

Cross the Line

Tao · Visionary Communication Level 3, Connect with Storytelling · 1040th meeting · 22 September 2026

Dear fellow Toastmasters and distinguished guests, good evening.

Today, I have a confession to make.

I used to be a perfect driver. Now? Not anymore.

Nine months ago, when I was a new driver, I followed every rule I had learned from the textbook. I signalled about a hundred metres before a turn. I stopped when the light turned yellow. I stayed perfectly inside my lane.

One day, my wife was driving. She crossed a solid line while changing lanes.

"Hey! You crossed the line. You can't do that."

She gave me that look.

Another time, she made a U-turn where she wasn't supposed to.

"That's illegal."

"Everyone does it."

"That doesn't make it right."

You see? I was a very fun passenger to drive with.

Then one day, I was driving home. At this intersection, I needed to go straight.

There was a long queue in front of me. I was in the straight-ahead lane, so naturally I thought the cars in front of me were going straight too.

I waited. One minute. Two minutes. Five minutes. Ten minutes.

Finally, I reached the front of the queue and realised what was happening.

Almost everybody in front of me was trying to turn right onto Beihuan, Shenzhen's North Ring Road. The road straight ahead was almost empty.

I had stayed in the correct lane. I had followed the rules. And I had wasted ten minutes for nothing.

Another day, another intersection. This time I was almost home - about three minutes away - and I needed to turn right.

Again, there was a long queue. Cars going straight and cars turning right were all stuck together. I joined the legal right-turn queue and waited.

After I finally turned right, I noticed something.

The road after the turn was wide enough for two cars to drive side by side.

If two lines of cars could turn here, maybe the entrance to the intersection would be less crowded. Maybe the cars going straight would not be blocked for so long.

The next time I came to the same turn, I saw another driver move ahead and turn right. And this time, I followed.

I crossed the line.

My wife was sitting next to me.

"You crossed the line."

I gave her a small smile.

"Everyone does it."

"That doesn't make it right."

I liked that sentence much better when I was the one saying it.

She was right. But that moment made me question something I had never really questioned before.

Maybe it is not only about whether people follow the rules. Maybe sometimes we also need to look at the rule itself - and at the way the road is designed.

For months, my only question had been:

"Am I following the rules?"

Now I had another question:

"Are these rules working?"

So now I ask myself those two questions. And I ask you the same.

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