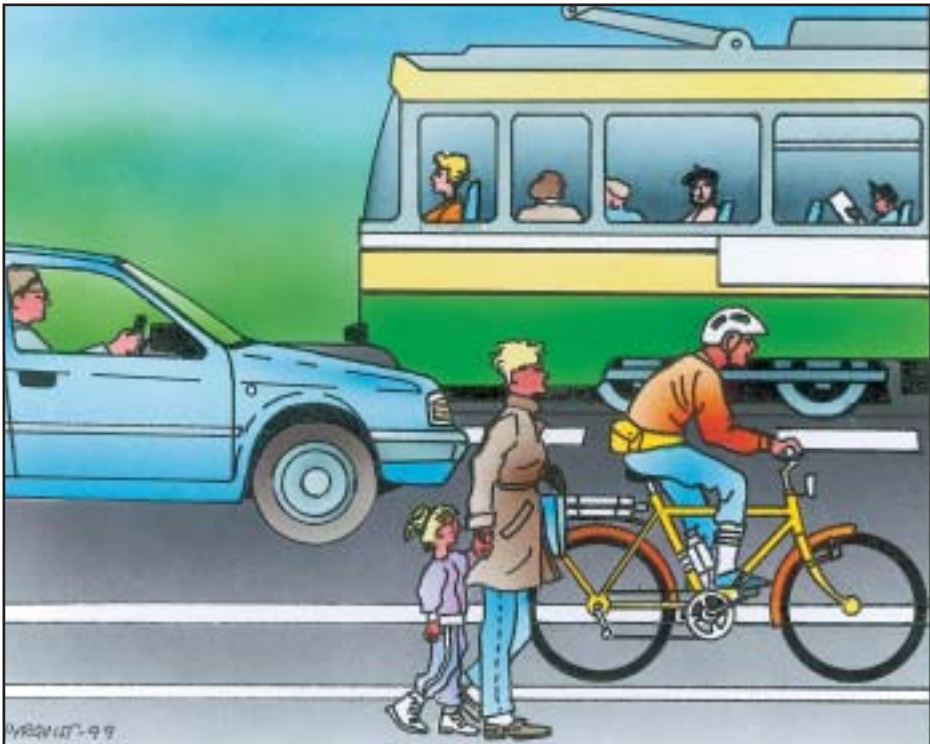


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# *Have a safe trip!*

This booklet provides you with all the basic information you need on Finnish traffic regulations and rules regarding the use of motorized vehicles. You should note that the contents are **not** a direct translation of the relevant legal provisions.

If you require any further information, please contact the authorities and organizations listed at the end of this booklet.



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# Basic rules for your safety

## Seat belt compulsory for everyone

In Finland, everyone travelling in a car or a van must use a seat belt, whether they are in the front or the rear seats. Children must also use a seat belt or a child seat. Seat belts are also compulsory when travelling by taxi.

**The forces of a collision can be very considerable on those inside the vehicle. In a collision at 50 km/h, a person weighing 80 kg will produce a force on the seat belt or the seat in front equivalent to 1,000 kg.**

## Headlights compulsory at all times

Use of headlights is compulsory in Finland. Whenever a vehicle is driven, its dipped headlights or day-time running lights must be on, even during daytime. Lights must be used within built-up areas as well as outside them. Use of headlights significantly improves the visibility of vehicles in traffic. It is easier to see if a vehicle is stationary or moving and in what direction it is travelling.

Headlights must not be used in such a way that would dazzle other drivers.

Use of main beam is prohibited on a well lit road and when driving close to another vehicle. Fog lights may be used only in fog or mist or in heavy rain or snow.

## Use of lights in a stationary vehicle

When stopping your vehicle on a poorly lit road at night or in poor daylight

conditions, keep the parking lights or dipped headlights on.

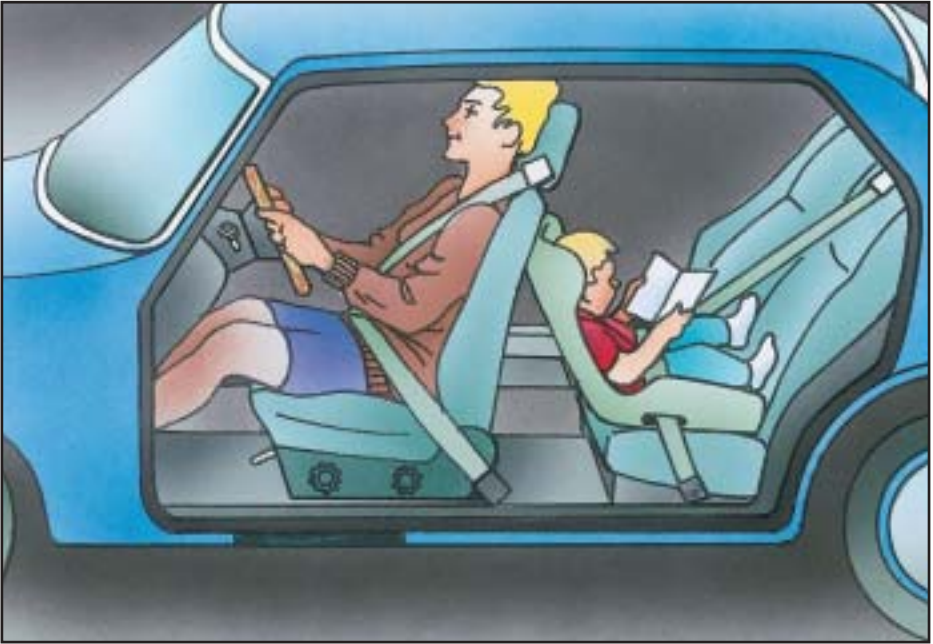
Hazard warning lights (i.e. all direction indicators on at the front and rear simultaneously) may only be used if, on account of an accident or other mishap, the vehicle has had to stop in a place which is especially hazardous to other traffic.

## Drunken driving is a criminal offence

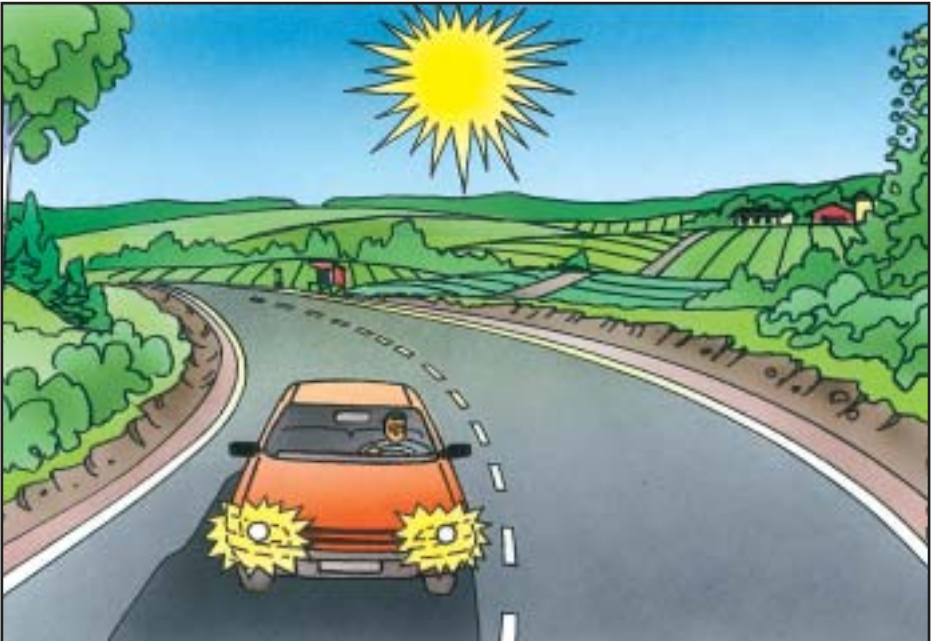
In Finland, a driver is guilty of drunken driving if he or she has a blood alcohol level of at least 0.5 g/litre (or a breath alcohol level of 0.22 mg/litre). The blood alcohol limit for aggravated drunken driving is 1.2 g/litre (or a breath alcohol level of 0.53 mg/litre). Driving while under the influence of drugs is also a punishable offence.

Drinking just two small bottles of medium-strength beer or 8 cl of spirits can put you over the legal limit. The passage of alcohol through your body cannot be hastened by, for example, sleeping or drinking coffee. If you have consumed a large amount of alcohol the previous evening, you are recommended not to drive at all during the following day.

A police officer can breathalyze a motorist on the spot. Those suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol may be taken for a blood test or to a police station, where their breath alcohol level will be verified with a precision



*Always use seat belts in the front and rear seats of cars and vans. Place small children in a rear-facing child seat.*



*Keep the headlights on at all times, regardless of time of day, weather or visibility.*



breathalyzer. Use of other intoxicating substances can be investigated using urine and blood tests.

Drunken driving is a punishable offence regardless of the road or location. Even driving just a short distance - such as in the yard of a building, on a forest road or in a parking area - can lead to a conviction for drunken driving.

Furthermore, letting a drunken driver use your vehicle is a criminal offence. Riding a bicycle or other non-motorized vehicle in a drunken state is also a punishable offence if it endangers the safety of others.

Insurance will not indemnify loss or damage caused by a driver who was under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In such cases the driver will have to pay for any property damage or personal injury him/herself as well as the cost of any legal expenses.

A conviction for drunken driving is accompanied by a driving disqualification and either a fine or a maximum of six months in prison. Aggravated drunken driving means a driving disqualification, an income-based fine and a maximum of two years in prison. Anyone found to have let a drunken driver use their vehicle will be subject to a fine or imprisonment.

