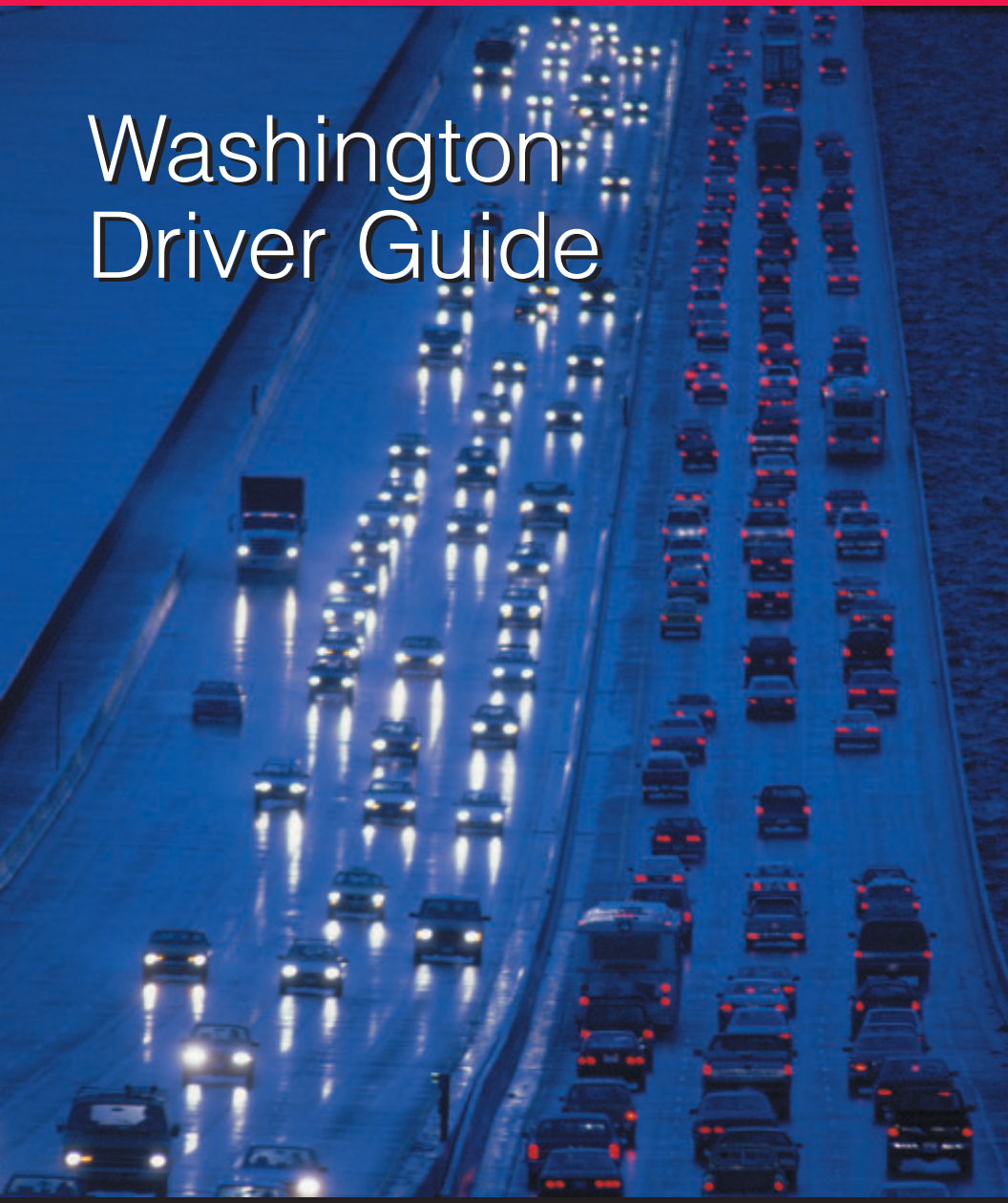
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING

Washington Driver Guide



www.dol.wa.gov

Warning Signs

Winding Road

Divided Highway (Road) Begins

Divided Highway (Road) Ends

Cross Road

Merging Traffic

Lane Ends Merge Left

Slippery When Wet

Signal Ahead

Hill

Two-Way Traffic

School Crossing *

Pedestrian Crossing *

Railroad Crossing

Advance Warning: Bicycles

Soft Shoulder

Added Lane (from right, no merging required)

Deer Crossing

Curve Left 35 mph or less recommended

No Passing Zone

Slow Moving Vehicle

* Color can be fluorescent green or yellow

Graphics provided in cooperation with Washington State Department of Transportation.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

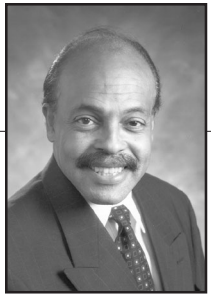
Message From The Governor

Our team of professionals at the Department of Licensing has provided this guide to help you successfully complete the driver licensing tests. It covers information about driving requirements, rules of the road, safe driving tips, driving responsibly, handling emergencies, and licensing your vehicle.

Carefully studying this information will help you demonstrate your knowledge and skills during your driver examinations.

I wish you every success. And once you have your license in hand, I urge you to drive safely.

Gary Locke
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING
Olympia, Washington 98504-8001

Message From The Director

One of the most important services the Department of Licensing provides is the licensing of Washington State drivers.

The Department of Licensing completes each licensing transaction with the goal of ensuring public safety.

You can expect to be served by knowledgeable staff and receive courteous customer service.

We would like your comments on what we did well and how we can improve. Customer comment cards are provided at all licensing services offices.

As you learn the rules of the road, remember that together we make Washington highways safe. We wish you luck on your examination.

Drive safely.

