

BLINK AND YOU'LL MISS IT

THE ESSENTIAL ART OF TUG!

Words: Pro Rider/Mark Jones

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Turn signal, blinkers, indicators and even winkers! Somewhere in the world, these words are used in reference to letting other road users know what we are doing by way of flashing little amber lights (in NZ at least) at them in the direction of intended travel. There are of course a range of hand signals we can use to either emphasise the electrical ones or for those bikes too ancient to be equipped with anything as flash as indicators (pardon that pun). Given that most of us have forgotten about hand signals or never knew they existed, we will stick with the voltage-dependent ones here.

An assessment focus for bikers hoping to gain a licence is 'communication (TUG)'. This concerns how we tell other road users what we are going to do by means of **T**aking information, **U**sing that information and **G**iving information – the 'G' generally being in the form of using our indicators for, as the road code tells us, at least three seconds. Other bikers wishing to retain their licence or avoid getting splattered are advised to adhere to this too.

Like many a road rule though, we need to avoid getting suckered into rigid obedience without thought. The right turn into my road home is hidden on a blind bend, and I'm sure to hit that indicator a least 10 seconds before making the turn. This gives following vehicles already clocked in my mirrors decent time to realise I am going to slow down mid-bend for an intersection they as yet cannot see and hopefully slow down too. This also gives time to decide if the vehicle closing up on me presents a hazard and to carry on another couple of minutes up the road to try a safer turning point. Hey, I get home five minutes later but in one piece!

The opposite can be true. When conducting one of those wonderful ACC Ride Forever courses, a roundabout we navigate has a car park exit just a few metres away as we trundle around to go straight on. As we know, when exiting a roundabout going straight ahead, we check mirrors, indicate left, and have a sneaky look into our left blind spot. Rules may be rules but are worth second-guessing if potentially dangerous. In this case, a motorist about to exit the car park looking to the right and seeing a bike signalling left mid roundabout could be tempted to think it was heading into the car park

and merrily pull out in front. The hazard aware rider would also have seen the waiting car and slowed down in anticipation of them pulling out, indicator or not.

We can remind ourselves here always to remember to cancel a signal as we turn. Once turning it is kind of obvious where we are going, and we don't want the eager beaver sticking out from an intersecting road on the left to take that lingering signal as an indication we are to turn into their road and pull out in front of us; not forgetting we should again have seen the potential hazard – though if you forgot to cancel the indicator that could have been unlikely too!

As well as over-eager motorists, we also have over-eager blinkers riding bikes. Consider this scenario. A start/end point for CBTA routes in Albany is the Maccas on Coliseum Drive (Google map it). McDonald's let us use meeting rooms for free – thanks for your contribution to rider safety burger people. The last gasp 120 metres of assessment comes off a right turn, and having been told to take the second left into the McD car park, many a rider flicks on that signal before they cross the first turn left – generally where at least one car of shoppers leaving the Warehouse is keen to pop out and get home to inspect their purchases. They do this because they are eager to pass, and the distance between the first and second turn looks way too short to get in a good 3 seconds of indicator time as drummed into them since Basic Handling Skills days.

They are right, to a point – that distance is 30 metres and travelling at 50 km/h (which would make turning interesting) they would cover 40 metres in 3 seconds, whereas if they slowed to a respectable 30 km/h setting up for the turn as they passed our Red Shed shoppers, they will only use up 25 metres in their 3 seconds of signalling time, so getting an A+ for their final act of compliance with the road code.

Remember – so far as indicating is concerned, use your TUG wisely! Keep your eyes open and take in your surroundings, using information gathered to give the most safety-enhancing indication of what you intend to do. A 3-second signal may seem like a good start, but longer, shorter or even none at all may be best to keep that hazard at bay – blink and hopefully, you will miss it!