## **A hands-free device is required in Finland**

According to Finnish law, the use of a mobile phone while driving is restricted to the use of a hands-free device. (Road Traffic Act of 1 January 2003)

A hands-free phone may be either a self-contained or a hand-held unit allowing hands-free use, provided that in either

case the user does not have to hold the phone in the hand. The hands-free requirement applies to all driver groups: private as well as professional drivers. It is valid both in and outside built-up areas.

According to the law no use of any device may disturb driving. For example, searching for a radio station or putting on a CD may distract the driver's attention from the most important aspect, safe driving. For the same reason a driver is not allowed to write short messages or dial long numbers while driving, even if the mobile phone is on a holder.

If you use a mobile phone while driving, avoid unnecessary calls and always make driving your top priority. Let your voice mail pick up your calls and stop in a safe place to check your messages.

As part of their regular traffic surveillance the police control the use of mobile phones. Drivers breaking the rule will be fined.

## **Radar detectors are prohibited**

Devices intended for detecting or interfering with road traffic surveillance equipment are prohibited.

## **Unnecessary engine idling is prohibited**

In Finland, excessive engine idling is prohibited. If the vehicle is stationary for reasons other than an unavoidable hold-up, the engine may not be run for longer than two minutes. However, if the air temperature is below -15°C, the engine may be run for a maximum of four minutes before moving off.





*If you stop your vehicle on a poorly lit road, keep the parking lights or dipped headlights on.*



*The blood alcohol limit for drunken driving is 0.5 g/litre and for aggravated drunken driving 1.2 g/litre.*

## Direction indicators must be used

Always use a direction indicator when moving off from the side of the road, turning at a junction, turning the vehicle around on the road, or when changing lanes.

## Consideration in use of the horn

Drivers can attract the attention of other road users by sounding the horn or flashing their headlights or brake lights, provided that this is necessary in order to avoid danger. When driving outside built-up areas it is worth flashing your lights to warn others if there is, for example, an elk on the road. In Finland it is not permitted to sound the horn when driving in built-up areas, unless absolutely necessary.

# *Adjust your speed to the conditions*

Your driving speed must be appropriate for the conditions. The speed indicated on a speed limit sign may be too high for the conditions at the time. The state of the road, the weather, the road surface conditions, the loading of the vehicle, the type of load and the traffic conditions must all be taken into account. Speed must be held at a level where the driver can keep control of the vehicle and can, if necessary, stop within the distance he or she can see to be clear.

If the road surface is badly worn, a lot of water can gather in the path of the vehicle. With an increase in speed, the tyres can steadily or without warning lose their grip, and the vehicle may then start to slide on the film of water.

## Most common speed limits

In built-up areas the general speed limit is 50 km/h. This is indicated by the sign for a built-up area or by a normal speed

limit sign. Outside built-up areas the general speed limit is 80 km/h, unless a road sign indicates otherwise.



In many built-up areas a separate road sign is used to indicate a 30 km/h or 40 km/h speed limit for a particular road or area. Following the sign for a built-up area a 60 km/h speed limit may also be displayed. In this case the speed limit concerns only that particular road; on the other roads the general 50 km/h limit for built-up areas will apply, unless a road sign indicates otherwise.

In a residential precinct indicated by a road sign (sign on page 18), you must adjust your driving speed to walking pace. If there are no pedestrians the maximum speed limit is 20 km/h.

In Finland there are also winter speed limits. During the winter, most of the 100 km/h speed limits are reduced to 80 km/h. On motorways the 120 km/h limit is



*Leave a safe gap when driving past pedestrians, cyclists or moped riders. Be careful not to splash water or mud as you pass.*



*If you drive significantly slower than other traffic outside a built-up area, leave a large enough gap behind the vehicle in front for an overtaking vehicle to enter without endangering other traffic.*

reduced to 100 km/h. On some stretches of road there are variable speed limits (variable speed limit signs are used) throughout the year, according to the road and weather conditions.

If you have to use your car to tow another car, the maximum permitted speed is 60 km/h.

## Speed limits for different vehicles

The highest permitted speeds for motorized vehicles travelling without any caravan or trailer are:

- 80 km/h for a van, special-purpose vehicle, lorry or camper van; however, in the case of a van, special-purpose vehicle or camper van of unladen weight less than 1.8 tonnes which was first registered in 1981 or later, the limit is 100 km/h;
- 80 km/h for buses; however, a limit of 100 km/h may apply if the vehicle has been inspected and approved for use at this speed and it does not carry any standing passengers;
- 60 km/h for a motorized vehicle with one or more unsprung axles;
- 45 km/h for a moped or light four-wheeler;
- 40 km/h for a snowmobile/motor sledge, except on snowmobile routes, where the limit is 60 km/h; for powered work machines (e.g. cranes, hoists and excavators) and agricultural tractors, the limit is 40 km/h;
- 50 km/h for transport tractors;
- 20 km/h for a vehicle with metal caterpillar tracks or wheels not fitted with pneumatic tyres

# *Using the road*

## Keep to the right

Vehicles must keep to the right of the carriageway, except on one-way streets.

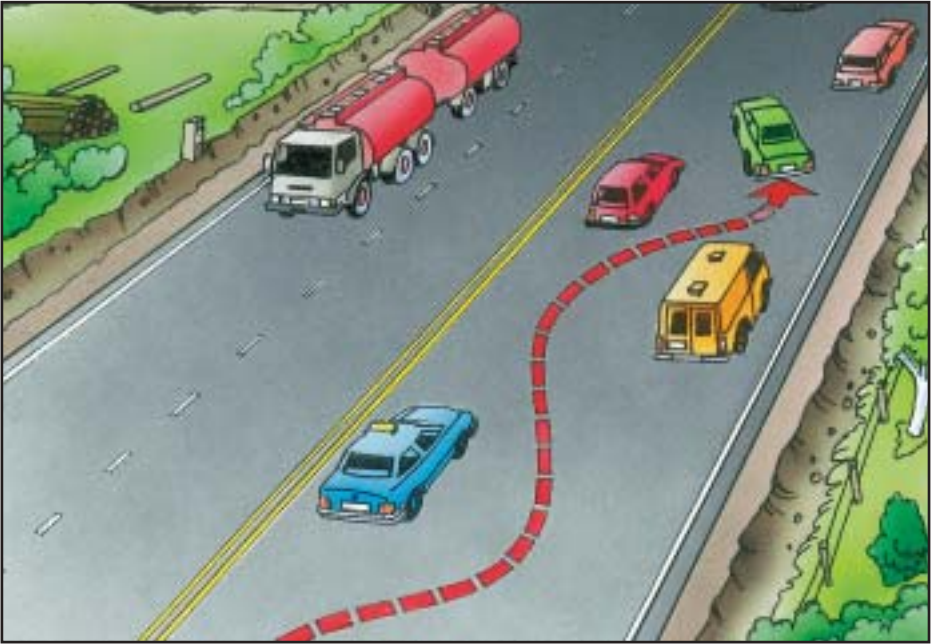
When there are two or more lanes in the direction of travel, drivers must use the free lane furthest to the right. Other lanes are only used when overtaking and when preparing to turn. On such stretches of road driving in lanes used by oncoming traffic is thus totally prohibited.

You are not permitted to weave through the traffic flow by constantly switching lanes.

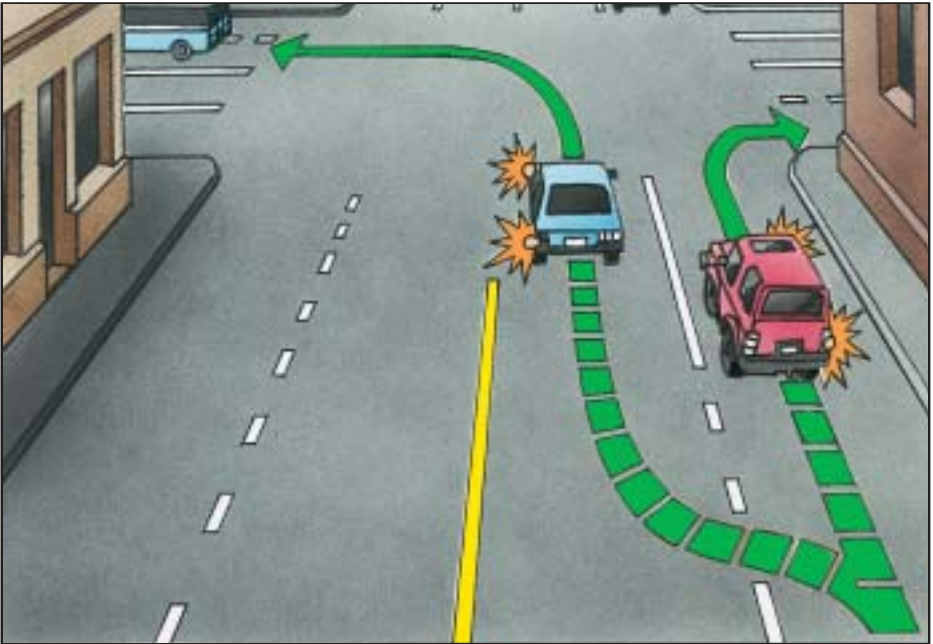
You are not permitted to change lane if there is a continuous white or yellow line between the lanes.

When turning right, move over to the right-hand edge of the carriageway. When turning left, move over to the right of the centre line of the carriageway, or on a one-way carriageway to the left-hand edge.





Generally, you should drive in the lane furthest to the right. Avoid weaving in and out of the traffic flow.



When turning, choose the correct lane in good time and use your indicators.

Traffic islands or similar structures in the middle of the carriageway are passed on the right.

Generally, you should drive in the lane furthest to the right. Avoid weaving in and out of the traffic flow.

When turning, choose the correct lane in good time and use your indicators.