Fred Stephens
Director

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The Department of Licensing welcomes your written comments or suggestions. Your comments should be addressed to: Driver Examining, Department of Licensing, PO Box 9030, Olympia, WA 98507.

Visit the Department of Licensing website at
www.dol.wa.gov

The Department of Licensing has a policy of providing equal access to its services. If you need special accommodation, please call (360) 902-3900 or TTY (360) 664-0116.

This manual provides safe driving rules and practices needed to drive a personal vehicle. It is a summary of the laws, rules, and techniques that apply to every person who drives a vehicle in Washington State. Please read it carefully.

This manual is not a book of laws, and should not be used as a basis for legal claims or actions. Traffic regulations in cities, towns, and counties may go beyond state laws, as long as they do not conflict with state laws. If you are interested in finding out about specific laws relating to motor vehicle operation and driver licensing, refer to Title 46 RCW, Motor Vehicles.

Copies of the Driver Guide, the Motorcycle Operator Manual, and the Commercial Driver Guide are available at your local driver licensing office. The manuals and the RCWs are available on the Department of Licensing's website at www.dol.wa.gov.

More than four million drivers share Washington's streets and highways. Always drive safely and courteously. Driving is a privilege, not a right. Be careful to drive in a way that allows you to keep that privilege.

THE DRIVER LICENSE

Requirements for Residents

If you operate a motor vehicle, motorcycle, moped or motor-driven cycle on public roadways in Washington State, you are required to have a valid driver license. You are required to have a Washington driver license if you live here for more than 30 days.

The following people are considered to be residents of Washington and are required to obtain a license.

- *Registered voters* - Persons registered to vote in Washington.
- *Recipients of state benefits* - Persons receiving payments, financial aid or other public welfare benefits from the state or a local government.
- *State licensees* - Persons obtaining a state license at the resident rate.
- *Students* - Persons paying in-state tuition fees.
- *Long-term visitors* - Persons who intend to live in Washington on more than a temporary basis for any continuous six month period.

Nonresidents and Visitors

The following people can drive with a valid license from their home state/province/territory/country if they are at least 16 years old:

- *Military* - Members of the Armed Forces on active duty or members of foreign military on temporary duty with the Armed Forces, as well as their spouse and children.
- *Students* - Students who are here to further their education and who are considered nonresidents for tuition purposes.

- *Trainees or instructors* - Employees of companies licensed to do business in Washington State, who are here temporarily to receive or give job instruction.
- *Aliens* - Foreign tourists, teachers, or business people who are here for up to one year.

Applications and Fees

You may obtain a driver license if you:

- Are at least 16 years of age,
- Submit acceptable proof of identity and age and disclose your social security number if you have one,
- Provide your Washington State residence address. A military address, such as an APO, FPO, HHC, HOR, etc., can be accepted when you also present military identification.
- Show proof of completing an accredited driver education course (with classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction) if under age 18,
- Have parental/guardian consent, if under age 18,
- Pay a $10 exam fee to establish an application good for 90 days and for one attempt to pass the knowledge test. If the knowledge test is passed, one drive test is also allowed.
- Pay an additional $10 fee at each occurrence of application expiration or test failure,
- Pass driver vision, knowledge, and skill tests,
- Turn in any other driver licenses,
- Your license is not currently suspended, revoked, cancelled, or denied,
- Pass needed medical requirements for the type of driver license desired,
- Have no unpaid fines for traffic violations, and
- When qualified, pay $25 for a five-year license.

Identification

To establish identity, you must present acceptable documentation containing a combination of your name and either date of birth, signature, photo, or address, including at least:

- One primary document, or
- One supporting and two alternate documents, or
- A minimum of five alternate documents. One document must be from the acceptable list on the DOL website or in the ID Requirements brochure and must have name and date of birth. Another document must have name and signature.

Primary documents include:

- A valid or recently expired Washington driver license, instruction permit, or identification card.
- An out-of-state driver license, identification card or photo identification, or a driver license from Canada or another foreign country. However, this identification must be accompanied by:
  - One other primary document, or
  - One supporting and one alternate document, or
  - A minimum of two alternate documents.
- A valid military identification card from a branch of the United States armed services.
- A valid United States passport that contains the signature and photograph of the individual.
- A valid identification card issued by a state or federal agency, which contains the signature and photograph of the employee where the identification is important to the security of the organization, for example, a card issued to an FBI employee.
- An original Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) form that contains the signature and photograph of the individual, for example, the Border Crossing Card I-186.

- Parent or guardian identity signature - An applicant who is under 18 may establish identity by providing an affidavit from their parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must accompany the person under 18 and provide at least one primary proof of identity and proof of relationship to the applicant. When last names are different, additional documents proving relationship will be required. If the primary document is an out-of-state license, additional documentation will be required.

Supporting documents include:

- A foreign country's passport with a valid expiration date.
- A federally recognized Indian tribe's enrollment card or a U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs identification card containing the signature and photograph of the individual.
- A verification letter produced by the Washington State Department of Corrections, United States Federal correction authorities, DSHS, or the King County Department of Adult Detention. Staff will not accept letters from any other entity, law enforcement, public or private agency, or individual.
- A Washington city or county police employee identification card, containing the signature and photograph of the individual.

Alternate documents include:

- Local area business mail sent to the customer by a utility, retailer, employer, or bank is acceptable as evidence of name and local mailing address. Personal mail is unacceptable.
- Employee identification cards, with name and photo of the employee, issued in a secure manner by an employer where identification is important to the security of the organization.

Some examples of common alternate documents include:

- Certified birth certificate or registration card.
- Social Security card.
- Marriage certificate or divorce decree.
- Voter registration.
- Government-issued business and professional licenses.
- Vehicle registration certificate or title.
- Credit or financial contracts.
- Certified school records.
- Bank account statements showing both name and address.
- Internal Revenue Service documents.
- INS I-766 Employment Authorization Card.
- DD Form-214 Military separation from active duty.

