



PLAYING DEFENCE

In this month's coaching article, Porsche Driving Consultant, Neil Furber, explains how careful consideration of other road users can help you to read the language of traffic and enjoy plenty more smiles to the mile...

It's your pride and joy. Whether you're in command of a classic 911, recent Boxster, tidy transaxle or any of the other Stuttgart-crested speed machines we love to feature in the pages of *GT Porsche*, we're sure you worry about the behaviour of other road users and how their actions might have an impact on you and your four-wheeled friend. With this in mind, the information spread across the following pages will help you to enjoy many more pleasurable miles of motoring. Without further ado, here are our top tips for protecting your Porsche whilst enjoying the open road or moving in traffic.



KING OF THE ROAD OR GARAGE QUEEN?

Some drivers are happy to go anywhere, park anywhere and come what may. In contrast, most Porsche owners (regardless of whether the car in question is being used as a daily driver or weekend joy toy) tend to be far more considered in their approach to car care — if there's one thing we can all relate to, it's that we don't want unnecessary damage caused through the mindless acts of others. Nevertheless, even if you've bought a rare Porsche as an investment, you should get out and drive it, at least from time to time. Granted, extremely low mileage vehicles can attract bafflingly high sale prices, but leaving your car in a state of suspended animation doesn't do it any good. A periodic fire-up, temperature cycling and rotation of all moving parts is essential to minimise your Porsche's long-term overhaul requirements.

Regular maintenance, including fluid changes and checking the condition of tyres, is your first line of defence on the road. Indeed, blowout or mechanical failure could result in a life-threatening incident, which is why anything you



can do to prevent both conditions is a worthwhile investment of your time and money. It's worth noting classic cars covering little ground from year to year soon end up old tyres. Keeping ageing rubber is an unnecessary risk, especially when cracked tread and perishing sidewalls are easy to spot. After all, we're talking about your safety!

Most tyres feature date stamps (read

our guide to tyres and how to decipher sidewall markings by ordering a copy of the September 2019 issue of *GT Porsche* at bit.ly/issuesgtp), enabling you to confirm the week and year of production. You may find manufacturer guidelines suggesting when tyre changes should occur, but use and storage can affect each product's usable lifespan, which is why regular checks are essential.

ATTITUDE, SPACE AND 'THE IDIOT PRINCIPLE'

Perhaps it's obvious, but your attitude behind the wheel and how you interact with other road users will affect how they behave towards you. Being considerate, leaving plenty of space (rather than tailgating) and avoiding unnecessary overtaking manoeuvres can pay dividends when other drivers are expected to give way, signal clearly, move predictably or park near your Porsche. Don't forget, another driver is another human. Show them true courtesy and respect. Often, doing so will reward you in spades.

Since a vehicle collision is, by definition, a lack of space, the more distance you can put between your vehicle and all others, the further you'll be from contact. If you've undertaken additional driver training on the road, you may have come across the concept of a 'space bubble', a term used to describe the area in front, behind and to both sides of your Porsche. Managing the gap to the car ahead is the easiest of these

for you to control, but in my experience, the majority of drivers require a little recalibration to identify exactly *how much* space is enough.

Generally, if leaving space is something you think about, double the distance and you won't be too far off what's safe. After all, a little extra room will help in most cases. Managing tailgaters or a driver intent on following closely in low speed areas (and dropping back in others) is more difficult. With some observation and drawing on experience, you may be able to label the driver behind as one of three categories: pusher, follower or autopilot. Doing so will help you to find suitable means to adjust their behaviour through subtle changes in your driving, without obvious gestures.

Keeping the sides of your Porsche clear isn't too much of an issue when driving on 'regular' single carriageways, but on multi-lane roads and at complex junctions, the »



NEXT
MONTHescape routes
and shortcuts

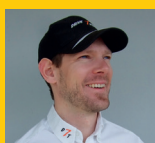
importance of the 'space bubble' becomes significant. If we assume you've got the space in front of your car under control, and we'll work on the assumption you're able to manage things at the rear, it's the driver moving and signalling without looking — as well as vehicles with large blind spots — you must guard against most. When in a body of traffic, the best thing you can do is balance the space ahead relative to others, thereby minimising the time spent side-by-side with other road users. If you stagger with no overlap (like two sides of a zip), other road users can move laterally in front or behind and you can move laterally behind or in front of them. Although you'll need to adjust your 'following gap' again, you've minimised the chances of a front-wing-to-rear-quarter incident when another driver decides they need to hop into your lane at the last minute. Don't forget courtesy — if you leave a generous gap ahead and consider the needs of other drivers, you provide safe passage for them at what might be a busy, unfamiliar junction and, usually, you'll receive the appropriate thanks in return.

Every road user has a different agenda. The minimum-time commute, simple

load transportation, emergency or time-sensitive journey and, of course, the Porsche pleasure drive are all examples of coexisting-yet-conflicting scenarios. As for human interaction, I like to refer to this as 'the idiot principle'. "Who's the idiot driving 20mph below the speed limit? Who's the idiot pushing me from behind? Who's the idiot driving back and forth in their Porsche for no apparent reason?!" You can see my point: we all have opinions and we can all *choose* how we react to the way other road users behave on the public highway. In other words, we can consider each of these examples, not as a faceless driver or simple machine, but by *human* standards. For example, if somebody is driving slower than expected, consider the fact they may be unwell or might be transporting a vulnerable child or animal. Similarly, if you get frustrated at a driver 'pushing' from behind, while there's every chance you're experiencing the dangerous actions of a bully, consider the fact you might be in front of someone missing the birth of their first child and trying to get to hospital. As for Porsche pleasure drives, we all have our favourite roads, but our use of speed and noise should be considerate, rather than indiscriminate.

CHESS AT THE WHEEL

As you can see, your attitude and use of space are fundamental to defensive driving. When you consider your attitude and actions deeply, you'll think more about how you drive and how you view and respond to the actions of others. It's this process that'll unlock your potential to read and analyse the language of traffic. Couple this with effective space management and you can avoid the majority of difficult situations you might otherwise find yourself in. Regular readers will remember the Visual Link Cascade from the February issue of *GT Porsche* (order a copy at bit.ly/issuesgtp). For the benefit of new readers, this is the process of using vision and planning to prepare the next few steps of your drive. It's the essence of what's known as 'advanced' driving and is akin to playing chess. In other words, you think several 'moves' ahead. Once you add this to good space management and attitude and can use all this effectively, it's unlikely that you'll be too concerned about taking your pride and joy to more difficult areas of the open road. The result: many more *safe* and enjoyable miles in charge of your treasured Porsche.



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 driving? Email him at enquiries@drive7tenths.com.