When turning left outside a built-up area you should also move over to the right of the carriageway centre line.

### Do not use lanes reserved for public transport



You may only enter a bus lane (indicated by a road sign above it) when preparing to make a turn.

### Oncoming vehicles

Vehicles approaching each other on the road must pass to the right of each other. At road junctions, however, vehicles

arriving from opposite directions which both intend to turn left may pass to the left of each other.

If a driver's lane is obstructed, he or she must, if necessary, stop to let oncoming vehicles pass.

Machines at roadworks can be passed in an appropriate manner taking into account the particular circumstances involved, provided that no damage is caused to other road users.

### Take care when reversing and turning your vehicle around

A vehicle can be reversed or turned around on the road, provided that this can be done safely and without impeding others. Reversing, turning around and U-turns are forbidden on motorways and roads for motor vehicles, or if a road sign prohibits such turning.

## *Giving way*

### Give way to vehicles from the right

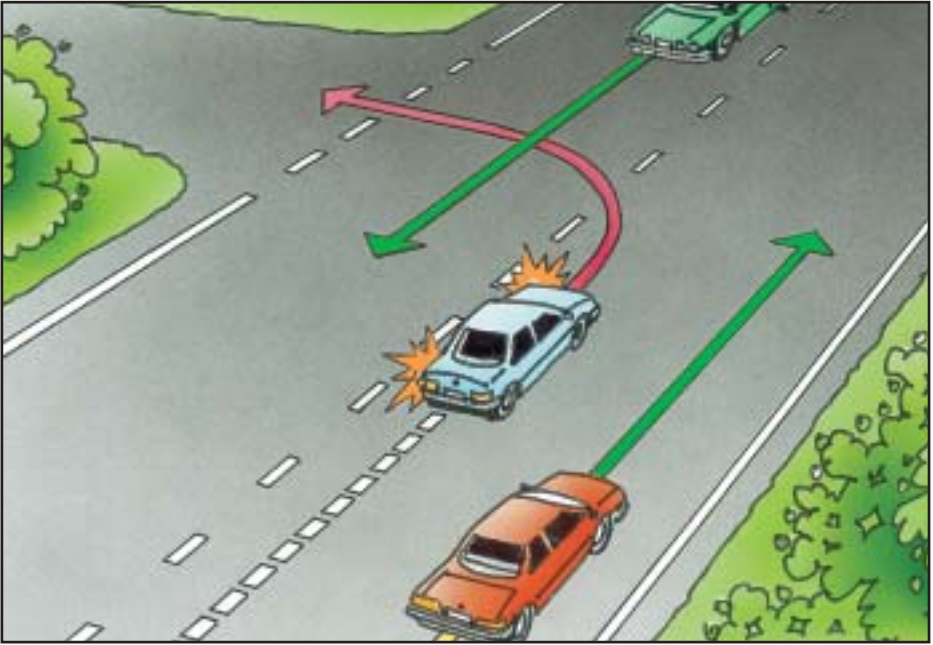
Motorists must give way at road junctions to vehicles approaching from the right if the junction has no separate give-way priority indicated by road signs.

### Give way when turning

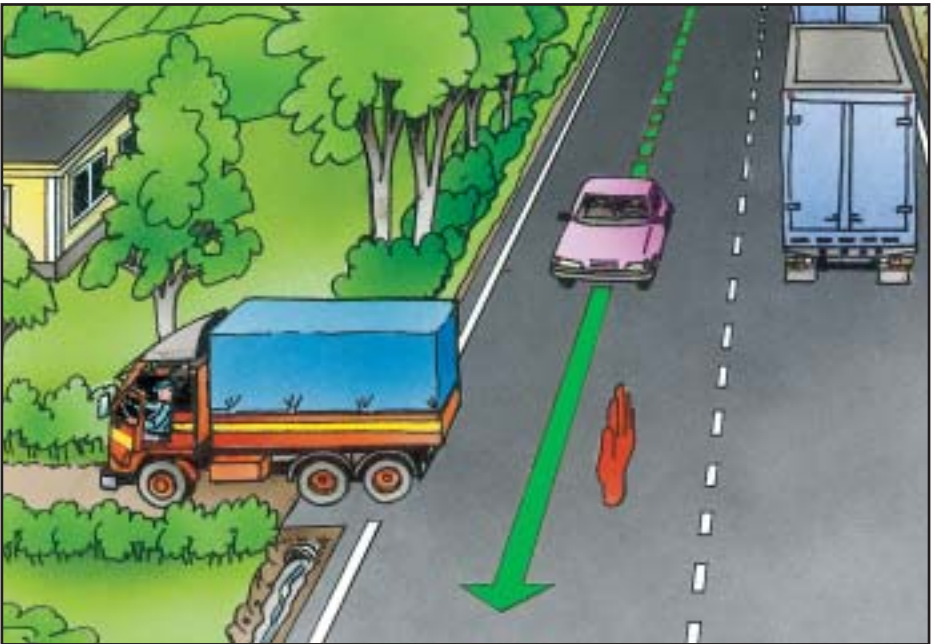
A vehicle turning at a junction must give way to cyclists, moped riders or

pedestrians crossing the intersecting road. At signal-controlled junctions the turning vehicle may have a green light at the same time as a green light is shown for pedestrians. In this case, motorists must let pedestrians and cyclists pass if they are already on the pedestrian crossing.

A vehicle turning left which is pulling up to or already at the junction must give



*When turning left outside a built-up area you should also move over to the right of the carriageway centre line.*



*If you need to reverse, make sure that you do not endanger other traffic.*



way to oncoming traffic. When a left-turning vehicle has a full green light (not an arrow), the turning vehicle must always give way to oncoming traffic. When a left-turning vehicle has a green arrow, the intersecting traffic always has a red light and the left-turning vehicle is free to proceed. The driver should, however, remember to watch out for pedestrians crossing the road.

A vehicle turning left or right may proceed first if the road signs and additional panels indicate that it has priority.

### **Do not block junctions**

At road junctions, motorists must adjust their driving to ensure that traffic on the intersecting or side road will not be inconvenienced if they have to pull up and wait at the junction. If the vehicle cannot be positioned at the junction without inconveniencing other traffic, the driver must wait behind the give way or stop sign for a suitable moment to turn.

### **Give way when joining the road**

Drivers must always give way to other traffic when joining the road from the yard of a building, a residential precinct, parking place, service station, earth track, path or snow-mobile route.

Drivers joining or leaving the road must also remember to give way to any pedestrians, cyclists or moped riders travelling along the edge of the road.

### **Give way to people at crossings and on pavements**

Motorists must give way to pedestrians and cyclists already on a pedestrian crossing, even when turning.

When driving across a pavement, drivers must give free passage to pedestrians.

### **Watch out for buses pulling out from bus stops**

Motorists must give way to buses pulling out from bus stops if the speed limit is 60 km/h or less. Buses pulling out from stops must, by law, use their indicators, but this may not always happen in practice, even on city buses.

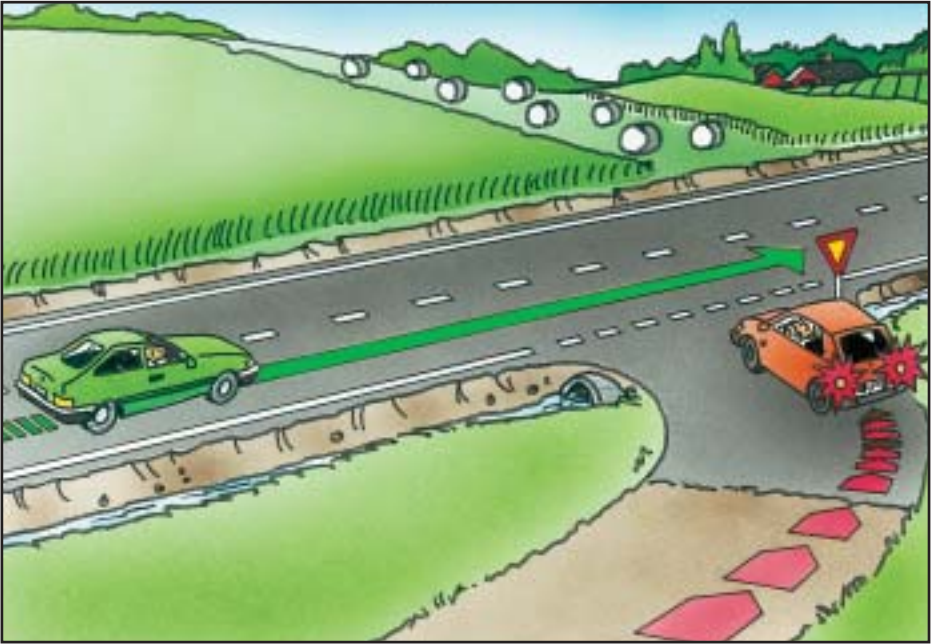
Trams must be given free passage at junctions.

