

eLearning Review – Young Drivers

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## Review of Young Drivers eLearning Course

### Introduction

Two years ago I finally decided to go for my G1 written test. After passing it, my parents decided to enroll me in driving lessons at Young Drivers. One of the requirements of the Young Drivers program was to complete an eLearning driving course. The course is intended to give beginners a better understanding of driving. Young Drivers launched this online experience back in 2010. It was one of the only driving schools in Ontario to utilize this mode of training. The course is composed of different modules that go beyond just teaching you the basic fundamentals of driving as well as rules of the road. Some examples of this are what to do in an emergency, how to become a defensive driver, avoiding accidents etc. The student is encouraged to finish this course prior to the completion of the driving lessons. This eLearning website is not free and is only offered to those individuals who paid for the driving package. A username and password is distributed to the company through email upon purchasing. It will take the average user around 10 hours to complete and it can be done in the comfort of your own home using your own computer.

### Objectives

- To acquire understanding of the traffic regulations related to driving a vehicle (e.g. right of way, 4 way stop signs, what you can and can't do)
- To become familiar with the different road signs and what they mean
- To learn the basic fundamentals of operating a vehicle (e.g. different buttons, how to turn on/off, changing gas, what different meters mean)
- To recognize the difference between an aggressive driver and a defensive driver
- To learn how to handle yourself in emergency situations (ex. car breaks down in the middle of the road, jump start a car etc.)

- To learn the different methods of parking a car (e.g. back park, parallel park)
- To learn how to minimize the risk of getting into an accident
- To become aware of the potential risks and dangers of driving
- To acquire the knowledge and Skills needed to get behind the wheel
- To minimize your fear of driving

### **Intended Audience**

The target audience for this eLearning course is teenagers and young adults who have just passed their G1 written test and have no driving experience. This course will make them feel more comfortable and get them into the right mindset before they actually drive.

### **Insight**

The eLearning course was designed for beginner drivers to learn additional concepts at home and apply them in the car. Not only does it cover basic driving rules and road signs, but it also talks about topics such as how to properly make a turn, how to jumpstart your car, how to lookout for unsafe driving conditions, and how to be a defensive driver by avoiding other drivers on the road. The course can be easily accessed from the comfort of your own home. The course is compatible with both PC and Macs. The course is operated through Moodle which is a learning program that allows you to create courses, activities, and communities online. Moodle is an open-source software, which can be downloaded and used free of charge. It is installed on a server and used through your web browser such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mozilla, etc.

There are 9 modules in total with subcategories under each one. Each module requires anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour to complete. The course is fairly easy to navigate through since it has to be done in a fixed, defined sequence. This means that in order to access module 2, one must first complete

module 1. At the beginning of the course, you are required to take a “cognifit test” which tests your hand to eye coordination by testing your reaction using a number of simulated games. For example, they will ask you to look at a picture which will disappear after 3 seconds and ask you questions on what you remember about the picture. Another test requires the student to move the mouse to follow the moving ball across the screen in order to test your reflex abilities. At the end of the test, the student will get back his/her results which consist of the overall mark and areas that need improvement. The student is required to print out the test results and the printout is to be passed onto the driving instructor. The data is intended to provide the instructor with some idea of the student’s cognitive abilities and he can use this information to better guide his student.

The course takes you on an imaginary road trip across Canada. The first session starts you off at St. Johns and as you complete the sessions it will progress you to the next destination until you finally hit Victoria which is the last stop. Module 1 starts off very easy with a basic introduction about driving, but as the student progresses through the subsequent modules, the level of detail and complexity increases. The program incorporates video, audio, and text narration in order to maximize the ease of learning for the user. For example, when teaching you how to park your car properly the video will display the driver’s view of the parking process. This enhances the learning and makes it easier to understand because you can picture yourself as if you are actually in the car performing the act. Users must follow along and wait until the video ends before advancing to the next slide. At the end of module 9 you are required to take a multiple choice test based on everything you have learned. A mark of 70% or higher is required in order to pass the course. Based on my own personal experience in completing this course, I would rate this as a very good tool for training new drivers. The eLearning sessions did an effective job of ingraining the information into my mind and I can visualize these images when I am driving.

## Pros

- Very simple/easy to go through the course since it takes the user through a defined path from start to finish. Even computer-challenged individuals will be able to navigate through the course.
- Use of interactive videos, music, animations, photos, and graphics make the whole experience enjoyable and fun to learn
- Very convenient. Can be accessed in the comfort of your own home as long as you have a pc or mac. Links are provided directly on the website to facilitate the downloading of any add-ons needed to run the eLearning course.
- Good time management. Course allows you to complete the modules at your own pace. You can save your progress during the middle of a session and come back to it later.
- The modules go above and beyond the basic driver training. Example: how to handle emergency situations, avoid accidents, jumpstart a car, becoming a defensive driver, insurance tips, fuel cost savings
- Modules are user friendly and the information is really simplified for beginners
- Cheating is prevented by disabling the “next” button until the video/text comes to an end or the exercise is complete. This ensures that users do not rush through the exercise by repeatedly clicking the next button to get to the end.
- Test/quizzes are given at the end of each module to ensure that the user understood the information. A passing mark is required in order to move on.
- Modules can be replayed again in case you want to review or brush up

## Cons

- eLearning course is not free, it requires you to pay for the program

- Being relatively new, the site has minor glitches such as freezing, shutdown error messages, saved sessions may not be saved again when you re-login
- Unable to skip slides may also be a con. Users who have already completed all the sessions may want to go back and review certain slides but will have to wait until audio/video is finished. This can be very demotivating and time consuming. It may take 15-20 minutes in order to reach the slide you want

### **Universal Instructional Design**

I don't feel that the Young Drivers eLearning course respects the first principle of UID which is "Accessible and fair (equitable) use. Diversity is not being respected and there is a huge language barrier since the only language that this course is offered to is English. The audio narrative and text cannot be changed. The creator of this course must have assumed that everyone knows how to speak English in Canada. The creator did not take into consideration the multicultural nature of Canada and the variety of languages in use such as Cantonese, French, Italian, Spanish, Vietnamese, etc.

