Driver Training Models

A Brief History

Driver training has developed slowly over the last hundred years. The main reason is because of the high face validity of existing teaching models and the reluctance of driver trainers and other practitioners to embrace empirical evidence by academics and researchers. The truth is driver training has a very poor record at reducing crashes.

Model & Year	Research
Roadcraft 1935. A model developed for the Metropolitan Police in the UK. A system or drill each feature is to be considered by the driver on the approach to a hazard. By the correct application of the 'system' the car will at all times be in the correct position on the road, travelling at the right speed with the correct gear engaged. Supported by Zones of Visibility & Invisibility, Driving Plans, the Golden Rules and the 10 Commandments. Roadcraft has formed the basis of driver training throughout the Commonwealth including military, emergency service and civilian applications today. Hybrids later became known as Defensive Driving.	Extensively researched and evaluated. Not found to reliably reduce crashes. Teaching model is based on the ability to develop knowledge and skill, and does not incorporate cognitive, affective or motivational factors. Has high face validity.
Military Driver Training 1941. It is not known exactly when driver training was first introduced for light vehicles in the military. In the US the all-purpose JEEP was introduced and widely used in WW2.	No data is available on the efficacy of military driver training.
Smith System 1948. Devised by Harold Smith in the USA and incorporated as The Smith System of Driver Improvement Institute in 1952. It is an 'Observation Model' with 5 keys; Aim high in steering, Get the big picture, Keep your eyes moving, Leave yourself and out & Make sure they see you. Hybrids later became known as Defensive Driving.	Extensively researched and evaluated. Not found to reliably reduce crashes. Teaching model does not incorporate cognitive, affective or motivational factors. Has high face validity.
Mechanised Death 1961. The film Mechanised Death (typical of its era) was produced in conjunction with the Ohio State Police showing graphic footage of fatal motor vehicle collisions. The intent it to shock viewers into cautious driving behaviour.	Extensively researched and evaluated. Not found to reliably reduce crashes. Teaching model is based on an ineffective form of shock (aversion) therapy.
Advanced Driving 1967. Following emerging trends in the USA and Europe, Peter Wherrett sets up Australia's first post-license driver training school as Peter Wherrett Advanced Driving. Courses include advanced car control, cornering and braking exercises. Hybrids later became known as Defensive Driving.	Extensively researched and evaluated. Not found to reliably reduce crashes. Teaching model is based on the ability to develop knowledge and skill, and does not incorporate cognitive, affective or motivational factors. Has high face validity. Can contribute to over confidence (optimism-bias) and increase crash likelihood.
Low Risk Driving 1997. A teaching and assessment model published by the NSW Roads & Traffic Authority. The model incorporates an 'Inputs' and 'Products' construct to help teachers identify and prioritise teaching and learning opportunities. The model incorporates learning activities that aim to influence perception, decisions and motivations. Objective elements aim to improve driver feedback and self-reflection.	The teaching model is extensively researched, however longitudinal studies aimed at evaluation are limited. The model has been shown to effectively reduce optimism-bias.