### **Watch out for people at bus and tram stops**

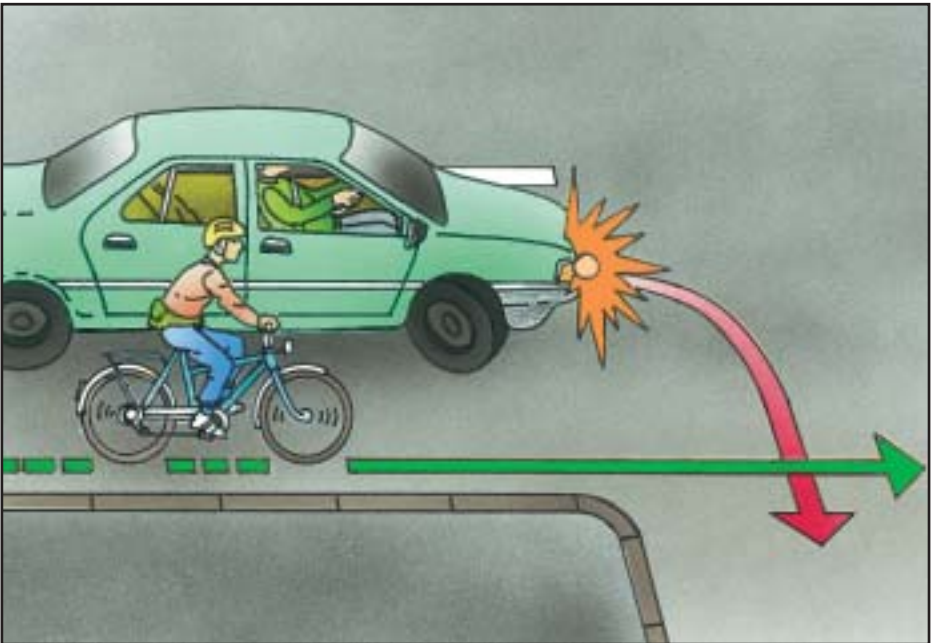
Drivers, moped riders and cyclists must give way to passengers getting on or off buses or trams.

### **Using roundabouts**

All traffic joining a roundabout, from whatever direction, is obliged to give way. The give way priority and obligatory direction of circulation on the roundabout are indicated with road signs. Vehicles entering the roundabout must give way to any vehicles and trams already on the roundabout. Vehicles exiting the roundabout must give way to pedestrians and cyclists crossing the road.



*Make it clear to other traffic that you intend to observe the give way rules. Slow right down or stop the vehicle completely.*



*When turning, give way to cyclists who are continuing forward.*

## Driving in residential precincts

Vehicles may only drive in a residential precinct (indicated as such by a separate road sign) if they need to gain access to a building or parking area next to the road. Driving speed must be adjusted to walking pace and may not exceed 20 km/h. Pedestrians must be given free passage

*Residential precinct*



## Let emergency vehicles and processions pass

Emergency vehicles with their sirens on or lights flashing must always be given free passage. If necessary, you must pull over or stop, even if, for example, the traffic lights are green.

Road users must not interrupt the progress of a military unit, a convoy, a supervised group of children or other organized procession. This does not, however, apply to drivers of emergency vehicles on call out.

## Free passage for trains

Trains must be allowed to pass. When approaching a level crossing you must proceed with special caution and check to see if there is a train approaching, even if any warning equipment does not indicate this. You must not cross the tracks if a train is approaching or if the warning equipment obliges you to stop.

## Watch out for elk, deer and reindeer

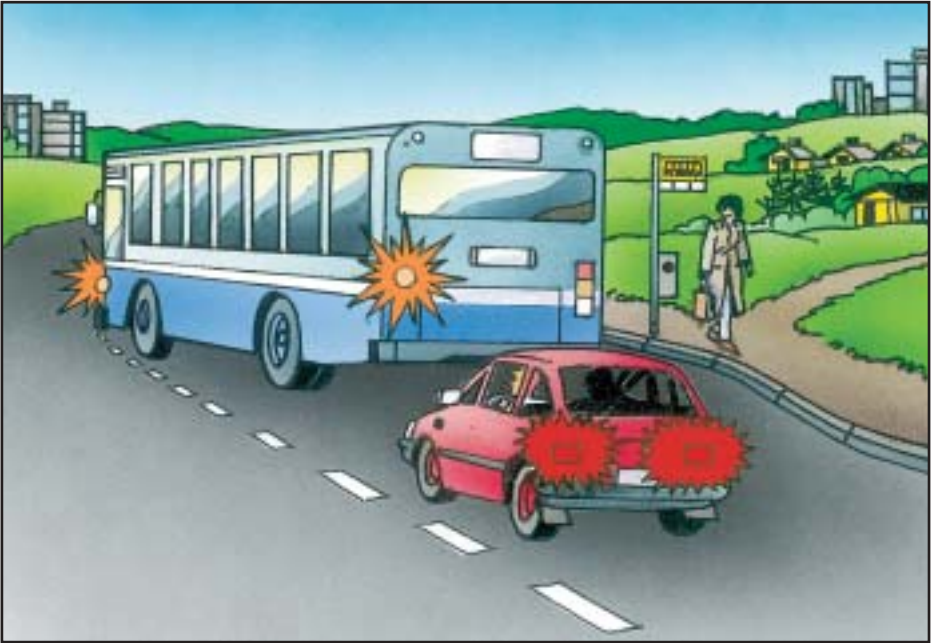
Road signs indicate the most common road-crossing points for elk, deer and, in the north, reindeer. These animals are on the move especially around dawn and dusk. The whole of northern Finland is a reindeer-grazing area. If you see any of these animals on the road, reduce your speed and, if necessary, stop the vehicle. Sounding the horn is not likely to have any effect. If you collide with an elk, deer or reindeer, you are obliged to notify the police.

# Overtaking safely

When overtaking a vehicle travelling in front of you, you must pass it on the left. However, if the other vehicle is intending to turn left, it must be overtaken on the right. You may also pass a vehicle on the right if there are at least two lanes in your direction of travel and the vehicles in these lanes are travelling side by side. You must not increase your speed while being overtaken by another vehicle.

## Stopping at pedestrian crossings

If you are intending to overtake a vehicle or tram and it stops at a pedestrian crossing or conceals the crossing from view, you must also stop at the crossing rather than complete the overtaking manoeuvre, unless there is a traffic island or a free lane between you and the vehicle or tram being overtaken.



*When driving on a road subject to a speed limit of 60 km/h or less, always make way for buses pulling out from bus stops.*



*If another vehicle or a tram has stopped at a pedestrian crossing or conceals the crossing from view, you must not drive over the crossing but must stop in front of it.*

## Overtake trams on the right

As tramlines are usually in the middle of the carriageway, trams are normally overtaken on the right.

A tram may, however, be overtaken on the left if the position of the rails requires this. Trams may also be overtaken on the left in the case of a one-way street. The driver of the overtaking vehicle must remember to watch out for passengers getting off the tram.

## When is overtaking not permitted?

The driver of an overtaking vehicle must ensure he or she can see far enough ahead and has sufficient space to complete the overtaking manoeuvre. Overtaking is prohibited if an oncoming vehicle is already approaching. You should not overtake if this would require the oncoming vehicle to move over. Neither should you overtake if you cannot return to the traffic flow without cutting

in or if a vehicle travelling behind has already begun to overtake you.

A continuous yellow line to the right of the centre line of the road signifies that overtaking is prohibited. Overtaking can also be prohibited by a road sign.

Overtaking is prohibited on the brow of a hill or on a bend and, in built-up areas, at road junctions or on the approach to junctions. Outside built-up areas, overtaking is prohibited at junctions if indicated in advance by a road sign. The prohibition on overtaking does not affect a junction where the side road is a farm road or other minor road.

A vehicle travelling at a slower speed than other vehicles must let others pass wherever possible. In doing so, the slower vehicle may temporarily drive on the verge. Vehicles travelling slowly outside built-up areas must keep sufficient distance from each other to allow an overtaking vehicle to pull in between them without causing any danger.

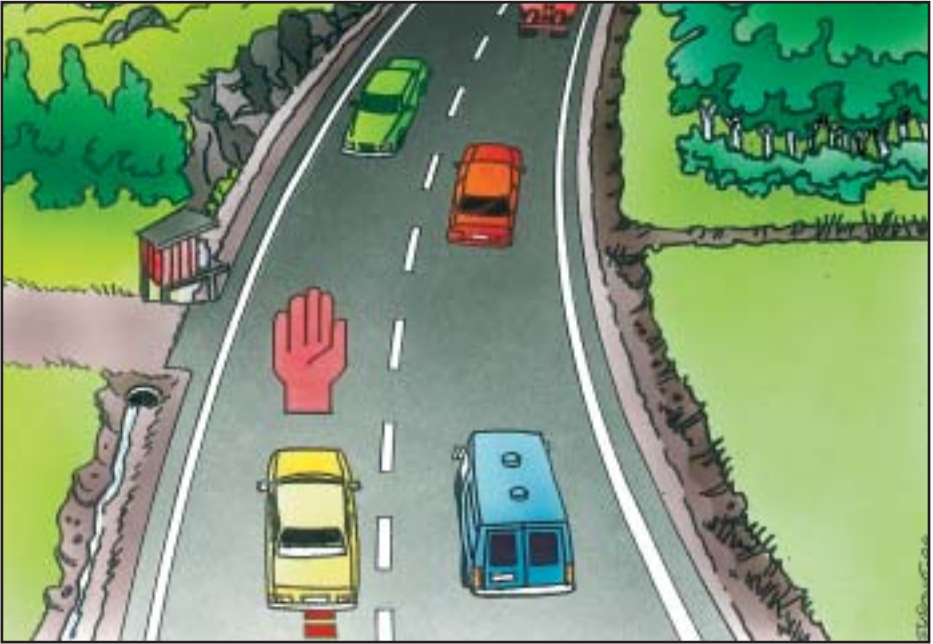
# *Driving on motorways and on roads for motor vehicles*

Only motorized vehicles are allowed on motorways and on roads for motor vehicles, and on their entry ramps. Exceptions to this are mopeds, agricultural vehicles and other motorized vehicles which are subject to a maximum speed of 50 km/h.

You may join a motorway only at its start or from an entry ramp. A driver moving

onto the motorway from the acceleration lane must do so without causing danger or inconvenience to other vehicles. The driver must signal before moving over. Where there is no acceleration lane, the driver must give way to vehicles travelling on the motorway and must wait for a suitable moment to join the motorway.