For more examples, visit the Department of Licensing (DOL) website at www.dol.wa.gov or obtain an Identification Requirements brochure from a local driver licensing office.

Authentic foreign documents are acceptable as proof of identity when DOL is satisfied with the document's origin, purpose, and content. However, a certified English translation may be requested at your expense, which must be presented with the original document.

The licensing services representative (LSR) may consider documents other than those listed here in an effort to establish your identity. These documents must be presented at the time of application. In most cases, photocopied documents cannot be accepted. Please ask the LSR for assistance if you are having trouble meeting these requirements. The LSR can suggest forms of identification that may be available to you. You may also ask an LSR to review any documents in your possession.

No Proper Identification?

It is possible to obtain a first driver license if you lack all of the required identification. However, you must prove your name of record and date of birth, and the license will be marked "Not Valid for Identification" until complete proof of identity is provided.

Types of Driver Licenses

Instruction Permit — A permit allows you to operate a motor vehicle within Washington when supervised by a licensed driver with at least five years of driving experience. The licensed driver must sit in the right front seat. A Washington instruction permit may or may not be valid in another state.

To obtain a permit you must be at least 15-1/2 years of age and pass the knowledge and vision test. If you are under 18, you must also have a consent form signed by your parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must show proof of identity and proof of relationship to the applicant. **When last names are different, additional documents proving relationship will be required.** The permit is valid for one year and one renewal is allowed. DOL may issue a second renewal if you show effort to improve your driving ability. The permit fee is $15.

If you are enrolled in an approved driver training course, you may obtain a permit at age 15. You will not be required to take the knowledge test prior to issuance of the permit if you present traffic safety education certification on the Instruction Permit Application form as proof that you are enrolled in an approved course.

If you are 16, you can get your license once you pass the classroom and behind-the-wheel driver training course. If you do not pass, you cannot get your license until you are 18.

Basic Driver License — The driver license allows you to drive a personal vehicle. Your license is valid for five years and will expire on your birthday. If you are 16 or 17 years old, you will first receive an intermediate driver license.

Intermediate Driver License — If you are 16 or 17 and meet the requirements, you will be issued an intermediate driver license that has rules designed to ease young drivers into the responsibilities of driving. Under this law you must:

- Pass an approved driver training course,
- Obtain parental/guardian consent, and
- Pass vision, knowledge, and skills tests.
- Have had an instruction permit for at least six months,
- Present parental certification stating you have had at least 50 hours of driving experience, including 10 hours at night, while being supervised by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old and has had a valid license for at least five years,
- Not have been issued a notice of traffic infraction or cited for a traffic violation that is pending at time of application,
- Not have been convicted of or found to have committed a traffic violation within the last six months before the application for the intermediate license, and
- Not have been convicted of or found to have committed an offense involving the use of alcohol or drugs during the period you had an instruction permit.

Once you receive an intermediate license, the following restrictions apply:

- You may not drive between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. unless accompanied by a parent, guardian, or a licensed driver who is at least 25 years of age,
- For the first six months you may not carry any passenger under 20 years old who is not a member of your immediate family, and
- For the remaining time you may not carry more than three passengers who are under 20 years old who are not members of your immediate family.

Restrictions are automatically lifted when you've had an intermediate license for one year and:

- You have not been involved in an automobile collision, and
- You have not been convicted or found to have committed a rules-of-the-road traffic offense or violated any of the intermediate license restrictions.

On your 18th birthday your license automatically becomes a basic license without the intermediate license restrictions. You do not have to visit a driver licensing office to change your license.

Motorcycle or Trike Instruction Permit and Endorsement —To obtain a motorcycle or trike instruction permit you must have a valid Washington driver license, pass a knowledge test, and pay the $15 permit fee. If you are under age 18, you are required to satisfactorily complete a motorcycle traffic safety education course and obtain parental/guardian consent before applying for a motorcycle endorsement. For more information, read the Motorcycle Operator Manual available at www.dol.wa.gov or at a local driver licensing office.

Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEV) and Motorized Foot Scooters (MFS) —A NEV is an electrically powered, four-wheeled vehicle capable of speeds of 20-25 mph that can be driven on roads posted 35 mph or less. A vehicle registration and plates, a driver license, liability insurance, and use of seat belts, child restraints, and other safety equipment is required. A MFS must have handlebars, two ten-inch or smaller wheels, and a gas or electric motor. No vehicle/driver license or insurance is required, but it must have state patrol approved reflectors to be driven at night.

Commercial Driver Instruction Permit, License, Endorsements and Restrictions — You must be at least 18 years of age to obtain an instruction permit to operate vehicles that require a Commercial Driver License (CDL). For more information about a CDL, please read the Commercial Driver Guide available online or at a local driver licensing office.

Time and Place of Examination

You may obtain a driver license from a DOL driver licensing office. More than 60 offices are located statewide. Check the Government section of the telephone book under "Licensing, Department of" for the nearest location or visit the DOL website at www.dol.wa.gov.

If you are applying for your first Washington driver license, you may make an appointment for the drive test after passing the knowledge test of traffic laws, rules and regulations. If you have a valid out-of-state license at the time of application, you may not have to take the drive test. An appointment is not required for the knowledge test, but you must start your test at least 30 minutes before the office will close.

You should arrive 15 minutes early for your drive test and let the licensing services representative (LSR) know you've arrived, if requested to do so.

Vision and Medical Screening

An LSR will check your eyesight to ensure you see well enough to safely operate a motor vehicle. If the test shows your eyesight does not meet the licensing standard without glasses, your license may have a restriction for corrective lenses. You will also be asked whether you have had a loss of consciousness or control within the recent past. DOL may require an examination by an eye care or medical specialist.

