

Tour the Twilight Saga

Automatic Transmission Anxieties

The vast majority of US and Canadian rental cars are equipped with an **automatic transmission**. Twilighters accustomed to operating a **manual (standard) transmission** vehicle—one with a **clutch** foot pedal and a **stick** for shifting gears—are sure to experience a degree of driving anxiety related to unusual vehicle operation, in addition to frequent episodes of **Frantic Left Foot Syndrome**.

Ok. Frantic Left Foot Syndrome (**FLFS**) doesn't really exist. But, it's the perfect title for symptoms your left foot will suffer when having to drive an automatic transmission vehicle for the first time.

- Your left foot will often feel restless and twitchy because it has absolutely *nothing* to do. Every time the car reaches a speed when you're used to shifting, for instance, your left foot will be *desperate* to push on the non-existent clutch.
- Since it's accustomed to stomping on the clutch when you have to stop, your left foot may accidentally stomp on the **brake**—especially during an emergency situation. This is the worst FLFS symptom, because it can contribute to rear-end collision accidents.
- Accidental FLFS brake stomping occurs more often when operating the car in **reverse**.

Techniques for Alleviating FLFS and Avoiding Accident:

- Begin each driving day by forcefully pressing your left foot onto the **foot rest** (aka, "dead pedal") found at the far left of the driver's-side floorboard.
- Practice a few rapid stops at the start of the trip—simultaneously **pressing your left foot into the foot rest** as you operate the brake with your right foot. Practice some rapid stops when driving in reverse, as well.
- **While driving, keep your left foot on the foot rest.** As you become more comfortable behind the wheel, especially during long drives, it's tempting to move your left foot off the foot rest. Don't.

FLFS-Alleviating Rental Car Options Don't Exist

Twilighters from **right-side driving countries** can—*theoretically*—avoid FLFS by reserving a manual transmission rental car. Unfortunately, because they're so rare in the US and Canada, there is **no guarantee** that a manual transmission car will be available.

In fact, US and Canadian car hire companies commonly confirm advance manual transmission vehicle bookings with the full knowledge that there probably *won't* be one available. When you arrive, rental car personnel will sincerely apologize for the oversight. Then, they'll give you the option of an automatic transmission car, or waiting up to 24 hours for a manual transmission vehicle to be brought in.

Twilighters from left-side driving countries will NOT be saved anxiety by hiring a manual transmission rental car. In right-side driving countries the driver's seat is located on **the left side of the car**. Thus, the gear shift in all manual transmission cars is on **the right side** of the driver's seat.

Tour the Twilight Saga Twi Travel Tips: Automatic Transmission Conundrums

Because it is your **left hand** that is used to shifting, your **right hand** may protest every time you have to change gears.

We know this because Chas still owned a manual transmission car the first time she rented a car to drive in the UK, and thus was accustomed to shifting with her right hand:

“My left hand felt like it was screaming, ‘*This is not my job!*’ every time I had to shift. During in-town driving with lots of gear changes, it even started to cramp up. Although it costs more to rent an automatic transmission car in the UK, having one less source of anxiety while driving is worth every cent.”

Happy News:

The gas and brake pedals are in the same location whether driving an automatic or standard transmission vehicle. They’re also in the same location whether operating a left-side-driving *or* right-side-driving country’s car.



Manual Transmission Foot Pedals

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Automatic Transmission Foot Pedals

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The gas pedal (accelerator) is far right. The brake is next to the gas pedal, on its left. Both are intended to be operated *only* by the **right foot**. Because there is no clutch pedal in an automatic transmission car, the brake pedal is wider. The foot rest (dead pedal) is far left. That’s your left foot’s home when driving an automatic transmission car. Do *not* operate the brake with your left foot.