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WHAT IS COASTING?

The term 'coasting' is a one that will become familiar to everyone who decides to learn to drive. It is, of course important to understand what exactly coasting is, and the effect it has upon the vehicle.

So what does 'Coasting' mean?

Essentially, coasting means that the road wheels of the vehicle are not being 'driven' or propelled by the engine even though the vehicle is actually moving. This occurs when either the clutch pedal is held down, or the gear lever is in the neutral position.

How does Coasting affect the vehicle, and why is it wrong?

Ultimately coasting reduces the driver's control over the vehicle. For example, if you were to be travelling around a corner or bend in the road, because the road wheels are simply free-wheeling at this point due to them not being driven by the engine, the vehicle will 'under-steer' which will likely result in you exiting the corner or bend too fast and possibly even in the incorrect road position (too wide) which, of course could be highly dangerous if you were to find yourself on the wrong side of the road with oncoming traffic facing you.

Furthermore, when travelling downhill the vehicle will quickly gather speed which makes the driver feel like the vehicle is 'running away' in an uncontrolled manner. This in turn would require the driver to brake far harder than normal to reduce their road speed in order to compensate for the missing 'braking effect' assistance which the engine provides in lower gears.

In truth the vehicle is essentially coasting a little each and every time you change gear, however this is simply unavoidable. The time taken to change gear and return the clutch to the fully at rest position should, however, be kept to an absolute minimum.

Never underestimate the importance of 'engine braking'.

What is 'Over-Run'?

Over-run is a vehicle state that is often, but should not be, confused with coasting. This state is most commonly referred to as 'travelling on the over-run'.

When the vehicle is travelling at speed and there is only minimal pressure being applied to the gas pedal, it can appear that the engine isn't actually 'driving' or propelling the vehicle forward. This tends to be the reason why it is often confused with coasting.

The reason it shouldn't be confused with coasting is because, as the vehicle is still travelling in gear, there is no loss of control over either the acceleration capabilities or braking effect of the engine which, of course, means that the driver remains in full control of the vehicle.

What is 'Slipping the Clutch'?

This is another vehicle state, this time whereby the clutch pedal is held partially down so that the clutch is not fully engaged. This state allows the engine to spin faster than it would if it were fully engaged.

For example, should a driver misjudge their use of a particular gear for a particular situation; for example being in too high a gear at too low a speed, they can be wrongly inclined to slip the clutch to compensate for the initial error of judgement.

Slipping the clutch is, to be honest, just poor driving practice and should be avoided as it will, over a course of time result in excessive wear of the clutch.

Best wishes and 'Safe Driving for Life'

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