

Kyle Busch is the author of Drive the Best for the Price: How to Buy a Used Automobile, Sport-Utility Vehicle, or Minivan and Save Money. In 1991, the book's author purchased a used 1986 vehicle for \$2,600 that a private owner had driven 82,000 miles. He has driven the vehicle for over nine years and the odometer has now logged over 292,000 miles. The vehicle continues to provide for his daily transportation needs.

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### **Learning to Drive a Standard Transmission Made Easy**

**Adapted from "Drive the Best..."**

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Almost anyone can learn to drive a standard transmission when they put their mind to it, right? Not! However, almost anyone can learn to drive a standard transmission if they go about it the right way (or rather the left foot way).

The easiest way to learn how to drive a standard transmission is simply by first focusing entirely on the left foot (letting its coordination to become equal to that of the right foot). Sounds simple, but training the good old left foot is really the biggest part of smoothly moving down the road.

#### **Getting Started:**

To get started, have someone who has a vehicle equipped with standard transmission drive you to a large flat vacant parking lot. Be certain to have your friend in the passenger's seat to provide supervisor when you drive. Also, make certain that you are covered by vehicle insurance from your policy or through the policy of the person who is letting you drive his or her vehicle.

In the parking lot with the vehicle's engine turned off, apply your right foot to the brake pedal, and practice getting a feel of the clutch pedal by pushing it in and out with your left foot.

#### **The Shift Pattern:**

Next, view the shift pattern shown on the top of the shift knob. 1st gear is usually located by pushing the gearshift lever forward.

Then, with the clutch pedal pushed all the way in to the firewall, move the gearshift lever through the gears (i.e., 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and reverse) a few times and then put the gearshift lever into neutral.

Neutral is located in the middle of the shift pattern. In simplest terms, picture the shift pattern as a H (reverse and 5th gear are also added in).

The crossbar of the H represents neutral. When the transmission is in neutral, you should be able to move the gearshift lever to the left and to the right. If you need help, ask your friend who drove you to the parking lot. So far, so good!

#### Getting the Feel of It:

With the transmission in neutral, start the engine and then press the accelerator lightly to get the feel of the accelerator pedal.

Next, take your right foot off of the accelerator completely and let the engine just idle. Push the clutch pedal in completely, hold it in, and place the gearshift into 1st gear.

Now the moment of truth (just kidding, you will be a pro in no time!) Continue to keep your right foot off of the accelerator, but very slowly let out the clutch (try to become aware of how far you have let the clutch pedal out when the clutch just begins to engage) until the vehicle just begins to creep forward. This is accomplished by moving the clutch pedal in and out just a little bit (about 1/2 inch) to get the vehicle to begin slowly rolling forward.

Work on slowly letting the clutch pedal out until you can get the vehicle to move forward at a couple miles per hour in 1st gear without touching the accelerator. If the vehicle stalls, it is no big deal. Just push the clutch pedal in, and restart the engine.

#### Keeping it Smooth:

Your goal is to be able to smoothly let the clutch pedal out (with no accelerator) and have the vehicle move ever so slowly forward. The purpose of this step is to allow you to focus solely on training just your left foot for a smooth controlled clutch movement.

Concentrated training of the left foot will help you to avoid the old herky, jerky, stall, "Here! You take the keys" routine. A routine can be so frustrating when you are first learning to drive a standard transmission vehicle.

Once you are comfortable not using the accelerator and letting the clutch out smoothly, you can practice pressing the accelerator lightly and letting out the clutch.

After you are able to drive the vehicle in 1st gear, practice releasing the accelerator, pushing the clutch in all the way, moving the gearshift in to 2nd gear, and letting out the clutch (shift out of 1st gear at about 15 miles per hour and 2nd gear at about 25 miles per hour). Drive in the large vacant parking in 1st and 2nd gear (most slow speed turns are achieved in 2nd gear) until you feel comfortable.

#### Planning Your Route:

When you feel comfortable and want to begin driving on public streets, have your friend drive you to low traffic secondary roads and accompany you to provide supervision. The next step would involve your planning to drive routes that will allow you avoid starting

and stopping on roads with hills. With a few miles under your tires, and continued use of your left foot, you will soon be able to hold the vehicle on a hill when starting out.

In no time at all, you will be driving like a pro and shifting into 5th gear overdrive.

In addition to the points covered in this article, the successful purchase of a used vehicle involves many other details. Being attentive to details and knowing what to look for when inspecting and test-driving a used vehicle will translate into significant savings. Additional information about the exterior and interior inspections, the test-drive, saving money, and selling a used vehicle are explained in the book: Drive the Best for the Price: How to Buy a Used Automobile, Sport-Utility Vehicle, or Minivan and Save Money.

The book is available in print and e-book editions from 1stBooks Library at: 1 800 839-8640 or at: 1stbooks.com In addition, it is also available from Barnes and Noble or through traditional bookstores and <http://www.drivethebestbook.com> .