The Knowledge Test

The knowledge test asks questions about road signs, traffic laws, and other information a driver needs to know. This manual includes all the information necessary to pass this test.

The Drive Test

The drive test measures your ability to drive legally and safely. A drive test may be a new experience for you. Please remember, each LSR is a trained and qualified professional. The LSR has given tests to many other people, just like you, and is riding with you only to see that you maintain control of your car and obey the rules of the road. The LSR will not try to confuse you, trick you, or ask you to do anything that is illegal. You may ask questions before the test begins. After that, any unnecessary talking will only hamper the test. Your driving will be scored during the entire test.

Only you and the LSR are allowed in the vehicle during a drive test. Occasionally, a Department supervisor may ride along to observe. Interpreters, parents, children or pets cannot be in the vehicle during a test.

You must:

- Provide a vehicle for the drive test and
- Present acceptable proof of liability insurance. As proof, present an insurance company card or policy showing the policy holder's name or the vehicle's description and the dates of insurance coverage.

A test cannot be given in a vehicle that is not properly insured, legally licensed, or has defective equipment. Items such as brakes, brake lights, turn signals, tires, seat belts, and windshield wipers will be checked.

The LSR will ask you to show arm and hand signals. Automatic signals may be used during the test. You are required to use hand signals only when signal lights cannot be seen by other drivers. Use signals whether or not other vehicles are near.

Special attention will be given to backing up. Be sure to turn your head and look to the rear for traffic and pedestrians. If the rear window is blocked, use the side windows and mirrors. Do not back the vehicle until you are sure you can do it safely.

Complete stops must be made at all stop signs and signals. Do not stop in crosswalks or beyond stop lines.

If you fail the test, expect to wait at least one week before retesting to allow time for practice and improvement.

Driver License Renewal

Your license is valid for five years and will expire on your birthday. You may renew your license within three months before it expires. If you will be out-of-state when your license expires, you may renew early. You will need to bring your current license or other proof of identity. You will be required to take a vision test and knowledge and driving test may be required. There is a $10 penalty if you renew your license more than 60 days after it has expired. You may not renew if you have a traffic violation or fine which has not been cleared by the court.

Duplicate License

If your license is lost, stolen, destroyed, or illegible, you may get a duplicate for a $15 fee. You will need to present proof of identity before the duplicate can be issued. If you are under the age of 18, your parent or guardian must sign to give their permission for the duplicate license. When last names are different, additional documents proving relationship will be required.

Change of Address or Name

You must notify the Department of Licensing within 10 days of an address or legal name change. A name change may only be done in-person and requires documentation establishing identity in your new name. Address changes may be done at no cost by mail by providing full name, date of birth, and driver license number, along with the new residence address. You must come to a driver licensing office and pay $10 to have a document issued with your new address or name.

A permanent mailing address can be added to your record along with the required residence address. Your driver license, identification card, or instruction permit will be sent to your mailing address if one is provided.

Keeping the Driver License

In order to keep your driver license, you must drive safely at all times. You can lose your license for:

- Driving or being in physical control of a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs,
- Refusing to be tested for alcohol or drugs if you are asked to do so by a police officer,
- Leaving the scene of a collision in which you are involved, without identifying yourself,
- Giving false information when you apply for a license,
- Being involved in a collision if you are uninsured. An uninsured driver involved in a collision can have their license suspended for up to three years. In addition, failing to settle a civil court judgment resulting from the collision can result in a suspension for 13 or more years if the driver fails to make restitution,
- Failing to appear for a reexamination when requested to do so by the Department of Licensing,
- Using a motor vehicle to commit a felony or causing the death of someone in a motor vehicle collision,
- Having too many moving traffic violations on your driving record (Habitual Traffic Offender),
- Reckless driving or reckless endangerment of a roadway worker,
- Racing, vehicular assault, or vehicular homicide,
- Eluding a police vehicle,
- Leaving a gas station without paying for your fuel,
- Failing to appear or respond to a traffic citation or Notice of Infraction,

- Driving while your license is suspended, revoked, cancelled, or denied,
- Carrying a license that has a fictitious name, incorrect information, or fraudulent alterations,
- Lending a license to another person or using another person's license, or
- Using a driver license issued by another state while your Washington license is suspended.
- Two or more traffic offenses if driving on an intermediate license,
- Manufacturing, selling, or delivering a forged, fictitious, counterfeit, altered, blank, or unlawfully issued driver license or identification card.

Failure to Appear

Failure to Appear (FTA) is the most common reason for license suspension. FTA is failure to appear, comply with, respond to, or pay a traffic infraction or criminal citation.

If you are cited by a law enforcement officer, the back of the ticket provides information on how to comply. If the court does not receive payment or a request for a hearing within 15 days from the date you are issued a ticket, the court notifies DOL and a Suspension Order is issued. You will have 30 days from the date the suspension is issued to comply or your driving privilege will be suspended. Arrangements should be made with the court to respond to the ticket as soon as possible. Courts may set up time payments for the fine and/or may reduce fines.

The suspension for failing to comply with the ticket is ten years or until the court authorizes reinstatement. The court will notify DOL when the matter is resolved and DOL will release the suspension. **Do not drive until you have been notified by DOL that you are authorized to do so.** If you are caught driving while suspended, you are subject to arrest and your vehicle may be impounded. There is a $20 reissue fee in addition to any other licensing fees. If the FTA is alcohol-related, the reissue fee is $150.

Other Licensing Services

Identification cards — The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues photo identification cards to non-drivers for a fee of $15. You must show the same identification that is required for a driver license.

Voter registration — You may register to vote at any driver licensing office if you meet the following qualifications: you must be a citizen of the United States, be a resident of the state of Washington, be at least 18 years of age, and must not have had your civil rights revoked. If you have just moved, you may change your voter registration at the same time you give DOL a change of address.

