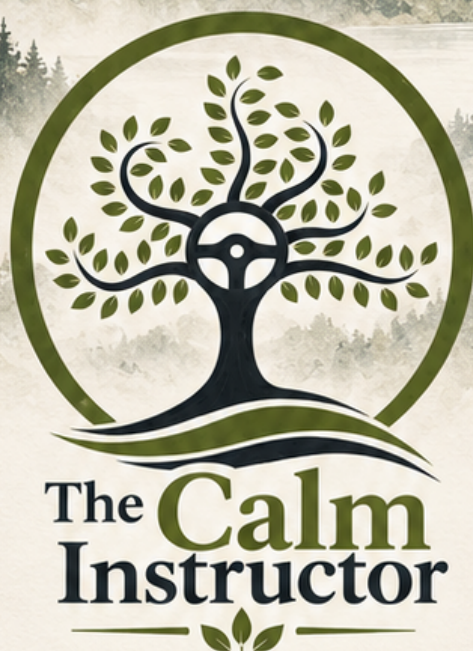
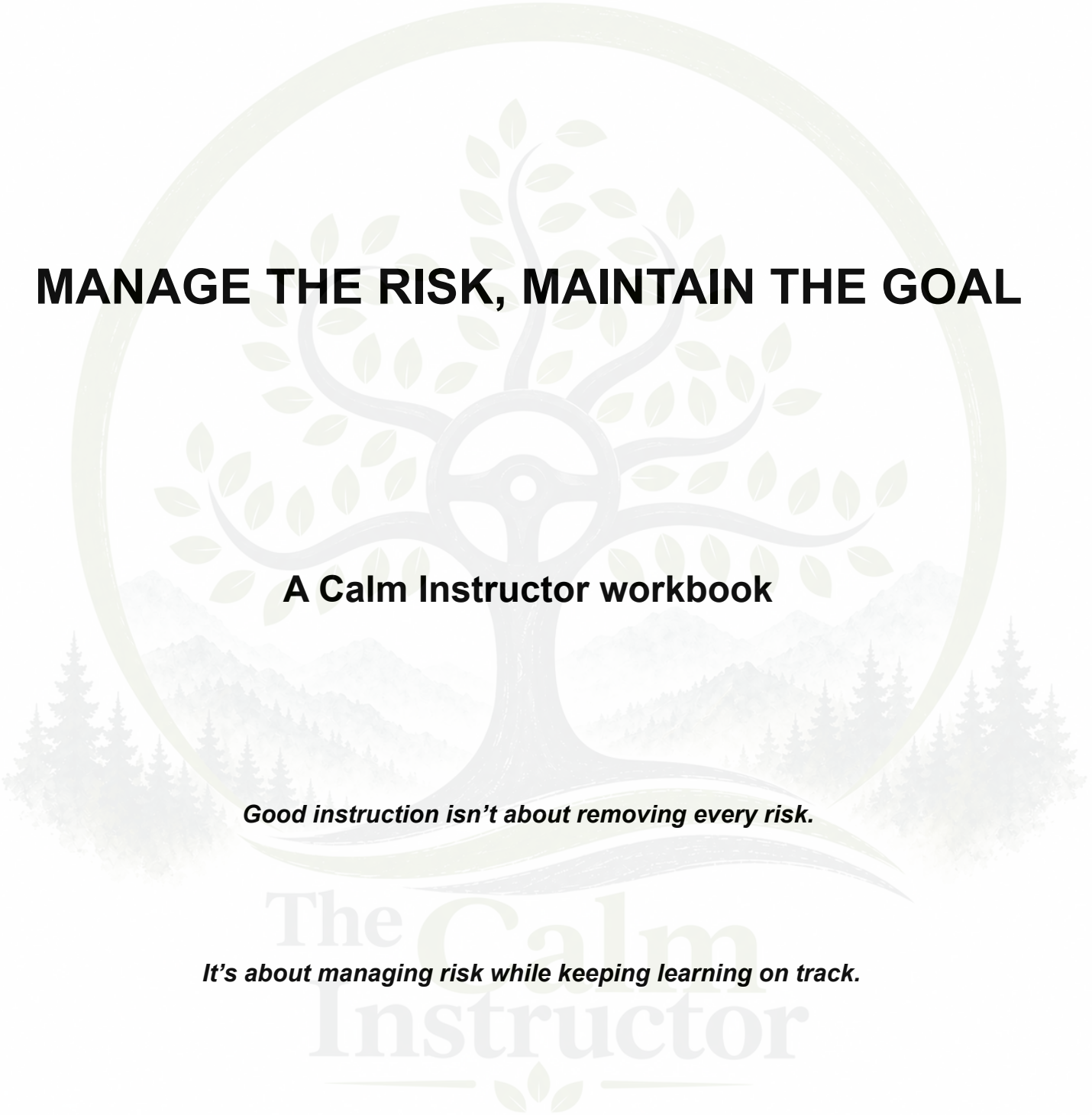