### **Incorporated Tools Overview**

**Narrative Voiceover:** Each slide comes with an audio narrative of a man speaking. His voice is very clear, concise, and easy to listen to and follow along. This is a good tool since some people may prefer listening over reading the text on the screen to absorb the information.

**Sound:** The right use of instrumental music is incorporated throughout the course such as in the introduction, and transition between slides. It sets the tone for learning and puts you in a relaxing mood. Real life car sounds are also used. This is useful because they show you different noises from the car. For example, what your engine should sound like, what it would sound like if there is a problem with it, what does this and that beeping sound mean when you hear it etc.

**Graphics/Animations:** The course makes good use of graphics/animations to make it feel like an actual driving course. For example, the main background layout shows an animated dashboard. This makes you feel as if you are sitting in the driver's seat the whole time. Instead of using a normal arrow for the back and next buttons, they incorporated images such as a left turn or right turn road signs. If you want to quit your session and continue next time they use an image of a stop sign instead of a normal exit button. Graphics are well implemented and effectively used where necessary. For example if they are explaining a part of the car, they are sure to have a picture of it. They use graphic animations of moving cars in order to illustrate situations such as a car going through a roundabout, and to show who gets right of way at a 4 way stop intersection.

**Test/Quizzes/Exercises:** There are several tests and quizzes during and at the end modules to evaluate you on what you have learned. This is a great eLearning tool since it provides immediate feedback on how much you have learned. Tests are not linear. The course incorporated various testing methods as opposed to just using multiple-choice approach. Sometimes they will ask you to watch a short animated video and test you after. For example, they will show 4 animated cars going at different speeds approaching a 4 way stop sign. At the end, they will ask you to click on the cars in order of who goes first to last. Another example, they will show you a video of a car driving through an intersection. The video will pause and they will ask you to point out everything that went wrong.

**Videos:** Almost every slide has a video attached to it. This is a good way for the user to get a better grasp of learning. For example, they show you real life driving instructors doing maneuvers inside their car such as parking, checking blind spots before switching lanes etc. These videos are so realistic that they give you the feeling that you are actually engaged in a physical lesson with them. Other videos depict people talking as they are talking directly to you. Other videos show a number of real life situations on the road such as collisions and accidents. It is a real eye opener and the purpose is not

only to teach you what the driver did wrong, but to instill fear in you. Since there is no way of practicing accidents in real life the best option would be to show you using video.

### **Recommendations**

Although I stated that the Young Drivers eLearning course was good, I believe that there is still room for improvement. Here are some suggestions which I feel will improve the course:

- Implement a language dropdown box in order to allow users to choose their preference if English is not their first language. This should have the effect of changing the text and also the narrative voice to the desired language. Users should be able to choose if they prefer a male or female voice.
- Videos should give you the option of choosing different camera angles. Most of the videos are shot from the driver's seat point of view. This may not always be the best view when trying to learn. For example, when learning how to park the user may want to view how it looks from different angles such as a 3<sup>rd</sup> person view or a zoomed out shot of the car from above. What you see in the driver's seat may look completely different from another vantage point.
- Videos should give you the option to fast forward or backtrack to wherever you like by clicking on the bar. As of right now, when you play a video, there is no way of controlling where you want to go. If you would like to look over a certain time frame of the video you will have to replay it again when the video ends. This can be very frustrating. It would be nice to have a button where you can slow the speed of the video. Example. 2x 4x, 8x slow speed. It may be easier for users to observe the little details in slow motion. For example, it may be hard for users to follow along when the person in the video is turning the wheel really fast.



- Some of the videos are of pretty poor quality. It would be nice if they replaced their old cameras with high definition cameras. Another idea would be to let users change the quality of the video. Such as HD settings 720p and 1080p quality.
- Their help page could have been more explanatory. I feel that it is not detailed enough and I find myself still confused after visiting the help page to resolve technical difficulties.
- After completing a module, the skip button should be unlocked so that the user can easily browse through whichever slide he/she desires to review. This has made reviewing very frustrating.
- Upgrades should be made in order to fix minor glitches that frequently happen to many users. Sometimes when you come back in after you save and logout, it will start you off at the beginning instead of the point that you left off. Sometimes the animations will cause the whole screen to freeze and the program will force you to close and restart.

## **Conclusion**

With the implementation of minor modifications that I have suggested above, I believe that this eLearning course will be perfect. The important thing to remember is that the course is designed with the intent of further improving your driving skills. Take the knowledge that you have acquired from this and apply it to your driving. You will only become a better driver by practicing and applying the techniques that you have learned.

## Links

In case you are interested in trying out this eLearning course, here are the links to the website attached below:

Main Driving Website: <http://www.yd.com>

Free Demo of eLearning: <http://www.yd.com/edemo/>

Main Login Screen for Account Holders: <http://elearnbox.yd.com/moodle/login/index.php>