Organ Donor Program — If you wish to be an organ donor, let the LSR know and the organ donor indicator will appear on your new license. Your information will be released to the donor registry to ensure your wishes will be carried out. To find out more about becoming an organ donor, call LifeCenter Northwest at 1-877-275-5269 or visit the registry website at livinglegacyregistry.org.

Sex offender registration — State law requires DOL to provide the following notification: Any person residing in this state who has been found to have committed or has been convicted of any sex offense must register with the county sheriff in the county of the person's residence. Failure to register may result in criminal prosecution. Please contact your county sheriff for further information.

Copies of drive record — DOL keeps a record of license applications, collisions, traffic infractions, convictions for motor vehicle violations, and notices for failure to appear or respond to traffic citations on every driver in the state. You, an insurance carrier, an employer, and some volunteer organizations you provide transportation for, are entitled to a copy of the record for a fee of $5.

Litter bags — There are severe fines for littering. Vehicle drivers and passengers should always properly dispose of all waste paper, glass, plastic, and potentially dangerous materials.

BEFORE YOU DRIVE

Your safety and that of the public can depend on what you do before driving, including adjusting the seat and mirrors, using safety belts, checking your vehicle, locking your doors, maintaining a clear view, and securing items in and on the vehicle.

Insurance Required

If you operate a motor vehicle registered in this state, you must have liability insurance and carry an identification card proving you have such insurance. Drivers of government vehicles, motorcycles, and common or contract carrier vehicles are exempt from this insurance requirement.

You must have an automobile liability policy or bond from a state-approved insurance or surety company that provides the following:

- $25,000 or more, payable for the bodily injury or death of one person in a collision in which only one person was injured or killed;
- $50,000 or more, payable for the bodily injury or death of two or more persons in any one collision; and
- $10,000 or more, payable for injury to or destruction of property of others in any one collision.

Check the Vehicle

Your safety starts with the vehicle you are driving. It is the duty of drivers to make certain that the vehicles they drive are safe to operate. A vehicle that is not working properly is unsafe and costs more to run than one that is maintained. It can break down or cause a collision. If a vehicle is not working well, you might not be able to get out of an emergency situation. A vehicle in good working order can give you an extra safety margin when you need it most.

You should follow the recommendations in your vehicle owner's manual for routine maintenance. Some you can do yourself and some must be done by a qualified mechanic. A few simple checks will help prevent trouble on the road.

Braking system - Only your brakes can stop your vehicle. It is very dangerous if they are not working properly. If they do not seem to be working properly, are making a lot of noise, smell funny, or the brake pedal goes to the floor, have a mechanic check them.

Lights - Make sure that turn signals, brake lights, tail lights, and headlights are operating properly. These should be checked from the outside of the vehicle. Brake lights tell other road users that you are stopping and turn signals tell them you are turning.

An out-of-line headlight can shine where it does not help you and may blind other drivers. If you are having trouble seeing at night or if other drivers are constantly flashing their headlights at you, have a mechanic check the headlights.

Windshield and wipers - Damaged glass can easily break in a minor collision or when something hits the windshield. Have a damaged windshield repaired or replaced.

Windshield wipers keep the rain and snow off the windshield. Some vehicles also have wipers for rear windows and headlights. Make sure all wipers are in good operating condition. If the blades are not clearing water well, replace them.

Tires - Worn or bald tires can increase your stopping distance and make turning more difficult when the road is wet. Unbalanced tires and low pressure cause faster tire wear, reduce fuel economy, and make the vehicle harder to steer and stop. If the vehicle bounces, the steering wheel shakes, or the vehicle pulls to one side, have a mechanic check it.

Worn tires can cause hydroplaning and increase the chance of a flat tire. Check tire air pressure with an air pressure gauge when the tires are cold. Check the vehicle owner's manual or the side of the tires for proper pressure.

Check the tread with a penny. Stick the penny into the tread, head first. If the tread does not come at least to Lincoln's head (2/32 inch), the tire is illegal and unsafe and you need to replace it.

Steering system - If the steering is not working properly, it is difficult to control the direction you want to go. If the vehicle is hard to turn or does not turn when the steering wheel is first turned, have the steering checked by a mechanic.

Never turn your vehicle's ignition to the "lock" position while it is in motion. This will cause the steering to lock if you try to turn the steering wheel and you will lose control of your vehicle.

Suspension system - Your suspension helps you control your vehicle and provides a comfortable ride over varying road surfaces. If the vehicle continues to bounce after a bump or a stop, or is hard to control, you may need new shocks or other suspension parts. Have a mechanic check it.

Exhaust system - The exhaust system helps reduce the noise from the engine, helps cool the hot gases coming from the engine, and moves these gases to the rear of the vehicle. Gases from a leaky exhaust can cause death inside a vehicle in a very short time. Never run the motor in a closed garage. If you sit in a vehicle with the motor running for a long time, open a window.

Some exhaust leaks are easily heard but many are not. This is why it is important to have the exhaust system checked periodically.

Engine - A poorly running engine may lose power that is needed for normal driving and emergencies, may not start, gets poor fuel economy, pollutes the air, and could stall when you are on the road causing you and traffic a problem. Follow the procedures recommended in the owner's manual for maintenance.

Loose objects - Make sure that there are no loose objects in the vehicle that could hit someone in the event of a sudden stop or crash. Make sure there are no objects on the floor that could roll under the brake pedal and prevent you from stopping the vehicle.

Horn - The horn may not seem like it is important for safety, but as a warning device, it could save your life. Only use your horn as a warning to others.

Clean Glass Surfaces

It is important that you are able to see clearly through the windows, windshield, and mirrors. Here are some things you can do to help.