*Do not overtake if you cannot return to the flow of traffic without cutting in or endangering others.*



*Do not overtake if the vehicle in front intends to overtake or if a vehicle behind you is already overtaking.*

When leaving the motorway you must move over in sufficient time to the lane for exiting traffic. If there is a deceleration lane, you must move into it as early as possible.

On a motorway, you must drive in the free lane which is furthest to the right. After overtaking, you must return to the right-hand lane. If informative road signs (direction signs, lane arrows) show that the traffic lanes lead in certain directions, you may, nevertheless, use the lane appropriate to the circumstances and for the continuation of your journey.

A vehicle travelling in front must be overtaken on the left. Overtaking on the right without changing lanes is, however, permitted in cases where vehicles are in a queue or using pre-selected lanes in accordance with informative road signs, or if the overtaking vehicle is being driven in a bus lane. If there are three lanes or more in the same direction, a lorry or a vehicle combination exceeding

seven metres in length may only be driven in one of the first two right-hand lanes.

### **No turning around or stopping on motorways**

A vehicle may not turn around or reverse on a motorway or on a motorway ramp. Driving is not permitted on the central reservation dividing the carriageways on a motorway, nor are drivers permitted to cross the central reservation.

Vehicles are permitted to stop or park on a motorway only in designated parking places or rest areas. A vehicle may stop at a bus stop only for the purposes of setting down or picking up.

Towing a vehicle with a tow rope or similar device is prohibited on motorways. A vehicle that has broken down on a motorway may, however, be towed as far as the next point of exit.

## ***Parking correctly***

Vehicles may stop or park on the road only on the right-hand side. On a one-way street a vehicle may also stop or park on the left-hand side of the road. The vehicle must be parked in the direction of travel and as far as possible from the middle of the carriageway. So-called echelon parking is prohibited unless permitted by a road sign or road marking. Parking must not inconvenience or endanger other traffic.

Vehicles must not stop or park if a road sign prohibits this. A vehicle may, however, stop for a moment on the pavement or cycle track for the purposes of picking up, setting down, loading or unloading, provided that there are no other suitable stopping places nearby. When opening the vehicle door to get out, you must remember to watch out for other traffic. A vehicle that has stopped must not endanger traffic or unduly inconvenience passers by. If necessary,



the driver must move the vehicle elsewhere.

Parking tickets are issued for parking infringements, the penalty ranging from 10 to 40 euros.

### Stopping and parking are prohibited:

- on a motorway or a road for motor vehicles
- on a pavement, pedestrian crossing or cycle track or within five metres leading up to a crossing or cycle track
- at a road junction and within five metres of it
- before a road junction if continuous lines or lane selection signs or markings divide the carriageway into lanes
- within three metres of a continuous white or yellow line
- near a railway line or tramline if it is close enough to inconvenience the railway or tramway traffic
- if the vehicle would conceal a road sign or a signal which is part of the traffic light arrangements
- in an underpass or tunnel
- on the brow of a hill or a bend in the road
- at a paid parking place without paying.

### Parking is further prohibited:

- on the access road or at the gateway to a building if it would hamper vehicular access to the property
- adjacent to another vehicle on the carriageway
- if it would prevent another vehicle from being driven away

- on the carriageway outside a built-up area if the road is shown with road signs to be a priority road
- outside the edge-markings of a parking space
- within thirty metres of a level crossing.



### Parking restriction signs

Mondays to Fridays

**8 – 17**

Saturdays only

**(8 – 13)**

Sundays and holidays

**8 – 14**

Time limit

**30 min**

*Paid parking on Mon-Fri  
9 a.m.-7 p.m.  
(Sat 9 a.m.-6 p.m.)  
applies to all except  
holders of residential  
parking permits.  
Parking is for a  
maximum of 1 hour.  
At other times  
parking is unlimited  
and free of charge.*



*Paid parking on Mon-Fri  
9 a.m.-7 p.m.  
(Sat 9 a.m.-6p.m.)  
applies to all.  
Parking is for a  
maximum of two hours.  
The arrow points to the  
direction of the ticket  
machine.*



## Use of parking discs

In some built-up areas parking is not permitted without a parking disc. The need for a parking disc is always displayed on a separate sign, which also indicates the maximum time allowed for parking. The parking disc is placed in the window of the vehicle and marked with the time of arrival.

It is not necessary to use a parking disc in a paid parking space. Paid parking spaces are indicated by a separate sign.

Parking discs are sold at car accessory stores and at service stations. A foreign parking disc is also valid in Finland if it has a blue background and is in line with European recommendations.

*Obligatory use of parking disc*



*Obligatory use of parking disc*



*Paid parking*



*Paid parking*



## Disabled parking permits

The police are authorized to grant a parking permit for a severely disabled person or for the transport of a severely disabled person. If the vehicle parking permit incorporates an international disabled person's badge, the vehicle may be parked in an area where parking is otherwise prohibited by road signs, and in a paid parking space free of charge. The parking permit must be displayed prominently inside the windscreen for the duration of the parking.

# Winter driving

## Adapt your driving to winter conditions

Winter conditions require a different kind of driving. Your vehicle may leave the road if your speed is too high, you brake suddenly, you accelerate too rapidly or you do not turn the steering wheel smoothly. The general 80 km/h speed limit may be too high in poor weather conditions.

In slippery winter conditions, overtaking requires special care. Sudden changes of

direction or acceleration must be avoided. When overtaking, snow or ice that has accumulated in the middle of the road may lead to loss of control of the vehicle.

## Watch out for black ice

Water freezing on the road surface in winter is not always visible when driving. Black ice can form especially in hollows and under bridges. Even studded tyres



*Park as shown in the picture, unless road signs indicate otherwise. You may stop at a bus stop only for picking up or setting down passengers.*



*In Finland there are separate winter speed restrictions designed to reduce driving speeds. You must not exceed the speed limit, whatever the hurry. The possible time saving is small in relation to the increased accident risk in slippery conditions.*

may fail to grip the road when there is black ice. In southern Finland it is typical to find temperatures around freezing point, with wet slushy snow on the road. Tyres lose their grip very easily in such conditions.

In deep snow, moving off can also be difficult. You should remove all excess snow from in front of the wheels and use the accelerator pedal with caution.

## Longer braking distance

In slippery conditions your braking distance will be considerably longer. The stopping distance for an articulated lorry or a bus may be up to several hundred metres. In winter, you should keep sufficient distance from the vehicle in front to avoid the danger of collision if it should suddenly stop.

In slippery conditions it can be particularly dangerous to brake on a bend. You must reduce your speed before the bend by easing off the accelerator pedal. If the vehicle begins to slide, you should disengage the clutch instead of applying the brakes.

## Winter tyres compulsory

In Finland all cars, vans and their trailers equipped with brakes must use **winter tyres** in December, January and February. At other times, the use of winter tyres is optional. Foreign-registered cars and vans must also use winter tyres (or all-season tyres) in Finland. The tread groove of winter tyres must be at least 3 millimetres. Winter tyres do not have to be studded tyres.

**Studded winter tyres** may be used between the beginning of November and the end

of March (or the Monday following Easter Monday if this is later than the end of March). At other times, they may be used if the weather conditions so require. The period during which studded winter tyres may be used is restricted because they wear down the road surface.

**Snow chains** may be used on winter tyres provided that they do not produce excessive wear on the road surface. In practice, snow chains are rarely used in Finland.

## Regulations on tyres in Finland

**During the time of compulsory use of winter tyres the allowed tyre types are: winter tyres, tyres intended for all-season use and studded winter tyres.**

### Winter tyres (or tyres intended for all-season use)

Compulsory from 1 December to 28 February.

Winter tyres without studs may be used throughout the year.

Minimum tread groove 3 mm.

### Studded winter tyres

May be used from 1 November to 31 March or the Monday following Easter Monday if this is later than the end of March.

However, the time period may be extended according to weather conditions.

### Summer tyres

May be used from 1 March to 30 November.

Minimum tread groove 1.6 mm.



## Preparing a vehicle for winter conditions

It is essential to take into account the impact of sub-zero conditions on the operation of your vehicle. The vehicle's cooling system may freeze up if no anti-freeze agent has been added to the coolant. The engine would overheat and eventually seize. Special anti-freeze agent is also needed for braking systems and for the windscreen washer. You should also check the engine oil to see that the level is sufficient and that it can withstand the cold.

The condition of winter tyres and the correct tyre pressures are particularly important. You should also check that the interior heater works properly and that the headlights are correctly adjusted. The windscreen should also be cleaned regularly to make sure that you are not dazzled by oncoming headlights at night. The battery should also be checked. A battery in poor condition will not be able to start the engine in extreme cold.

Winter accessories for a car also include an ice scraper, lock de-icer, snow shovel, tow rope and jump leads.

The winter condition of your car can be checked at a vehicle inspection station.

# *Learn to drive economically*

Driving economically helps protect the environment and reduces your fuel costs. Fuel consumption is at its lowest when the vehicle is driven smoothly and in the highest possible gear. Acceleration at full throttle should be avoided. Nor should the vehicle be left idling when stationary, but instead driven off as soon as possible after starting the engine.

Savings can also be made in fuel costs if tyre pressures are kept at the appropriate levels and unnecessary use of roof racks and ski boxes is avoided. You should also consider using an engine-block heater to warm up the engine in winter time.

## *Vehicle regulations*

### **Tyres**

Vehicles must have the correct tyres for their overall weight. Summer tyres for a car are required to have a minimum tread groove of 1.6 millimetres, and winter tyres 3 millimetres. Tyres with exposed ply or cord must not be used. Neither is it permitted to use a mixture of studded and other tyres.

The air pressure for a car tyre must not be less than 20 per cent below the recommendation of the tyre or vehicle manufacturer for the particular vehicle load, unless there is a special reason for this.

