Information for clients of
Occupational Therapy Driver Clinics in South Australia

What are the steps involved in getting my drivers licence back after an injury, illness or disability?

A resource created by
Brain Injury Rehabilitation Services Occupational Therapists

Updated and disseminated to OT Driver Clinics in SA during the “Talking About Driving” 4th year OT student project University of South Australia 2010
The Return to Driving Process

☐ First you need medical clearance by a Doctor to drive a car

Your Doctor has 3 options after giving you medical clearance:

☐ Option 1. Give clearance to resume driving a car

☐ Option 2. Recommend that you have a Department for Transport Energy & Infrastructure (DTEI) Practical Driving Assessment

☐ Option 3. Recommend you participate in a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist Rehabilitation Program

A Driver Trained Occupational Therapist program involves the following steps:

Step 1 – Referral to a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist by your Doctor.

Step 2 – Pre-driving screen with a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist.

Step 3 – On-Road driving assessment with a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist, this may show that lessons are needed.

Step 4 (optional) – Your Doctor or Driver Trained Occupational Therapist may recommend you undertake a DTEI practical driving assessment.
The Return to Driving Process Explained

Medical Clearance by your Doctor to drive a car

Your Doctor (Specialist, Neurologist, Neuro-surgeon, GP) needs to complete the ‘Certificate of Fitness – Light Vehicle Drivers’ (Transport SA MR 712 Medical certificate form).

In order to complete this form your Doctor may want you to have:

- A Neuro-Ophthalmology Assessment (eye test)
- A Neuropsychology Assessment (looking at your thinking)
- Other Medical tests

After your Doctor has given medical clearance they have 3 options which are explained on the following pages:

Option 1. Clearance to resume driving a car

This option is only possible if:

a) Your licence has not been revoked on medical grounds AND

b) Your Doctor assesses your medical condition as not impacting on your ability to drive a car safely.

If these two points apply to you, then your Doctor can clear you to continue or resume driving.

It is important that after having a brain injury you have permission from a Doctor to drive otherwise your car insurance may not be valid.
Option 2. DTEI Practical Driving Assessment

If your Doctor considers you fit to drive a car they may refer you for a practical Driving Assessment with DTEI. This assessment is free.

This assessment is necessary if:

a) Your licence has been revoked on medical grounds  OR

b) Your licence has not been revoked but your Doctor recommends it

If you pass this practical driving assessment then you will regain your drivers licence usually on the same day.

If you don’t pass this practical driving assessment then you may be able to resit it at a later date.

If you don’t pass you may wish to talk to your Doctor about being referred to a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist Rehabilitation Program to allow you to work on specific skills before resitting the Practical Driving Assessment.
Option 3. Driver Trained Occupational Therapist Rehabilitation Program

Your Doctor can refer you to an appropriate Driver Trained Occupational Therapist.

For a list of private Driver Trained Occupational Therapists please visit the OT South Australia website http://www.otsa.org.au/default.asp and refer to section “Finding an OT”.

Please note that fees and waiting lists apply, you will need to speak to individual therapists to check about the costs involved.

There are 4 steps involved in a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist Rehabilitation Program:

Step 1 – Medical Clearance and Referral

Your treating Doctor needs to complete:

1) The ‘Certificate of fitness – light vehicle drivers’ (DTEI MR 712 Medical certificate form) AND

2) A letter of referral to an appropriate Driver Trained Occupational Therapist (Contact the individual therapists to find out what information they need)
Step 2 – Pre-driving screen with an Occupational Therapist

When your referral has been received and processed, the Occupational Therapist will contact you to make an appointment for your Pre-driving screen.

Some frequently asked questions about the pre-driving screen

What happens at the pre-screen?

- You will be asked about your driving experiences
- You will be asked about your medical history
- You will do a visual, physical and cognitive screen
- We will review your general road knowledge

How long will the pre-screen take?

1½ hours – 2 hours

Do I get my licence back at the end of the pre-screen assessment?

No, you need to complete the Driver Trained Occupational Therapist on-road assessment. If your licence has been revoked you will also need to complete a DTEI practical driving assessment before you get your licence back.

What do I need to bring to the pre-screen?

- Prescription glasses (if you wear them)
- Copy of your drivers licence if you have it

Can I prepare for the pre-screen?

You can’t prepare for the visual, physical and cognitive screen but if you think your road rule knowledge is a bit rusty then you can brush up on it. A copy of “The Driver’s Handbook” can be obtained from www.raa.net or purchased from an RAA office or newsagency for $10.00 (current May 2010).
What happens if I don’t do well in the pre-screen assessment?

The pre-screen assessment is not a test and there is no “pass” or “fail”. The pre-screen aims to identify any areas of concern before the on road assessment. For example:

- Whether you will need to drive a modified vehicle and what modifications are required
- Whether there are any difficulties with your thinking skills that could affect your ability to drive in busy traffic.

At the end of the pre-screen assessment, the Occupational Therapist will determine the next step and discuss this with you.

Sometimes you may not be ready to do the on road assessment, but in most instances you will proceed to the on road assessment.

Can I do the on road assessment on the same day as the pre-screen?

This will depend on your individual situation. Please contact the Occupational Therapy driver clinic you will be attending for more information.
Step 3 – On road driving assessment with an Occupational Therapist

After the pre-driving screen you will complete an on-road assessment. A driving instructor and their car are used for this assessment. The Driver Trained Occupational Therapist will be seated in the back seat. The Driving Instructor will be seated in the front passenger’s seat, with access to dual controls.

At the end of your on-road driving assessment the Driver Trained Occupational Therapist will recommend that:

1) You are ready to regain or obtain your drivers licence OR

2) You are ready for your DTEI practical driving assessment OR

3) You participate in a Driver Rehabilitation program to improve your skills & increase your chance of success in a driving assessment. The Driver Rehabilitation program will involve:
   • driving lessons with a recommended driving instructor and
   • reviews by the Driver Trained Occupational Therapist.
Step 4 (optional) – DTEI practical driving assessment

You will be required to complete a DTEI practical driving assessment if:

- your licence has been revoked on medical grounds
- your licence requires endorsement with specific conditions e.g. spinner knob, hand controls, left-side accelerator etc.
- your Doctor, Driver Trained Occupational Therapist or DTEI officer recommends you complete one

The DTEI practical driving assessment is free.

In order to be eligible to sit it you need to have passed the following:

- Doctor’s Medical Clearance to drive
- Pre-driving screen with a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist
- On-road driving assessment with a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist
- Driver Rehabilitation Program if recommended

After you have sat the DTEI practical driving assessment:

- If you **pass** you will regain your drivers licence, usually on the same day
- If you **don't pass** then you may be able to resit it at a later date.

You may be required to continue with further Driving Rehabilitation, with reviews by a Driver Trained Occupational Therapist, before re-sitting your DTEI practical driving assessment.

In some cases DTEI and / or the Driver Trained Occupational Therapist may advise that as a result of your medical condition you are unable to successfully regain your drivers licence and that further Driver Rehabilitation and DTEI practical driving assessments are not possible. In these circumstances, alternative transport options will be discussed with you such as access taxis, public transport and community supports such as the Australian Red Cross Transport Service.