- Keep the windshield clean. Bright sun or headlights on a dirty windshield make it hard to see. Carry liquid cleaner and a paper or cloth towel so you can clean your windshield whenever it is necessary.
- Keep your window washer bottle full. Use antifreeze wash in areas where the temperature could fall below freezing.
- Keep the inside of your windows clean, especially if anyone has been smoking in the vehicle. Smoking causes a film to build up on the inside glass.
- Clear snow, ice, or frost from *all windows* before driving.
- Do not hang things from your mirror or clutter the windshield with decals. They could block your view.
- Keep the headlights, backup, brake, and tail lights clean. Dirt on the lenses can reduce the light by 50 percent.

Adjust Seat and Mirrors

You should always check and adjust your seat and mirrors before you start to drive.

- You may not drive with more than three people in the front seat if it blocks your view or interferes with the control of your vehicle. You should have clear vision in all directions, all controls should be within reach, and at least one-third of the steering wheel should be between your hands.
- Adjust your seat so that you are high enough to clearly see the road. If necessary, use a seat cushion. Do not move the seat so far forward that you cannot easily steer. You should sit so the air bag will hit you in the chest if there is a collision. Also, sit so you can touch the floor below the brake pedal with your feet.
- Adjust your rear view mirror and side mirrors. You should be able to see out the back window with the rear view mirror. Adjust the side mirrors so that you can see a small amount of the side of your vehicle when you lean forward slightly. This will help you see the traffic behind you.
- If you have a day/night mirror, make sure it is set for the time of day you are driving.
- Head restraints are designed to prevent whiplash if you are hit from behind. They should be adjusted so the head restraint contacts the back of your head.

Use Seat Belts and Child Restraints

In Washington State it is illegal to drive or to be a passenger without wearing seat belts. Always fasten your seat belt and make sure all passengers are properly using seat belts, child car seats, or booster seats. Also remember to lock the vehicle's doors.

You may have to pay a fine if you or your passengers under 16 are not wearing a seat belt or are not secured in a child car seat or booster seat. Passengers over 16 are responsible for wearing their belt and any fine.

The law also requires that:

- Any vehicle manufactured after January 1964 and registered in Washington State must have front lap-type seat belts.
- Passenger vehicles manufactured after January 1968 and trucks and multi-purpose passenger vehicles manufactured after January 1972 must have lap and shoulder belts or a lap belt at all seating positions.
- Vans, motorhomes, and vehicles carrying chassis mounted campers manufactured after January 1976 must have seat belts at all seating positions.

If your vehicle has a two-part seat belt system, be sure to wear and properly adjust them both, with the shoulder belt over your shoulder and not under your arm or behind your back. The lap belt should be across the hips, not the abdomen. Wearing either part alone greatly reduces your protection. If you have an automatic shoulder belt, be sure to buckle your lap belt as well. Otherwise, in a collision you could slide out of the belt and be hurt or killed.

In addition to protecting you from injury as a driver, seat belts help you keep control of the vehicle. If you are struck from the side or make a quick turn, the force could push you sideways. You cannot steer the vehicle if you are not behind the wheel.

Seat belts must be worn even if the vehicle is equipped with air bags. While air bags are good protection against hitting the steering wheel, dashboard, or windshield, they do not protect you if you are hit from the side or rear or if the vehicle rolls over. Also, an air bag will not keep you behind the wheel in these situations.

Children under the age of three must be properly secured in an approved child car seat. Children should be secured in the rear seat. Never secure a child in the front passenger side, especially if your vehicle has an air bag. If you are in a crash and the bag opens, your child could be injured or killed.

Washington state requires proper restraint of children:

- one year and under, or 20 pounds and under, in a rear-facing child car seat,
- one to four years and from 20 to 40 pounds in a forward-facing child car seat,
- four to six years and between 40 and 60 pounds in a booster seat, and
- six years and older or over 60 pounds with seat belts or a booster seat.

If the vehicle has an active passenger side air bag system, children under six or who weigh less than 60 pounds must ride in the back seat.

For more information about child passenger safety, call 1-800-BUCK-L-UP.

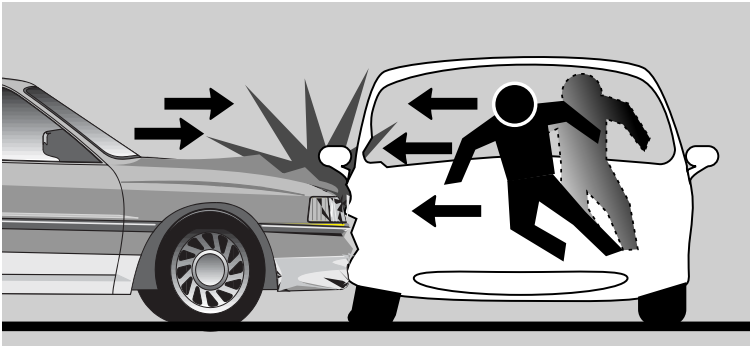
Studies have shown that if you are in a collision while using seat belts, your chances of being hurt or killed are greatly reduced. Some people still have ***bad information*** about using seat belts. For example,

"Seat belts can trap you inside a car." Wrong. It takes less than a second to undo a seat belt. Collisions where a vehicle catches fire or sinks in deep water and you are trapped, seldom happen. Even if they do, a seat belt may keep you from being knocked out. Your chance to escape will be better if you are conscious.

"Seat belts are good on long trips, but I do not need them if I am driving around town." Wrong. Over half of all traffic deaths happen within 25 miles of home. Many of them occur on roads posted at less than 45 mph.

"Some people are thrown clear in a collision and walk away with hardly a scratch." Wrong. Your chances of surviving a collision are much better if you stay inside the vehicle. Seat belts can keep you from being thrown out of your vehicle, into the path of another one.