Tyres which are unbalanced and may therefore disturb steering must not be used on the front wheels of a car. Unbalanced front wheels will result in shaking of the steering wheel at certain speeds.

### **Carrying passengers and luggage/goods**

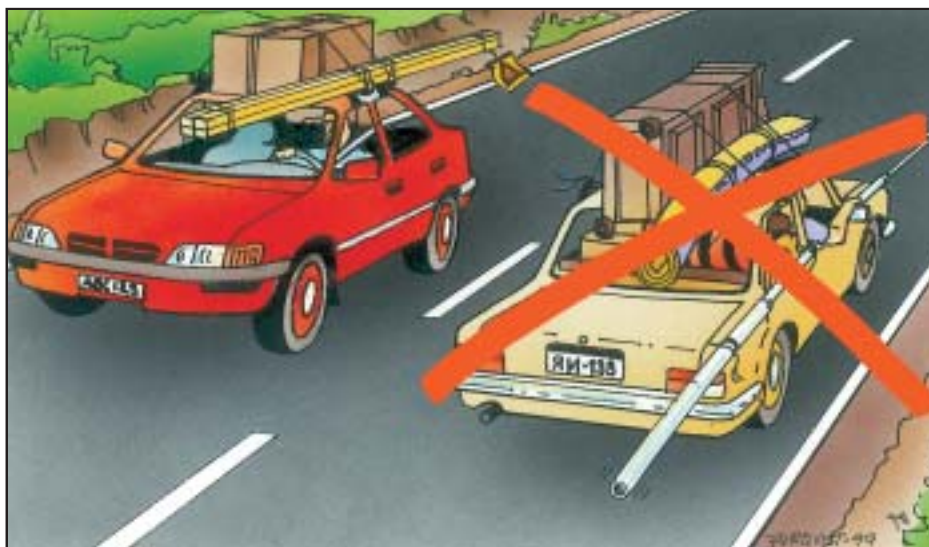
Passengers and luggage/goods must be positioned so that they do not obstruct the driver's view or hamper the handling of the vehicle. Lights, reflectors or panels fitted to the vehicle by law must not be covered. In a car, luggage/goods must primarily be carried in the luggage space. Sudden braking would otherwise cause unsecured objects inside the car to be a danger to passengers.

The maximum number of people in a vehicle at any one time in addition to the driver is specified on the vehicle registration document. In a car, the number of people permitted including the driver can be exceeded temporarily by 30 per cent.

### **Loading a vehicle**

Luggage/goods can be conveyed on the roof of a car if their weight is no more





*A load carried by a vehicle must not project sideways beyond the body of the vehicle. The extremities of the load must be clearly marked with a red or red-and-yellow flag.*

than 10 per cent of that of the car. The vehicle manufacturer may specify a lower figure than this.

A load carried by a vehicle must not project sideways beyond the body of vehicle or its stowage space. Neither must the vehicle with its load exceed the permitted height for it on the road.

The load may project no more than one metre in front of the vehicle and two metres behind it, in relation to the extremities of the vehicle. The outermost part of the load must be clearly marked with a red or red-and-yellow flag. In the dark or in poor visibility, a white light and a white reflector must be positioned at the front of the load and a red light and red reflector at the rear.

The load must be made into a uniform unit and its height minimized. The centre of gravity of the load must be as low as possible and as close as possible to the centre of the vehicle lengthways. Where

possible, the load must be supported against the leading edge of the loading space. Any sharp edges in the load must face towards the rear.

The load must be secured so that it cannot shift around in the loading space and thus endanger traffic safety. The load must be properly secured in place. It must also be protected with a tarpaulin if it would be dusty or liable to be shed on the road with the effect of the air turbulence.

It is generally not permitted to carry people on the back of a lorry or in the stowage space of a van.

### **Towing a caravan or trailer**

A caravan or trailer towed by a car or van must not exceed the maximum permitted weight of 750 kg if it is not fitted with brakes, or 3,500 kg if it is a centre-axle caravan or trailer equipped with brakes,



provided these limits are in keeping with the weight limits specified by the vehicle manufacturer.

The towing vehicle should have mirrors on both sides.

The caravan or trailer equipped with brakes must be fitted with winter tyres during December, January and February, and with studded winter tyres if the towing vehicle has studded winter tyres. The tread groove of winter tyres must be at least 3.0 mm.

## *Enforcement and penalties*

### **Vehicles are subject to inspection**

Vehicles must stop if signalled to do so by a police officer. Drivers are obliged to comply with any orders issued by a police officer regarding inspection of the vehicle's condition, its equipment and its load and to permit the vehicle's roadworthiness to be inspected.

Officials of the Finnish Road Administration whose work it is to supervise vehicle dimensions, weights and loading have the same authority as the police in these official duties. Customs and frontier guard staff supervising traffic are also vested with the same authority.

### **Presentation of documents**

When required to do so, the driver of a vehicle must present the police with his/her driving licence, vehicle registration document or other documents that drivers are obliged to carry.

If it is not possible to present the driving licence, the police can nevertheless allow the driver to continue on his/her way provided that the driver's identity and entitlement to drive can be proven. The

driver may, however, be requested to present his/her driving licence or registration document to the police within a given period.

### **Preventing further use of the vehicle**

A police officer can prevent the further use of a vehicle in traffic by confiscating the number plates and the registration document or by other necessary measures. This can be done if the structure, equipment or condition of the vehicle do not meet legal requirements or the vehicle has not been appropriately inspected or registered.

The police will not necessarily prohibit the use of the vehicle if its defects do not present an immediate threat to traffic safety. The police may in this case specify a time within which the defects must be rectified. The vehicle can also be ordered for inspection.

The police can also intervene if a vehicle has a defective load. They can order an overloaded vehicle to be unloaded, a defective load to be corrected or, if necessary, can prevent the vehicle from being driven further. A police officer can

also prohibit any further progress if the vehicle is carrying too many passengers.

## Traffic offences are registered

In Finland all traffic offences are registered. If the driver receives three fines for traffic offences within one year or four fines within two years, he or she will be disqualified from driving in Finland.

A serious or repeated traffic offence or unpaid fines, as well as a driving ban, can lead to the application for a new visa being denied.

## Fines for speeding

The fine for exceeding the speed limit is 100-115 euros for excess speeds of up to 20 km/h. For a minor traffic offence the fine is a maximum of 50 euros.

For serious speeding offences and for other traffic offences the fine is determined according to the driver's income. Fines are calculated on the basis of net monthly income using taxation data for the previous year.

A police officer can also confiscate the driver's licence immediately, in which case the driver can no longer continue to drive the vehicle. A foreign driver will be given back the licence only on leaving the country. Seriously endangering traffic safety is reported as a crime.

Fines are paid through a bank using the payment slip issued by the police.

# Traffic accidents

## Obligation to stop and help

All vehicle drivers have an obligation to help anyone involved in a traffic accident and to transport any casualties to a place where they can receive treatment, or to help in arranging transport, wherever this is necessary.

If the accident vehicles are blocking the carriageway, other traffic should be warned of this. In other cases, too, where the driver sees some object on the road endangering traffic safety, it must be clearly marked, removed or reported to the police.

A driver involved in an accident is obliged to provide his/her personal and motor insurance details to the authorities and the other parties in the accident.

## Emergency number 112

You should telephone the nationwide emergency number 112 if you need to contact the police, ambulance service, medical assistance or the fire brigade. The police can



also be contacted directly at 100 22. These numbers are free of charge, even from call boxes.

## Accidents must be reported

Traffic accidents must be reported to the police if:

- a serious personal injury has occurred
- traffic control equipment has been damaged
- an accident has occurred involving an elk, reindeer or other big animal
- the property of a third party, such as a parked vehicle, has been damaged and the owner cannot be contacted.

## Leave evidence untouched at the scene of an accident

The scene of an accident must be left untouched if there has been a fatality or if someone has been seriously injured in the accident. The vehicle may thus not be moved or circumstances changed which may be important in investigating the accident. People and valuable property may nevertheless be protected from harm. The engines of vehicles involved in a collision must be switched off if they have been left running.

## Broken-down vehicles must be removed from the road

Road users involved in an accident must move the vehicles as soon as possible to a suitable place if the vehicles are in an area where stopping or parking is prohibited (e.g. on a motorway). This same obligation also applies to drivers

whose vehicle has broken down due to an engine fault or similar.

If a vehicle that has broken down on a main road cannot be removed immediately, a reflective warning triangle must be placed behind it at a distance of 150-250 metres. At night or in poor daylight conditions, the parking lights must be left on. If the vehicle has ended up on a railway line or tramlines, the driver must take measures to warn train or tram traffic.

If a vehicle is towed with a rope, cable or rod, the maximum permitted speed is 60 km/h and the spacing between the vehicles should be 3-6 metres. The mid-point of the tow rope or rod must have a clearly visible flag. Towing a vehicle with a tow rope or cable is prohibited on motorways. A vehicle may be towed in this way as far as the next exit point. Information on towing services can be obtained from car repair shops, service stations and the telephone directory under *Hinausautoja* (Towing services).

## Traffic control equipment and fixtures not to be removed

Traffic control equipment and fixtures (road signs, traffic lights, road markings, etc.) must not be damaged, covered or moved. If a motorist damages traffic control equipment or fixtures, this must be reported to the police or other appropriate authorities, and if necessary, measures should be taken to ensure traffic safety.

Traffic control equipment may not be placed on the road without the permission of the authorities. The police or the road maintaining authority will remove any road signs, panels, etc. which are contrary to the rules and regulations.