MANAGE THE RISK, MAINTAIN THE GOAL

A practical workbook for
driving instructors

Recognise risk. Make sound decisions. Keep learning on track.





MANAGE THE RISK, MAINTAIN THE GOAL

A Calm Instructor workbook

Good instruction isn't about removing every risk.

It's about managing risk while keeping learning on track.

The Calm
Instructor

1. Two things to hold on to

Every driving lesson has two important considerations:

- **The learning goal:** What does the pupil need to learn or improve?
- **Risk management:** What do I need to do to keep the pupil, myself and other road users safe while that learning takes place?

These two things need to work together.

If we focus entirely on the goal, we might allow a situation to develop beyond the pupil's ability to manage it safely.

If we focus entirely on risk, we might intervene too early, take over the learning and leave the pupil with little opportunity to develop.

Good instruction sits between these two extremes.

The aim isn't to avoid every difficult situation.

It's to give the pupil an appropriate opportunity to learn, while recognising when the level of risk requires us to change our approach.

The question isn't simply, "Is this safe?"

It's also, "What support does this pupil need to make progress safely?"

2. Start with the goal

Imagine your pupil is learning to turn right at traffic lights.

That's the topic. It isn't necessarily the learning goal.

The pupil might need to improve their ability to:

- Select a safe position in the road.
- Judge an approaching vehicle's speed and distance.
- Decide when there is a safe opportunity to turn.
- Manage their speed and steering through the turn.
- Make an independent decision without relying on your prompts.

Each of these involves different skills and different risks.

Before deciding how much support to provide, establish what the pupil is actually working towards.

Your turn

Think about a lesson you might teach.

The topic:

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What the pupil can already do:

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What they need to improve:

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The learning goal for this lesson:

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How will you know they've made progress?

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Notes

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3. Recognise the changing risk

Risk isn't fixed. It changes with the pupil, the situation and what is happening around them.

A manoeuvre that presents little difficulty on a quiet road might become much more demanding in busy traffic.

A pupil who usually makes sound decisions might struggle when they're under pressure.

A pupil who has successfully completed a task several times might still need support when the circumstances change.

As the instructor, you need to keep assessing the situation rather than relying on what happened a few minutes ago.

Consider four questions:

1. What can I see?

Look at the developing traffic situation, the pupil's actions and any signs that they are struggling.

2. What does it tell me?

Are they making a sound decision? Have they recognised the developing risk? Are they able to act on what they have recognised?

3. What could happen next?

Think about the likely consequences if the pupil continues without support.

4. What response is needed now?

Could you allow the pupil to continue, ask a question, give a prompt, provide an instruction or intervene physically?

Your response should reflect the actual risk, not simply your level of discomfort.

Reflection

Think of a situation where you felt the need to intervene.

What did you observe?

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What did you think might happen?

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What made you decide to intervene, or not intervene?

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4. Match the support to the risk

The aim is to provide the least intrusive support that is appropriate for the situation, without allowing risk to develop beyond acceptable limits.