"If I get hit from the side, I am better being thrown across the car, away from the crash point." Wrong. When a vehicle is struck from the side, it will move sideways. Everything in the vehicle that is not fastened down, including the passengers, will slide *toward* the point of the crash, not away from it.



"At slow speeds I can brace myself." Wrong. Even at 25 mph, the force of a head-on collision is the same as pedaling a bicycle full-speed into a brick wall or diving off a three-story building onto the sidewalk. No one can brace for that.

RULES OF THE ROAD

There are traffic rules that say where, when, and how fast you can drive. These rules help keep traffic moving safely. Rules of the road include traffic control devices, right-of-way, and parking rules.

Traffic Control Devices

Traffic control devices include traffic signals, signs, pavement markings, and roundabouts. Traffic control also can be provided by law enforcement, highway construction or maintenance personnel, or school crossing guards. You must obey directions from these persons.

If a traffic signal is not working, come to a complete stop, then yield to traffic as if it were a four-way stop. Proceed only when you see it is safe, or when a police officer, fire fighter, or traffic control person directs you.

Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are lights that tell you when or where to stop and go. A green light means you can go if it is safe. A yellow light means caution and a red light means stop.

Traffic lights are usually at intersections and are red, yellow, and green, from top to bottom or left to right. There are some intersections and other locations where there are single green, yellow, or red lights.

A steady **green traffic light** means you can go through the intersection. You must yield to emergency vehicles and others as required by law. If you are stopped and the light turns green, you must allow crossing traffic to clear the intersection before you go ahead. A **green arrow** means you can safely turn in the direction of the arrow. There should be no oncoming or crossing traffic while the arrow is green. If you are turning left, a steady green traffic light means you may turn but only when safe to do so. Oncoming traffic has the right-of-way. Be alert for signs that prohibit left turns.

When turning right or left, watch for pedestrians crossing in front of your vehicle. You must stop for pedestrians if they are in, or within, one lane of your half of the roadway.

A steady **yellow traffic light** means the traffic light is about to change to red. You must stop if it is safe to do so. If you are in the intersection when the yellow light comes on, do not stop but continue through the intersection. A **flashing yellow** traffic light means slow down and proceed with caution. A **yellow arrow** means that the protection of a green arrow is ending and if you are turning in the direction of the arrow, you should prepare to stop and give the right-of-way to oncoming traffic before turning.

A steady **red traffic light** means stop. You must wait until the traffic light turns green and there is no crossing traffic before you may move ahead. If you are turning right, you may turn after coming to a full stop if it is safe and if there is no sign prohibiting the turn on a red light. You may also turn left onto a one-way street with traffic moving left after coming to a full stop if there is no sign prohibiting turns on a red light. Be careful of pedestrians crossing in front of your vehicle. A **flashing red** traffic light means the same as a stop sign. You must come to a full stop and then may proceed when it is safe to do so. A **red arrow** means you must stop and you cannot go in the direction of the arrow. You may proceed when the red arrow goes out and a green arrow or light goes on. If you are turning right, you may turn after coming to a full stop if it is safe and if there is no sign prohibiting the turn on a red arrow. You may also turn left onto a one-way street with traffic moving left after coming to a full stop if there is no sign prohibiting turns on a red arrow when it is safe to do so.

Traffic Signs

Traffic signs tell you about traffic rules, hazards, where you are, how to get where you are going, and where services are located. The shape and color of these signs show the type of information they provide. The inside cover of this guide shows the shape and color of common signs.

Warning signs - These signs are usually yellow with black lettering or symbols and most are diamond shaped. These signs warn you to slow down and be prepared to stop if necessary. They warn you of sharp curves, special situations, or hazards ahead. Some common warning signs are shown below.

Cross Road

Stop Ahead

Merging Traffic

Two-Way Traffic

Yield Ahead

Lane Ends, Merge Left

Advance Warning: Bicycles

Pedestrian Crossing

School Crossing

Divided Highway (Road) Begins

Divided Highway (Road) Ends

Added Lane

Slippery When Wet

Sharp Curve Right

Hill

Railroad crossing warning signs - Many railroad crossings have signs or signals to warn drivers. Never try to beat a train across the tracks. Never start to cross if there is not room for your vehicle on the far side or if you will have to stop on the tracks. Wait until there is room for your vehicle on the far side. It is wise not to shift gears when crossing railroad tracks, just in case you might stall. Remember that trains are large and may be moving faster than they look. Some common railroad crossing warning signs and signals are listed below.

- A round yellow warning sign with an "X" symbol and black "RR" letters is placed along the road before you get to a railroad crossing.
- A white X-shaped sign or "crossbuck" with "Railroad Crossing" on it is located at the railroad crossing. This sign has the same meaning as a "Yield" sign. You must yield to trains crossing the road.

- At some crossings, along with the crossbuck sign, you will see side-by-side red lights that will flash alternately when a train is approaching. When the lights are flashing, you must stop. At some crossings there is also a crossing gate that will lower when a train is coming. Do not drive around the gate. Some crossings also have a bell or a horn that will sound. Do not cross until the bell or horn has stopped.
- Crossings with more than one train track will often post a sign that shows the number of tracks. These signs warn you that there is more than one track and there may be more than one train crossing.

Not all crossings with more than one train track will have these signs so it is important to check for more than one track before crossing.

Slow Moving Vehicle sign - A reflective orange triangle on the rear of a vehicle means it is traveling less than 25 mph. You may see this decal on construction equipment and in rural areas on farm vehicles, horse drawn wagons, or carriages.

