

When I bought my first real 4WD last year, I was not at all ashamed to admit I didn't know what half the buttons do – let alone when to use them, or what to do after I became ambitious enough to push a few.

Luckily for me, when it comes to the buttons, the latest models of 4WDs are about as close to idiot-proof as you can get. That said, the rest of the driving is definitely up to you – so I figured I'd have some lessons. My nephew quite helpfully suggested that “when in doubt, more right foot” was all I really needed to know – but I figured I'd cough up the bucks and head up to Quorn in the Flinders Ranges, to train with Norm from Pindan Tours and 4WD Training.



The latest models of 4WDs are about as close to idiot-proof as you can get!



A freeloading Bearded Dragon decides to take part in the 4WD training too!

I can honestly say, it was life-changing. Perhaps not in the same way people would say after taking part in a firewalk with Tony Robbins (I've done that too, by the way) – more in a practical, and ‘holy cow, I didn't know I could do THAT’ kind of way.

Here's what I learned (and what I've bought...or am going to buy, now that I'm basically an expert):

1. Tow bars are not for recovering other vehicles

Tow balls can launch like projectiles – and wow, they sure do make a mess when they go through the front windscreen of the vehicle being towed! I didn't do this, but I saw photos of people who had – and holy cow! Not great.



Norm demonstrates how to assemble the recovery kit equipment

I'll be buying a proper set of bibs and bobs for a recovery kit, and also look for proper recovery points on my car. Apparently, snatch ropes are better, safer, and more effective than snatch straps, while soft shackles are better than those metal D-ring thingies...



Norm assembles the recovery equipment – including soft shackles, snatch ropes, and a recovery damper



A rear recovery point/hitch

Side note: I also learned the correct way to use kinetic recovery gear, which probably isn't as much fun as when Uncle Dave (who knows it all) tells you how to do it. That said, there's a lower chance of getting killed...so I'm happy to do it the boring way.

2. There's an easy way to change a tyre...then there's my way

The tyre-changing hacks were *in-cred-ible*, one of which required a shovel to prop the tyre up while aligning and fitting it back on... and yep, I'll be getting me one of those shovels too, thanks very much.



One tyre-changing hack involved first propping a shovel underneath it

 *Norm demonstrates how to change a tyre using a digger shovel*

 *There's an easy way to change a tyre... then there's my way!*

3. MAXTRAX Recovery Tracks are available in some pretty colours (oh, and they're pretty useful too)

I learned when to use two, when to use four, *and* that there are pink ones available - *hello!* Sign me up. I knew a bit about deflating and re-inflating your tyres when planning to drive on soft sand, but was always too scared to put it into practice. Plus, I didn't fancy trying to inflate my tyres using my mouth... so now I know how and when to do so properly. Now I just need to decide whether I go for the tyre-pressure-gauge-type scenario (like this Bushranger one), or those little doovalackies you fit onto each valve and allow to do their thing. I'm thinking the doovalackies by Staun.

4. I'll also be looking at new tyres


...instead of the ones that came with the car (that are good for picking up the kids I don't have, from the school they don't go to).

Plus, I'll look into some of the more fancy bits and pieces like a UHF radio, so I can say 'breaker, breaker' a lot, re-enact 'Smokey and the Bandit', and mount one of those cool aerials to my roo bar (which will *instantly* have me looking way more manly and legit).

 *Mounting an aerial to my roo bar will instantly have me looking way more manly...*

I'm not sure where you're at with your 4WD-ing, but if you're looking to better understand your vehicle's capabilities, feel more confident, or just feel like less of an idiot like myself - I truly couldn't recommend Norm at Pindan Tours and 4WD Training highly enough. The lesson is one on one, so you won't need to worry about looking like a goose in front of other people - and save the eye-rolling, because the only stupid questions will be your own. I even got to drive along a great 4WD track that was closed to the public, as a way of putting my newfound skills to the test. It was terrifying - but bloody awesome.

 *Putting my newfound skills to the test along a private 4WD track was terrifying, but awesome*

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Thinking of kitting out your 4WD?