

How good is your eyesight?



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Good eyesight is essential for safe driving. If you can't see properly, then you can't drive safely. Statistics show that one driver in 14 have an eyesight problem that may affect their driving. If you think your eyesight may not be as good as it used to be, then make an appointment to see your doctor or optometrist and get it checked now. Don't wait until it's checked when you renew your driver licence.

How does your vision affect your driving?

Distance vision: You have to be able to see clearly to drive safely. Even the simplest reactions can take 0.4 seconds. If your distance vision is poor, you may not see hazards until it's too late to react safely. The faster you travel, the less time you have to see things and react to them. Poor distance vision and excessive speed can have disastrous results. Keep your windscreen and glasses free of dust and scratches, as this can greatly reduce your vision on bright days and at night.

Field of vision: The ability to see both sides of the road is important. You need to be able to see cross traffic, pedestrians, and animals at the roadside, without having to look away from the road ahead. Make the best use of your side and rear view mirrors, and keep them adjusted correctly.

Depth perception: You need to be able to judge distances well to pass other vehicles and change lanes, especially in busy traffic. If you've recently lost the use of one eye you need to take extra care. You might need to stop driving for a while, until your vision has adjusted.

Accommodation (near vision focusing): When you're driving, you need to look from the road to the dashboard and back again quite often. This ability to change focus from far to near is called accommodation or near vision focusing. Over the age of 45, most people have increasing difficulty with near vision, and may need glasses to see the dashboard instruments clearly.

Night vision: You need to be able to see in low and variable light conditions, and recover quickly from the glare of oncoming headlights. Glare recovery is best in drivers under the age of 30, and night vision can deteriorate after the age of 40. Eyes are much slower to adapt to night-time light levels after they've been exposed to bright light. Being outside in the sun for only a few hours can slow the dark adaptation process, so you might not have your normal night vision for several hours after dark. You can avoid this temporary loss of night vision by wearing sunglasses during the day. Some people find their night vision has deteriorated and they can't drive safely at night at all. It's possible to get a licence that allows you to drive in daylight only.

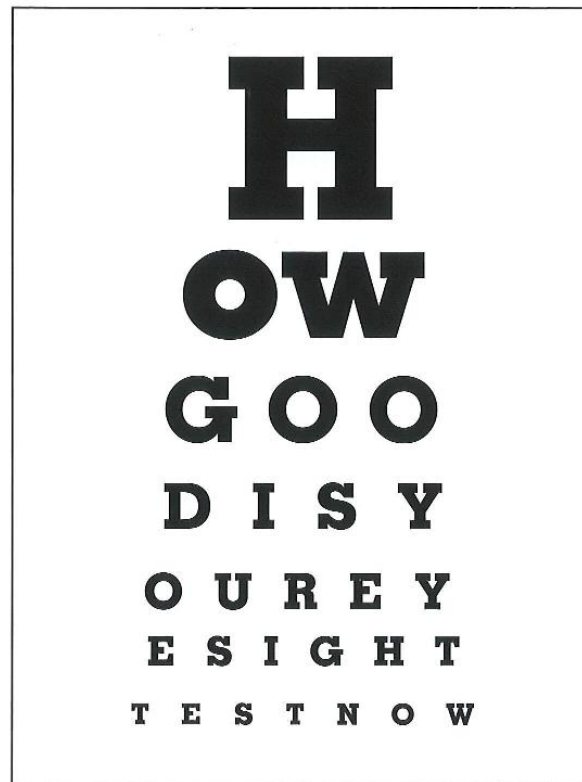
Colour vision: Colour plays an important part in road safety. Drivers must instantly recognise traffic lights, indicator signs, hazard warning lights and stop lights, and people with colour vision defects may react slower to them. Medium or dark blue sunglasses can seriously interfere with some people's ability to distinguish traffic light colours.

Safety recommendations:

- Keep windscreens, glasses, sunglasses and lights clean.
- Frequently look in your rear vision mirrors and scan the verges of the road while you're driving.
- Keep your speed down to the conditions.
- Use your sun visor on bright days and consider having a pair of tinted glasses made to your prescription.
- Never wear sunglasses for night driving.

You must prove that your eyesight meets the required standard each time you apply for a new licence class or endorsement or renew your licence. To do this you can present the appropriate certificate issued by a registered optometrist or a registered medical practitioner (certificate must be no more than 60 days old) or pass an eyesight screening check at a driver licensing agent.

For more information refer to NZTA Factsheet 25, Vision and driving <http://nzta.govt.nz/resources/factsheets/25/index.html>



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