*All drivers are obliged to stop and help any casualties in a traffic accident, if necessary. The police and ambulance services can be contacted on the general emergency number 112.*



*If a vehicle has stopped on a carriageway outside a built-up area where it may endanger other traffic, the driver must place a warning triangle on the road or otherwise warn other road users. The warning triangle is placed at a distance of about 150-250 metres.*

# Motorcycles and mopeds

The same traffic rules apply to motorcycles as to cars. The traffic rules for mopeds (maximum speed 45 km/h) largely correspond to the rules for cyclists. Motorcycles are ridden on the carriageway, whereas mopeds are ridden on the verge, provided that there is a suitable verge on the right-hand side of the road. For this reason a moped rider may overtake vehicles on the right, other than cyclists or other moped riders.

A moped may also be ridden on a cycle track if there is a sign indicating that mopeds are allowed. In joining the carriageway from a cycle track, moped riders must always give way to other traffic.

A moped may also be stopped and parked on the pavement or on a cycle track.

## Helmets compulsory

Motorcycle, snowmobile, moped and bicycle riders and any passenger must use an approved type of helmet when riding, unless prevented from doing so by an illness, injury or other special reason.

## Driving licence needed for motorcycle

To drive a motorcycle in Finland you must have the appropriate designation on your driving licence for the particular category of motorcycle in question. Entitlement to drive a motorcycle is shown by the designation A1 or A.

## Moped licence

Moped licence is obligatory for drivers born in 1985 or later, who do not have a driving licence with the designation A1, A or B. The licence concerns two and three-wheeled mopeds with a maximum permitted speed of 45 km/h and an engine with a maximum capacity of 50 cm<sup>3</sup>. The moped licence requires a rider examination to be taken, although this does not require a compulsory riding or theory course. The necessary information is obtainable by self-directed learning or attending a voluntary course. The minimum age for riding a moped is 15 years.

Traffic rules for mopeds are on the Internet at [www.liikenneturva.fi](http://www.liikenneturva.fi)

A bicycle is a vehicle, and so there are traffic rules that apply to it by law. Cyclists must comply with road signs and traffic lights, they must indicate with a direction signal that they are turning, and they must use lights when cycling in the dark. Bicycles must be fitted with a red rear reflector. Using a proper helmet is obligatory.

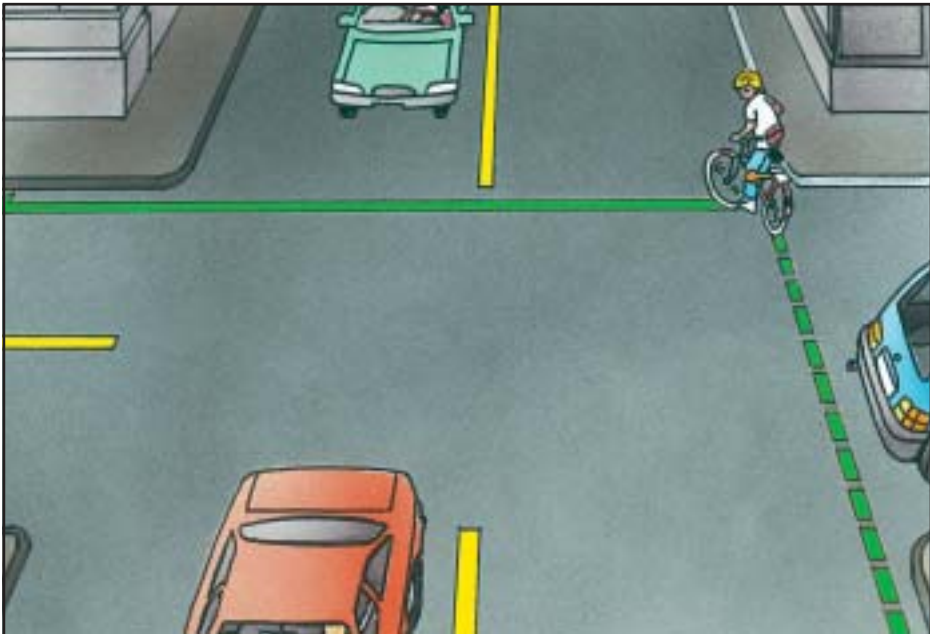
## Use of cycle tracks

Cyclists must keep to cycle tracks wherever such tracks exist in the direction they are travelling. Otherwise, cyclists must use the edge of the carriageway or the verge, if a suitable

verge exists on the right-hand side of the road.

On cycle tracks, cyclists must keep to the right. On unsegregated cycle and pedestrian paths and on pavements, cyclists should keep to the right. If the path is divided into one section for pedestrians and one for cyclists, the pedestrians and cyclists using the path should each keep to the right-hand side of their section. Road signs and road markings will indicate which section is for cyclists.

Children under the age of 12 may cycle on the pavement, provided that they do not cause unreasonable nuisance to pedestrians.



*When making a left turn at a road junction, it is safest for cyclists to proceed as shown in the picture. Cyclists should first stop and check that no traffic is approaching.*

## Using crossings

If a crossing is an extension of a cycle track, cyclists may use it without dismounting. In other cases cyclists must dismount when crossing; this also applies to children cycling on the pavement and then using the pedestrian crossing.

## Give way rules for cyclists

In Finland cyclists are obliged to give way under certain conditions. All cyclists should check the give way rules for the cycle routes that they use and should also explain these rules to their children.

The most important basic rule is that

when joining the carriageway from a cycle track, the cyclist must always give way to other traffic, both from the left and the right.

A turning car, on the other hand, must always give way to a cyclist crossing the intersecting road. At a road junction, motorists must also give way to cyclists when obliged to do so by a road sign.

When riding on the carriageway in the absence of a cycle track, cyclists must observe the same traffic rules as cars.

The give way rules for cyclists are fully illustrated on the Central Organization for Traffic Safety in Finland's web site at [www.liikenneturva.fi](http://www.liikenneturva.fi).

# *Pedestrians and roller skaters*

## Use of pavements

Pedestrians must primarily use the pavement or verge. On pavements with shared use by pedestrians and cyclists, pedestrians can either keep to the right or the left. On the carriageway, pedestrians should follow the left-hand edge for their own safety. When wheeling a bicycle or moped, the right-hand edge may, however, be used.

## Observe the traffic signals

Pedestrians must cross the carriageway using pedestrian crossing points, if they are close at hand. Otherwise, when safe to do so, pedestrians should walk straight across the carriageway, normally close to a junction. Pedestrians may be required

to pay a fine if they use a pedestrian crossing when the light is red.

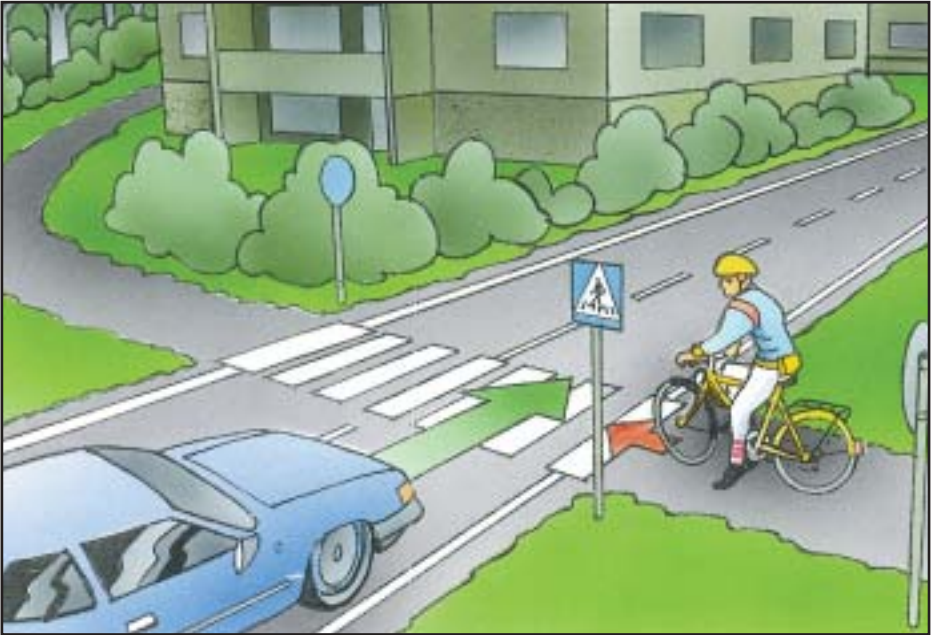
A pedestrian stepping onto a crossing or otherwise onto the carriageway must watch out for approaching vehicles and pay particular attention to their distance and speed. He or she must cross the carriageway without undue delay. The carriageway here is taken to include any cycle track or tramway route.

Anyone already on a pedestrian crossing has priority. You should nevertheless remember to watch out especially for vehicles which are approaching.

## Use a reflector at night

A pedestrian in build-up or rural area must use a reflector at night.





*When joining the carriageway from a cycle track, the cyclist must always give way to other traffic, both from the left and the right.*



*Anyone already on a pedestrian crossing has priority. You should nevertheless remember to watch out especially for vehicles which are approaching.*

## Roller skaters are pedestrians

In Finland, roller skaters must observe the rules for pedestrians. Roller skating on the pavement must not cause any significant inconvenience to other pedestrians. Use of a helmet and protectors is recommended for roller skaters. Using a helmet could prevent most roller-skating head and brain injuries.

## Vehicles used by disabled people

The rules for pedestrians also apply to wheelchair users. They also apply to disabled persons travelling at walking speed using manually operated or powered invalid vehicles with a speed of up to 15 km/h. Otherwise he or she must observe the rules for cyclists.

## Horseriding

Horseriders and drivers of horse-drawn vehicles must observe the same traffic rules that apply to cars. Horseriders cannot use cycle tracks or pavements.

