



MAKING A MOVE

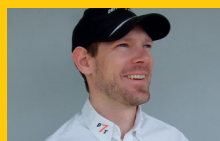
In this month's coaching article, Porsche Driving Consultant, Neil Furber, discusses overtaking techniques and the hazards of passing moving vehicles...

We all overtake, but there are different opinions about what makes for appropriate overtaking behaviour. The act of passing another moving vehicle is one of the most dangerous aspects of driving, whether it's a necessity (pulling out to pass a cyclist) or through choice (passing a vehicle travelling slower than your own car). Regardless of the reasons for the move, the most important thing is to ensure overtaking is performed safely.

Years ago, the road network was simpler and much quieter. Back then, overtaking was fundamental to making significant difference to the duration of essential journeys. These days, hopping past a car tends to yield only a few moments of free air before you're stuck behind another vehicle, hit a village

speed limit or a frustrating queue of traffic. In truth, on the average commute, there's little gain to be had by overtaking on anything but the very quietest of roads, where that one dawdler or farm vehicle happens to be up ahead.

Sometimes, though, the temptation is just too great – the freedom of free air can be a constant draw, especially if driving one of the more recent high-powered Porsches. Despite all that adrenaline, however, the heightened use of fuel and extra wear-and-tear is usually wasted, as demonstrated when the slower vehicle trundles up to your car's rear bumper at the next set of traffic lights! Needless to say, not only was overtaking unnecessary, the manoeuvre introduced the element of risk to your journey. And so, we arrive at the nub of the matter.



DRIVING FORCE

Neil Furber is *GT Porsche's* resident driving expert. With a background as a mechanical engineer in Formula One, he brings a unique technical insight to driver coaching. Splitting his time between the French Alps and the UK, Neil coaches drivers through his brand, Drive 7Tenths (drive7tenths.com) and is also a Porsche Driving Consultant at Porsche Experience Centre Silverstone. Have a question about coaching? Email him at enquiries@drive7tenths.com.

IS IT WORTH THE RISK?

Often, I'm stunned by the overtaking I see on the public road. Before a corner, in a 30mph zone or just badly executed, many of these manoeuvres seem unplanned and rushed. We covered an introduction to vision and planning in the February issue of *GT Porsche* (order your copy at bit.ly/issuesgtp). The core skills discussed in the article apply to overtaking, just as they do for cornering and general driving: effective vision, gather information, consider possibilities (Visual Link Cascade), prioritise and create a plan of action.

The most important advice I can give you when it comes to overtaking is *take your time*. Take your time to pause before starting the move. Take your time to have a proper look up the road ahead before committing to the throttle pedal. Take your time to move ahead of the vehicle you've passed. Rash decisions, poor planning and rapid pulling in/out fail to allow sufficient opportunity to evaluate and perform an overtake safely. In some cases, taking time will mean you'll miss a potential opportunity to pass, but then, clearly, the move was dubious at best!



SAFETY FIRST!

There are many situations where it's physically possible to overtake a slower vehicle within the length of visible clear road and the specific performance of your Porsche. That's not to say this is a safe place or way of doing it. With this in mind, we'll dig into some of the unexpected hazards often overlooked, differentiating between good and bad overtaking techniques.

The two most common poor overtaking techniques can be identified as a move starting too close behind the vehicle in front and what I refer to as 'the windup'. The first of these two examples makes many overtakes possible where, if using proper technique, a safe overtake isn't viable. This is only achieved by getting right up behind the vehicle in front so that, as soon as you pull out and accelerate, you're alongside the slower moving vehicle almost immediately. Although the latter half of this overtake may be okay, the earlier close-following position and immediate progress has the potential for serious consequences. What if the driver of the car in front stamps on the brakes whilst you're in close proximity to its back end? Is the position of your Porsche perceived



as aggressive or intimidating, even if you don't mean any ill? Could this lead to erratic driving? What if there's debris in the road ahead of the lead car? If its driver suddenly steers to avoid contact, have you got room to move laterally as your overtaking move begins? We'll cover ways to safeguard against much of this over the following pages.

As for 'the windup', if you've grown up with low-powered cars or your classic Porsche has period performance, this is an approach you may well be familiar with. Put simply,

'the windup' is planning for a straight you know or *expect* and timing acceleration well in advance in a bid to approach the back of the vehicle in front at a specific time. Then, you arrive at the critical go/no-go decision. You must either commit to the overtake or drop your speed. Although this can be done safely enough, the main problem is the lack of time for a proper assessment of the road ahead before committing to the move — significant closing speed when overtaking can have disastrous consequences.

HIDDEN HAZARDS

In many cases, drivers will overtake based on a quick look up the road ahead and a subsequent split-second decision. Often, the move takes place from a very close following position. Most of time, the overtake is completed successfully, but it doesn't take much for it to become fatal. The most significant risk — and if you remember nothing else from this article, then please remember this — is the presence of an oncoming car approaching significantly faster than you'd expect.

It may be foolish to judge a situation purely by your own driving. Don't assume other road users are adhering to rules of the road. If, for example, there's a 911 GT3 RS heading the other way at breakneck speed and temporarily obscured by a bend or crest at the other end of your overtake, will you have finished the move in total safety before the oncoming car appears? Although its driver's behaviour may not be appropriate, they may well stay in their lane under full control through the corner, before happening upon two cars side-by-side on the next straight. Do you wish to be the one looking straight at the GT3? In this instance, a head-on collision could have a closing speed of over 150mph. Furthermore, when overtaking,



you'll be on the other side of the road. It sounds obvious, but it's drivers in joining side roads you need to watch out for. They may look one way for 'normal' traffic, deem it's clear and pull out, immediately finding themselves nose-to-nose with you! And let's not forget the potential for potholes, debris or a cyclist masked by the vehicle in front.

