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The art of not getting lost:

Tour instructions — how to read them; how to write them

The written directions we typically use when on tour follow a style that dates from the early days of touring by automobile, when roads — where they existed — were often poorly marked. The writers of early tour instructions had to be descriptive, relying on landmarks to convey to motorists where to turn.

In some ways, not much has changed in the past 100 years. Road signs are sometimes missing, overgrown with foliage, or subjected to vandalism. Even well-marked intersections can often be a confusing tangle of visual stimuli and directional options.

The tour instructions that are handed out at the beginning of our CKMARC activities are intended to be more than just a memento of the day. The person who planned the tour put a lot of work into those instructions, and they're to keep you from getting lost. You just have to use them.

"But I just follow the car in front of me." That can work if the tour group is small enough. But with the large

turnout our club typically has, "elephant-style" touring isn't as practical. The cars tend to get separated — particularly in congested areas with lots of stop lights, and on long, curvy stretches of road. And the larger the group, the harder it is to find a place to pull over and wait for the stragglers where there's enough room to accommodate everyone — safely.

In theory, there would be no problems if everyone kept the car behind him in sight. (The tongue-in-cheek term for this practice is "Follow the car behind you.") Unfortunately, it's all too easy to become enthralled with the scenery until we suddenly realize that the car behind us has disappeared.

If you never look at the instructions until you're separated from the group, it's too late to try to figure out which page you're on and which turn you're looking for. Here's the key: Have your passenger follow the directions from the beginning, and check off each turn as you get to it. That way, you're always on the lookout for the next turn — whether the car ahead of you is in sight or not.

"What if I don't have a passenger to read the instructions to me?" In that case, you should form an alliance with the people in the car ahead of you. Make them aware of your situation, and ask them to keep you in sight. Watching out for each other is easier for two cars than it is for 20.

Let's examine some of the elements of a typical set of tour instructions.

The mileage columns

You'll usually find two columns of numbers running down the left side of the page. One column shows cumulative miles; the other, incremental miles. The

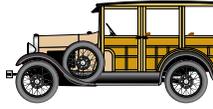
Tour to Moyer's on the Ohio

Herman and Nancy Butler have planned a scenic drive to take us to lunch overlooking the Ohio River at the picturesque Moyer Winery in Manchester, Ohio on Saturday, Nov 10.

We will meet at 9 a.m. at the McDonald's on Elkhorn Rd. off of Winchester Rd. (close to I-75), and will leave for Moyer's by 9:15.

There will be a comfort stop in Flemingsburg at the McDonald's on the bypass (Route 11). That's about 55 miles from the starting point in Lexington — so if you would like to join the group there, you should time your arrival in Flemingsburg accordingly.

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cumulative column shows the total number of miles you've traveled since the start. The incremental column shows how far apart one instruction is from the next.

Both columns start at zero. They will be equal on the next line, and will diverge from there. Here's an example.

Cumulative	Incremental	Instruction
0.0	0.0	TURN RIGHT out of the parking lot onto U.S. Highway 25.
1.2	1.2	STOP at stop sign. TURN LEFT onto Main Street. CONTINUE STRAIGHT through three traffic signals.
1.9	0.7	TURN RIGHT onto Elm Street.

In this example, your turn onto Elm Street occurs when you've traveled 1.9 miles from the start — which is also 0.7 miles from your turn onto Main Street.

If your Model A was built before mid-1930, you have an advantage. With the oval speedometer, you can start

out with your trip odometer set at zero, and use it to track the cumulative miles. In the above example, your turns should occur at approximately 1.2 and 1.9 miles on the trip odometer. (You can even reset it on the fly to correct for discrepancies between your speedometer and the instructions as you go along.)

If you have the later (round) speedometer, you don't have a trip odometer. In that case, the incremental miles column might be more useful to you — but some mental math will still be required.

Writing good instructions

As you become familiar with following tour instructions, you'll come to appreciate the subtleties that make for good directions. And when you're called upon to lead a tour for the group, you'll have more confidence in your ability to keep your ducklings in a row.

The first words in each instruction should *prominently* tell the driver what to do. Any additional details should follow afterward. The driver or navigator shouldn't have to read through the supplemental details before getting to the action required.

For example, "TURN RIGHT onto Elm Street — Shell station on corner" is better than "At the Shell Station on the corner of Elm Street and Main Street, turn right." With the latter, the driver might have missed the turn by the time the navigator reads "turn right."

You'll notice that in the examples above, the "action" (e.g., "TURN RIGHT") is written in all capital letters. That's what we mean by "prominently" telling the driver what to do. There should be no need to "hunt" for the required action.

Reducing confusion

Remember that even if you know the route like the back of your hand, you're writing instructions for people who have never been there before. The potential for confusion lurks at every turn — literally. Be precise in your descriptions. Never take for granted that what's obvious to you will be clear to someone who's unfamiliar with the area.

For example, let's say we're driving on Highway 100, and we come to a red barn, a sign indicating that Highway 100 turns off to the right, and another road that continues straight ahead. The instructions say, "At red barn, keep going." Confusion alert! Should we keep going on Highway 100 — by turning right — or keep going straight? It's anybody's guess. To be clearer, the instructions

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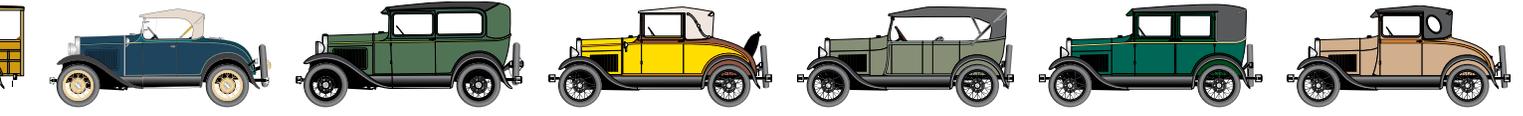
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should have been written one of two ways, depending on which is appropriate.