# *Foreign driving licences*

## Entitlement to drive in Finland

In Finland, a motorized vehicle can be driven by anyone with the appropriate designation on their driving licence for the vehicle in question. The driver must also be at least 18 years old. A moped rider must be at least 15 years old.

Entitlement to drive begins once the driving licence or the certificate for completing the driving test has been obtained from the police or the testing authority. Anyone with a full or temporary driving disqualification is not entitled to drive; entitlement to drive will recommence only when the authorities return the driving licence. Conviction for alcohol or drug dependency or any further traffic offences can prevent the return of a driving licence.

## Driving licences of other EU countries and the Nordic countries

Driving licences of other European Union countries and the Nordic countries are valid in Finland without the need for any further action. The validity of a driving licence may, however, be limited if the licence has been obtained by exchanging a licence originally issued by a third country which would not otherwise be approved in Finland.

If a driver takes up permanent residence in Finland, he or she must exchange his/her driving licence for a Finnish licence. This must be done before the validity of the foreign licence expires. It is not necessary to take a new driver examination. The entitlement of a driving-licence holder residing permanently in Finland to drive a bus or a heavy vehicle combination (C1E and CE) ceases at the age of 70.

## Driving licences of signatory countries to the Vienna and Geneva Road Traffic Conventions

Other foreign driving licences issued in a signatory country to the Vienna or Geneva Road Traffic Conventions entitle the licence holder to drive in Finland for one year following the date of arrival, provided the licence holder was residing permanently in that country when he or she received the driving licence. These signatory countries comprise most of the European countries, the United States and a number of African countries.

The holder of a licence issued by a signatory country can obtain a Finnish class B driving licence without having to take a new driver examination. The condition for doing so is that the licence holder resides permanently in Finland, has been driving a car here for six months and fulfils the prescribed health requirements. An application for a driving licence must be submitted to the police within 18 months of arriving in Finland. If the licence is not applied for within this time, the applicant will be required to take a new driver examination. Other driving licences (e.g. a goods vehicle licence) also require a driver examination.

A Finnish driving licence may be denied on the grounds of traffic offences or the driver's health (e.g. alcohol or drug dependency). When processing driving licence applications, the police check whether or not the driver has, for example, ever been taken into custody for being intoxicated or convicted of drunken driving. The applicant may then be required to present a medical statement from a specialist physician.

## Other driving licences

Driving licences not issued in any of the signatory countries do not give entitlement to drive in Finland. On application, however, the police may grant a provisional driving licence for a maximum of one year without the need for a driver examination. After this, the Finnish driver examination must be taken.

# *Vehicle registration*

## Foreign-registered vehicles in Finland

Persons residing permanently in a signatory country to the Geneva or Vienna Road Traffic Conventions may drive a vehicle registered in a signatory country

in Finland **temporarily for one year** from their date of arrival. For vehicles registered in other countries, an equivalent one-year licence can be obtained from the Finnish Vehicle Administration.

A person permanently resident in Finland **is only allowed to drive** a car registered abroad and brought temporarily to Finland if the car's owner or his/her family member is present in the car. A heavy vehicle registered abroad may not be driven in Finland at all by a permanent resident of Finland.

## Registering a vehicle in Finland

**A vehicle used permanently in traffic in Finland** must be registered in Finland. Registration notices can be submitted via vehicle inspection stations, car dealers and insurance and finance companies, among others, and number plates and registration documents obtained through them. Registration notices can also be submitted via post offices.

**New vehicles imported into Finland** are generally notified to the Finnish Vehicle Administration in advance. When a vehicle is transferred to a buyer, it is registered in his/her name. For this

purpose the buyer must complete a registration notice within seven days. Registration of a new car is made on the notification section of the prior notification certificate. Number plates may be attached only when the registration notice has been submitted.

Before a new vehicle is registered, the duties and other payments concerning its import must be paid in full. Motor insurance must also be taken out for the vehicle. All new cars must be EU-approved models. Other vehicles must comply with the appropriate technical requirements valid in Finland. Removal vans are permitted to deviate in a few ways from these requirements.

**Registration of a used car**, for instance following a change of owner, is made using the notification section of the registration document.

# *Motor insurance and vehicle inspection*

## Motor insurance is obligatory

In Finland, motor insurance is obligatory for all motor vehicles. For vehicles from EEA (European Economic Area) countries, number plates are sufficient proof of motor insurance. Other foreign vehicles must have an international green card (certificate of motor insurance) or frontier insurance. Fixed-term frontier insurance can be purchased from Finnish

customs offices. Foreign cars must also display a national identification mark.

A green card or frontier insurance will indemnify for any loss or damage to persons or property incurred by the opposing party, as well as any loss or damage to passengers in the insured's own vehicle. The insurance does not, however, cover damage to the insured's own vehicle. Neither does the green card

cover personal injury to the driver of the vehicle if he or she is the guilty party. Frontier insurance, however, covers any personal injury to the driver who caused the accident.

The insurance does not cover loss or damage caused by the driver of a stolen vehicle or an intoxicated driver.

For motor insurance losses caused by foreign vehicles, indemnity is applied for from the Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre and Green Card Bureau. If the party causing the loss was driving a Finnish vehicle, however, the loss is notified directly to the insurance company of the vehicle in question.

**If a new car is being taken from one country to another via Finland**, it must have Finnish motor insurance and be fitted with transfer plates. Motor insurance and transfer plates can be obtained from customs offices, vehicle inspection stations or the Vehicle Administration. A green card granted in another country is thus not sufficient.

Transfer plates must be clearly visible on the vehicle.

## Vehicles tested annually

The day and month of **first registration of a vehicle** as shown in the vehicle registration document will determine the timing of subsequent vehicle inspections. Inspections must be made annually during the four months preceding this date, and at the latest on the date itself.

A private car, van or special-purpose vehicle of up to 3,500 kg must have its first inspection within three years of the vehicle's date of first registration. Cars must be inspected a second time within

five years of the date of first registration and, subsequently, on an annual basis at the latest on the date of first registration. Vans and special-purpose vehicles must be inspected annually following the first inspection.

If the date of first registration of the vehicle is not shown on the registration document, the date for inspection is determined on the basis of the last figure of the registration number. The vehicle's date of inspection is specified as the last day of the month in accordance with the following table.

### Last figure of registration number Month of first registration

1 January	6 August
2 February	7 September
3 March	8 October
4 April	9 November
5 June	0 December

The inspection date can expire if the vehicle is off the road or abroad. In this case, the vehicle must be inspected at the latest within one month of the date of taking it into use or of the vehicle entering Finland. If the vehicle fails in the inspection, it must be repaired immediately and brought for a follow-up inspection within two months.

Details of the vehicle inspection stations in different localities can be found in the telephone directory. Further information is also available on the Internet at [www.ake.fi](http://www.ake.fi).

## Exhaust emissions tested

A vehicle's exhaust gas emissions are assessed during the inspection. Exhaust testing is carried out on petrol-driven vehicles first registered in 1978 or later and on diesel vehicles first registered in 1980 or later. Petrol-driven vehicles are

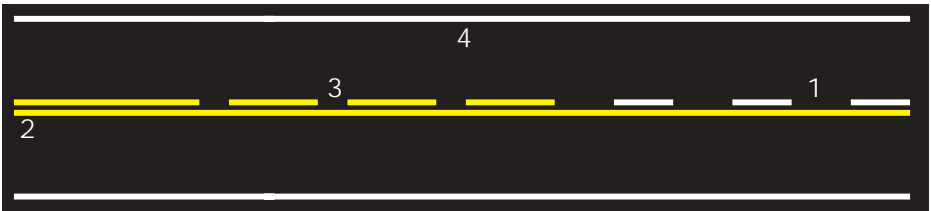
checked for carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions, and vehicles fitted with catalytic converters are also checked for the lambda value, which is the fuel-air ratio in the combustion mixture. Diesel vehicles are subjected to a smoke test.

## Road signs

A brochure showing Finnish road signs can be obtained from the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Road signs can also be viewed on the Internet at [www.tiehallinto.fi/liikennemerkki/merkit\\_englanti.pdf](http://www.tiehallinto.fi/liikennemerkki/merkit_englanti.pdf)

## Road markings



- 1 Centre line
- 2 Yellow continuous line
- 3 Warning line
- 4 Edge line



Chequered marking for road humps and superelevated pedestrian crossings.



Bus stop; stopping and parking prohibited



Marked island



# Further information

## **Ministry of Transport and Communications**

P.O. Box 31 (Eteläesplanadi 16-18)

FI-00023 Government

Tel. +358 9 16002

[www.mintc.fi](http://www.mintc.fi)

[info@mintc.fi](mailto:info@mintc.fi)

## **Ajoneuvohallintokeskus AKE**

### **Finnish Vehicle Administration**

P.O. Box 120 (Fabianinkatu 32)

FI-00101 Helsinki

Registration advice, tel. +358 100 7830

Driving licence advice, tel. +358 100

7840

[www.ake.fi](http://www.ake.fi)

## **Tiehallinto**

### **Finnish Road Administration**

P.O.Box 33 (Opastinsilta 12 A)

FI-00521 Helsinki

Tel. +358 204 2211

[www.tiehallinto.fi](http://www.tiehallinto.fi)

## **Suomen Autokoululiitto**

### **Finnish Driving School Association**

Ratamestarinkatu 11

FI-00520 Helsinki

Tel. +358 9 4542 3034

[www.autokoululiitto.fi](http://www.autokoululiitto.fi)

## **Liikennevakuutuskeskus**

### **Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre**

Bulevardi 28

FI-00120 Helsinki

Tel. +358 9 680 401/traffic accidents

## **Liikenneturva**

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[www.liikenneturva.fi](http://www.liikenneturva.fi)

## **Sisäasiainministeriön poliisiosasto**

### **Ministry of the Interior, Police Department**

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