Your response	When it may be appropriate
Observe	The pupil is managing the situation safely and has the opportunity to learn independently.
Ask a question	There is time to explore the pupil's awareness or decision-making without creating additional risk.
Give a prompt	The pupil needs a reminder or cue to help them recognise or respond to something.
Give a clear instruction	The pupil needs more direct guidance to manage the developing situation safely.
Intervene	Immediate action is needed to prevent or reduce danger.

These aren't rigid stages. You don't have to work through them in order.

A developing hazard may require an immediate instruction or physical intervention. In a lower-risk situation, a question or a period of observation may be more appropriate.

The important thing is to make a considered decision based on the situation in front of you.

Remember: Giving a pupil independence doesn't mean withholding necessary support.

Equally, providing support doesn't mean taking every decision away from them.

5. Manage the risk, maintain the goal

Let's put this into practice.

Scenario: Turning right at traffic lights

Your pupil has practised turning right at traffic lights before. They can position the car correctly and understand the need to assess oncoming traffic.

Today, they approach a junction with heavier traffic than they are used to.

They position correctly but hesitate when assessing an approaching vehicle. Traffic begins to build behind them.

You still want them to develop their ability to judge a safe opportunity to turn.

What is your priority?

- A. Complete the turn so the lesson can move on.
- B. Take over the decision because the situation feels uncomfortable.
- C. Assess the developing risk, provide the support needed and preserve the learning opportunity where it is safe to do so.
- D. Abandon the learning goal for the rest of the lesson.

Your answer: (be honest)

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Now think it through

What is the learning goal?

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What risks are developing?

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What information do you need from the pupil or the situation?

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What support would you provide, and why?

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How could you return to the original learning goal once the situation is under control?

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A possible approach

If the pupil has adequate time and space to assess the situation, a question might help establish what they have recognised and what is influencing their decision.

If the situation requires a more immediate response, give a clear instruction or intervene as necessary.

Once the immediate risk has been managed, you can review the decision with the pupil and decide whether to continue with the same task, simplify it or find a more suitable opportunity to practise.

The learning goal doesn't automatically disappear because the situation became difficult.

But neither should the goal take priority over safety.

6. When should you change the plan?

Maintaining the goal doesn't mean stubbornly sticking to the original plan.

Sometimes the pupil needs a simpler situation. Sometimes they need more explanation or guided practice. Sometimes the best decision is to stop the activity and return to it later.

Ask yourself:

- Is the pupil still capable of making progress in this situation?
- Is the level of challenge appropriate for their current ability?
- Can I manage the risk while allowing meaningful learning to continue?
- Would changing the road, traffic conditions or level of support help?
- Has the original learning goal been achieved, or does it need further work?

A change of plan can be good instruction.

The key is to understand **why** you're changing it and what that means for the pupil's learning and have agreed it with them?

Your decision

Think of a pupil who struggles when a task becomes more demanding.

What signs would tell you that you should:

Continue with the task:

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Provide more support:

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Simplify the task or change the situation:

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Stop and reconsider the activity:

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7. The instructor's reflection

After a lesson, it's easy to judge your performance by how smoothly everything went.

A better question is whether your decisions helped the pupil make progress while managing risk appropriately.

Think about a recent lesson and complete the following.

The learning goal was:

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The main risk I had to manage was:

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I recognised the risk when:

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The support I provided was:

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This helped or hindered learning because:

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Next time, I would:

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8. Take this into your next lesson

Before your next lesson, identify one specific learning goal.

During the lesson, pay attention to how you balance that goal with the risks that develop.

Afterwards, reflect on three questions:

1. Did I give the pupil an appropriate opportunity to learn?
2. Did I recognise and manage risk at the right time?
3. Did my decisions help the pupil become more capable of managing the situation independently?

You don't need to get every decision perfect. You do need to understand why you made it, recognise when it wasn't effective and learn from the outcome.

The principle to remember

Manage the risk. Maintain the goal. Adapt the approach.

Good instruction isn't about choosing between safety and learning. It's about making sound decisions that allow learning to happen safely.



Calm Instructor | Free learning resource