

DISTRACTION

Just a quick look? **Just focus on the road!**

Staying focused keeps everyone safe

Driving isn't something we do on autopilot; it's a complex skill that demands attention, coordination and awareness. Even small moments of distraction can have big consequences on the road.

What counts as a distraction?

Mobile phones are major sources of distraction for drivers, but it's not just mobile phones. Anything that pulls your eyes, hands, or mind away from driving can put you at risk.

Common distractions include:

- Mobile phones – texting, calling, social media, GPS entry.
- Food and drink – eating while driving.
- Passengers – conversations, kids, pets.
- Music and in-car controls – changing playlists, adjusting climate settings.
- Personal grooming – makeup, hair adjustments, shaving.
- Loose items in the car – reaching for bags, water bottles.
- Daydreaming or strong emotions – thinking about everything except the road.

Even quick glances add up and can mean missing hazards, pedestrians, or sudden changes in traffic.

Mobile phones: Why they're so risky

Research shows that using a mobile phone while driving makes you four times more likely to crash, even when using hands-free.

Hands-free devices only remove physical and visual distraction. Mental (cognitive) distraction still remains, meaning your brain isn't fully focused on driving.

Using a phone while driving can lead to:

- poor decision making
- reduced ability to judge speed, distance and road conditions
- slower reaction times
- inconsistent speed
- late, hard or uncontrolled braking
- drifting in lanes
- less mirror checking and general awareness of your surroundings.

What the law says in South Australia

For fully licensed drivers

You may use your mobile phone for certain functions, being answering a phone call, following maps or listening to music, if it is secured in a commercially designed mount or it can be operated completely hands-free.

For Learner (L) and Provisional P1 drivers

You cannot use any function of a mobile phone while driving.

This includes hands-free calls, texting, music apps, and GPS.

When stopped

Using a handheld phone is still illegal when your vehicle is stopped but not parked, such as at:

- traffic lights
- intersections
- stationary traffic.

You can use your mobile phone to pay for purchases in drive throughs when ordering food or to gain entry into car parks.

Penalties

Using a mobile phone while driving:

- Fine and accumulation of 3 demerit points.

L or P1 driver using a phone in any way:

- Fine and accumulation of 3 demerit points.

These penalties exist because distraction is one of the leading contributors to serious crashes and fatalities on South Australian roads.

About the SA Police Road Safety Centre

The SA Police Road Safety Centre leads the way in road safety education across South Australia. Our programs help reduce road trauma by building the awareness, knowledge, and skills of all road users – supporting safer journeys through lifelong learning.

Want to learn more?

Explore our full range of programs and resources:

 www.police.sa.gov.au/road-safety

Or simply **scan the QR code** in this fact sheet to go straight to our road safety page.

Book a FREE road safety session

We offer engaging, practical sessions for schools, community groups, and organisations.

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