

**Driver's Ed. Education**  
**A Series of Specifics for Success**  
**by John Hajny**  
**Central NY Region Editor, Zone 1 Instructor**

**#21 – Don't Turn until you Turn !**

I recently coined this phrase whilst trying to help yet another student beat this most vexing driving problem. Initially, it may sound dumb like all Yogi-isms\*, but their charm lies in the fact that they are born of faultless, if simplistic, logic and hence are maddeningly true! We have touched on this point previously, but the universality of this malady warrants further discussion.

When a driver first starts out, the Driving Line will be highly theoretical, mysterious, and elusive. The student will generally be driving at a pace that does not outstrip his/her innate ability to cope with the task at hand, and minor inaccuracies that will create large headaches later on will go unnoticed. As I've mentioned previously, once The Line starts to sink in, speed happens all by itself. This is where we begin our story.

As The Line begins to gel and cornering speed naturally increases, this newfound velocity carries with you as you go down the straights, and is still present when the next corner is approached. Humans tend to jump the gun and over-react in stressful situations. This is quite true when it comes to high speed cornering.

When speed happens, the novice driver's brain begins to play tricks on them, distorting their perspectives, and allowing anxiety to trump logic, wisdom, and even at times their instructor's demands. While we are likely still at a pace that will not get us in real trouble, we can definitely start to see the effects of the Fear Factor setting in.

The Business Cone lesson begins to become quite prominent at this juncture, as one's previous reference points are likely not ideal any longer. This creates the precipitous mental overload situation that stimulates one of two likely scenarios; Early Turn-in, where the driver simply miscalculates the turn in point, or The Wanders, where the driver over-anticipates the turn-in and wanders or drifts away from the track edge before really initiating the turn. These two are a universal expression of driving distress in the fluid realm of high speed driving.

These miscalculations are always an unconscious action at first. The early turn-in is the more obvious of the two. Even the foggiest novice can plainly see (with help) that the resultant early apex and track-out can be corrected by turning in later. Hence, the early turn-in is more easily diagnosed and corrected to some degree. Of course, we will not be driving in straight lines, but let's do a simple diagram to illustrate the point.

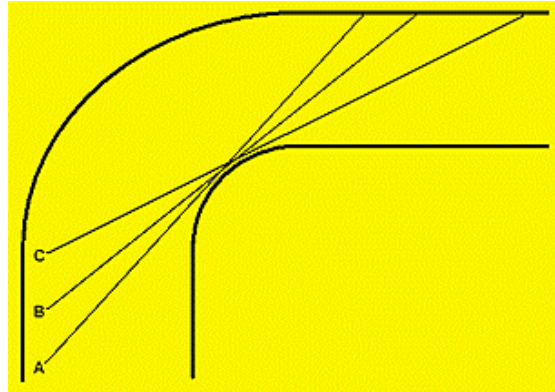


DIAGRAM 1 Obviously, turn-in point C will give us a straighter exit line and less cornering distress. Note that even though we increase our turn-in distance equally, the resultant track-out distance point increases exponentially. We also are getting that comforting later apex.  
Good deal!

"The Drift" is the truly insipid one. The instructor states that, once again, the student has wandered from the track edge before turning in earnest. The usual sequence of student reactions will sound like this;

- 1) I did? (no clue)
- 2) I did (Hmmm)  
What I call Clue-Lite...  
1/3 less than a REAL clue!
- 3) Yeh I did. (doink!)

Then, before the instructor can even say it...

- 4) DAMN I did it again!

This can go on for an interminable length of time, and last for many run sessions or even several events! When we get to numbers 3 & 4 we know there is hope for the future, and the instructor can counter the student's frustration by positively reinforcing their blossoming awareness of the subtleties of driving.

Again, let's go to the diagram to illustrate the point.

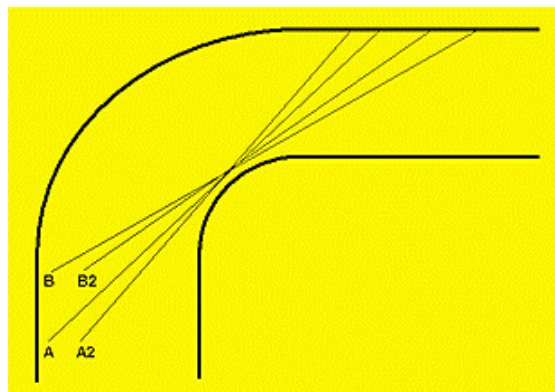


DIAGRAM 2 The Drift-in difference is obvious. In reality, giving up two feet by drifting in translates to 5-10 feet at the track-out. At a novice pace, this stuff seems picayune. However, later on when you are really flying, you simply can't afford to be giving up any advantage.

Now is the time to fix these problems once and for all, before further indoctrination of bad habits occurs. This is where the instructor really earns his or her stripes. The student may not be aware of them, and it is up to the instructor to jump on the first signs because yet more speed will happen as we continue to refine our driving. Trying to go back and fix these unforeseen problems once they become ingrained is truly difficult. If the instructor cannot intercede early enough, a nasty cornering moment will surely result eventually.

Best to nip it in the bud, folks. Even though the student won't realize it yet, you instructors Don't let 'em turn until they turn!

I would like to think that NY Yankee Legend Lawrence Peter "Yogi" Berra would approve and think it was a nice fit!

**All Text and Graphics herein are  
Copyrighted (C) 1995-2003  
by John L. Hajny**

**I have striven to make this an extremely well written and accurate series on a subject that is not to be taken lightly and can obviously be dangerous. To maintain the accuracy and proper presentation of that message, I would ask that absolutely no use whatsoever of any text herein be made without my express written consent.**

**I ask you to please abide by this request.**

**Thank you.**