- CONTINUE STRAIGHT at red barn, where Highway 100 turns right. DO NOT TURN onto Highway 100.
- TURN RIGHT at red barn, staying on Highway 100.

Types of intersections

Tour instructions should specifically describe the type of an intersection as a T, Y, stop sign, flashing red light, traffic signal, flashing yellow caution light, yield sign, etc.

“T” intersections should be noted as such in the instructions. For example: “STOP at the T. TURN LEFT onto Muddy Ford Road.” T intersections are reassuring, because you can’t miss them. Note that this instruction begins with STOP. This alerts the reader that the “T” intersection is marked with a stop sign, as most — but not all — are. In the interest of safety, it’s good to issue a warning that a stop is required — particularly where the “T” is at the bottom of a hill. After all, not all Model A owners keep their brakes in top condition.

Intersections with stop signs should be described as four-way, three-way, etc., where applicable. (Example: “STOP at the 4-way stop. CONTINUE STRAIGHT on Maple Avenue.”) If it’s not an “all-way” stop, it’s sometimes a good idea to include a safety reminder like this: “STOP at the stop sign. CONTINUE STRAIGHT on Maple Avenue. CAUTION — Cross traffic does not stop.” If the stop sign is accompanied by a flashing red light, the instructions should say so for added reassurance that the reader is in the right place.

Traffic lights (or traffic signals) should never be called “stop lights” because you don’t have to stop if they’re green. This helps avoid confusion with flashing red lights, where a stop is always required. An instruction where there’s a traffic light would read something like: “TURN RIGHT at the traffic signal onto Maple Avenue” or “CONTINUE STRAIGHT at the traffic light on Main Street.”

“Y” intersections can be a source of confusion, and should always be mentioned in the instructions with specific direction regarding which way to go. Yogi Berra’s axiom (“When you come to a fork in the road, take it”) isn’t as helpful as “BEAR RIGHT at the Y.”

Points of reference

When you’ve driven several miles since the last instruction, an uneasy feeling can begin to develop. Am I going the right way? Did I do the right thing back there?

Could I have missed a turn somewhere? The farther it is between instructions, the greater the fear. Also, it’s easy to forget to watch for the next turn when you’ve been 20 miles without an instruction.

Well-written directions will include points of reference within long stretches to give readers something to watch for, and to let them know they’re still on the correct route. By pointing out an unusual building, sign, landscape feature, etc., much-needed reassurance can be provided. For example:

51.2	5.9	POINT OF REFERENCE: Claw-foot bathtub used as flower bed on right.
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Points of interest

A point of interest (POI) can be as reassuring as a point of reference. But a POI also has an educational component, providing a tidbit of historical context or other background information about a particular location, building, landscape feature, etc. Example:

63.8	8.3	POI: The ridge across the pasture on your left is part of the right-of-way of the “Riney-B” railroad, which operated from the 1890s to the 1930s and ran between Richmond, Irvine, Nicholasville and Beattyville.
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Safety tips

We’ve touched on it earlier, but safety can’t be overemphasized. When routing a tour, be mindful of potential hazards. If a particular left turn could be dangerous, modify the route to avoid that situation — by going around the block, for instance, or by choosing an intersection where the traffic signal has a green arrow for left turns. If the hazard can’t be avoided, include a warning in the instructions, such as: “TURN LEFT onto Highway 150. CAUTION: Blind hill. Watch for oncoming traffic.”

As we mentioned already, not all Model A brakes are well maintained, or properly rebuilt and adjusted. If there’s a long, steep downgrade, urge drivers to shift to a lower gear BEFORE the descent begins. For example:

75.4	1.6	CAUTION: At red-gated farm entrance, shift to a lower gear. Long, steep downgrade begins in 0.2 miles.
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Accuracy

After you’ve drafted your tour instructions, run the route again and make any necessary corrections. You’d be surprised how easily LEFT can creep in when you meant

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to say RIGHT, or a crucial turn can be omitted. Check your cumulative and incremental mileages for math errors.

The authentic touring experience

Automobilists of yesteryear relied on written instructions to find their way along the primitive roads of the time. Today, such instructions — when well written and properly used — can enhance our enjoyment as we re-create the experience of a bygone era.

Next 2013 National Meet planning meeting is Nov. 18

Our next National Meet planning session will be held Sunday, Nov. 18 at 2:30 p.m. at the Rabbit Run Club House, 1920 Ft. Harrods Drive in Lexington. If you see a club member who has not attended one of these meetings recently, extend an invitation to join us. (As always, there will be food).

‘MARC’ your calendar

- ✓ **Nov. 10** — Tour to Moyer Winery in Manchester, Ohio (Herman and Nancy Butler; Jeff and Mary Rhoads). See details elsewhere in this issue.
- ✓ **Dec. 8** — Christmas potluck dinner (John and Karen Blair; Jeff and Mary Rhoads).
- ✓ **Jan. 26, 2013** — Potluck social at Rabbit Run Recreation Center in Lexington (Delmer and Linda Dalton).



CKMARC celebrated International Model A Day on Sept. 22 with a tour to the Flavorman factory in Louisville. Thanks to Burt and Rita Nation, their daughter, Lori Nation-Legrand, and son-in-law Jerry Legrand for making the arrangements and hosting the group.