With good technique, you have a chance to look for these obstacles before you find yourself pulling alongside a slower driver who may need to steer around them. Also, it's vital to check mirrors in order to ensure another vehicle isn't in the process of overtaking your Porsche while you're preparing to pull out.

GOOD TECHNIQUE

- Close the gap, but leave sensible following distance
- Ensure the most appropriate gear for the move is selected
- When the road ahead looks clear, move laterally and completely into the other lane
- Pause and have a good look ahead — tuck back in if not suitable
- Accelerate promptly when committing to overtake
- Don't rush to pull back in — avoid cutting-up the other driver

GOOD TECHNIQUE

Since safety is paramount, there's a little more to good overtaking technique than simply pulling out and hitting the gas. It's useful to think of an overtake in stages. Rather than hanging onto the tail of the car in front while chasing any and every option, you can start your plan for overtaking by considering where the next opportunity to perform the move might be. If you can 'read' the road ahead to be sure of a suitable place to pass, or if you already know there's a good straight coming up, you can begin the process. In most cases, if you have a safe following distance (minimum of a two-second gap), you'll need to close on the car in front to gain ground. There is, however, a balance: you'll gain on ease of overtake, yet increase risk of collision should the car in front brake heavily without warning. A minimum of a single-second gap for a short period of time just before an overtake is reasonable. You can always drop back again if the opportunity to pass proves not to be suitable. Wait for the next indications of a straight coming up. If your car makes use of a manual

gearbox, or if you shift using the manual overrides available with PDK or Tiptronic S transmissions, it's important to pre-select the most appropriate gear. You may not need the lowest possible gear for the road speed you're travelling at if you're in charge of a torquey engine — it's nice to have enough revs left to complete the manoeuvre without shifting gears halfway through. Generally, you'll want to select second or third gear, but not in all cases. From behind the car in front, you'll be able to see enough of the road ahead to gauge if overtaking is likely to be safe. Rather than just accelerating and pulling out, a lateral move at constant speed is best. And before you do, check those mirrors!

As you edge out, you can always backtrack if there's a car approaching or you spot something unsafe. Rather than hide behind the car in front or crane your neck, it's best to move the whole car across for a proper look. If all is okay, you'll be completely in the other lane and this little pause before starting to accelerate will give you time to consider the road ahead.

Is the road long enough, wide enough and suitable for a safe overtake? Remember

that GT3! Are there any junctions, side turnings or field exits which may prove fatal? Is there anything in either lane ahead that may require you or the other driver to change course or speed? Pothole, mud, debris? Are there any areas with potential for a 'hidden' car? Hidden dip or crest? Are there any other things that stand out in this picture? If all is good, it's time to commit to the throttle, make good progress and spend a minimum time alongside the car in front. Side-by-side is not a good place to be, so avoid the temptation to pass slowly, though be mindful of rushing past and shocking a driver who may not have checked their mirrors. Finally, when you're past, a sudden pull-in should be avoided. There's nothing more frustrating than being cut-up for no reason and receiving a series of machine-gun-fire stone chips all over the front of your four-wheeled friend. As a guide, if you're at a higher speed and can see the full width of the car you've overtaken in your rear-view mirror, you're far enough to start moving back to the correct side of the road.



▲ When an opportunity presents itself, close the gap a little.



▲ Move out laterally and pause before acceleration in order to evaluate fully.



▲ If all's clear, commit and accelerate.



▲ Leave plenty of space when moving back — nobody likes stone chips on the front of their car!

OVERTAKING CHECKLIST

- Is there real and worthwhile advantage in the overtake?
- Is there a suitable centreline to allow overtaking?
- Is there a faster car already starting to overtake you?
- Is the straight ahead long enough to accommodate the move if you consider a GT3 travelling flat-out in the opposite direction?
- Is there a hatched area in the middle of the road? This could be a filter lane about to be used by vehicles travelling ahead. It's also the most likely place to experience a puncture thanks to collected debris.
- Can you see everything in the road ahead? Are there hidden dangers? Turnings, crests, dips and the like may hide other cars. Potholes and loose debris could cause issues.

A FINAL THOUGHT FOR CYCLISTS

The highest-value overtaking opportunity you'll encounter regularly is the single cyclist. Often, I'll see drivers happen upon a bicycle and simply steer around it whilst leaving little space, even forcing three-a-breast traffic with an oncoming car! Although general advice is to pass with a good metre or so between bike and car, I advocate committing fully to the other side of the road (completely the other side of the white line). This way, the cyclist has maximum space and I'm less likely to spook them as I pass. If I'm not confident

enough to be that far out, it clearly isn't the right time or place for the manoeuvre. The noise of your engine and the speed with which you pass could surprise a rider, so it's best to slow down, pick your moment (as per the technique outlined earlier in this article) and accelerate tentatively, at least until you've been seen. Of course, horses present an even more extreme situation and extra care must be taken. In some cases, you may find yourself following for significant distance before finding a safe overtaking opportunity.