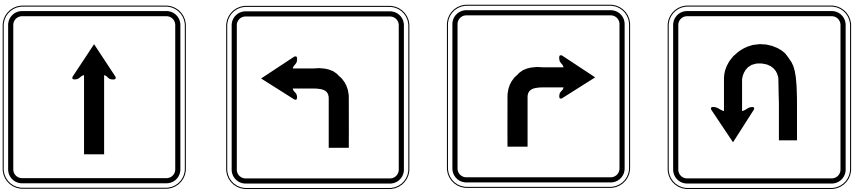
Work area signs - These construction, maintenance, or emergency operations signs are generally diamond or rectangle shaped and orange with black letters or symbols. They warn you that people are working on or near the roadway. These warnings include reduced speed, detours, slow moving vehicles ahead, and poor or suddenly changing road surfaces. In work areas, traffic may be controlled by a person with a sign or flag. You must obey these persons. Motorists must yield to any highway construction personnel, vehicles with flashing yellow lights, or equipment inside a highway construction or maintenance work zone. Fines double for moving violations in construction areas when workers are present.

Regulatory signs - These signs are square, rectangular, or have a special shape and are usually white, red, or black with black, red, white, or green letters or symbols. They give you information about rules for traffic direction, lane use, turning, speed, parking, and other special situations.

Some regulatory signs have a red circle with a red slash over a symbol. These signs prohibit certain actions, such as, no left turn, no right turn, no U turn, etc.

Common types of regulatory signs are:

- *Speed limit signs* - These signs indicate the maximum safe speed allowed or the minimum safe speed required. The maximum limit should be driven only in ideal driving conditions and you must reduce your speed when conditions require it. For example, you should reduce your speed when the roadway is slippery, during rain, snow or icy conditions, or when it is foggy and difficult to see clearly down the road. Some high speed roads have minimum speed limits and you are required to travel at least this fast so you are not a hazard to other drivers. If the minimum posted speed is too fast for you, use another road.
- *Speed zone ahead signs* - These signs tell you to slow down because the speed limit is reduced ahead.
- *Lane use control signs* - These signs tell you where you can go or where you can turn and often use an arrow symbol. These signs can be located on the side of the road or hanging over the lane of travel. Sometimes arrows may be painted on the road as a supplement to the signs.



- *No passing signs* - These signs tell you where passing is not permitted. Passing areas are based on how far you can see ahead. They consider unseen hazards such as hills and curves, intersections, driveways, and other places a vehicle may enter the roadway.

These signs, along with pavement markings, indicate where you can pass another vehicle, the beginning and ending of a passing zone, or where you may not pass. Where passing is permitted, you may do so only if it is safe. Be aware of road conditions and other vehicles. A triangular No Passing Zone sign can also be used. These signs are yellow or orange and placed on the left side of the roadway.

- *Stop sign* - A stop sign has eight sides and is red with white letters. You must come to a full stop at a marked stop line, but if none, before entering a marked crosswalk or, if none, at the point nearest the intersecting roadway where the driver has a view of approaching traffic. You must wait until crossing vehicles and pedestrians have cleared and pull forward only when it is safe.
- *Yield sign* - A yield sign is a downward pointing triangle. It is red and white with red letters. It means you must slow down and yield the right-of-way to traffic in the intersection you are crossing or roadway you are entering.
- *Do Not Enter sign* - A square sign with a white horizontal line inside a red ball means you cannot enter. You will see this sign at roadway openings that you should not enter, such as exit ramps where you would be going in the wrong direction, in crossovers on divided roadways, and at numerous locations on one-way streets.

- *Disabled Parking sign* - A rectangular sign with a white background and green lettering, and/or the international disabled person symbol in white on a blue background marks special parking stalls at businesses and stores. You or your passenger must have and display a disabled person's parking placard or license plate to park in these stalls. There is a $250 fine for parking in stalls without displaying the required placard or plate and for blocking the access aisle next to a space reserved for physically disabled persons.
- *Traction Advisory signs* - A rectangular sign with a white background and black letters. These signs tell you when chains are required. There is a $500 penalty for failing to use chains when required.

Common types of guide signs are:

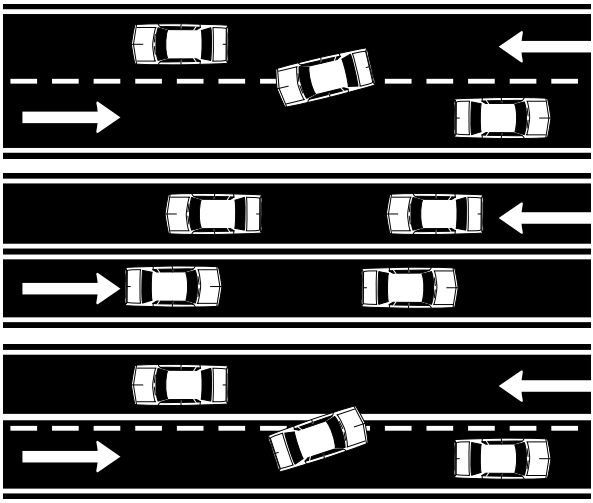
- *Destination signs* - These signs are square or rectangular shaped and are green or brown with white lettering. They show directions and distance to various locations such as cities, airports, or state lines or to special areas such as national parks, historical areas, or museums.
- *Service signs* - These signs are square or rectangular shaped and are blue with white letters or symbols. They show the location of various services such as rest areas, gas stations, campgrounds, or hospitals.
- *Route number signs* - The shape and color of route number signs indicate the type of roadway - interstate, U.S., state, city, or county road. When planning a trip, use a road map to determine your route. During the trip, follow the route signs to prevent you from getting lost.

Pavement Markings

Lines and symbols on the roadway divide lanes, tell you when you may pass other vehicles or change lanes, which lanes to use for turns, where you must stop for signs or traffic signals, and define pedestrian walkways.

Edge and Lane Lines - Solid lines along the side of the road show you where the edge of the road or lane is located.

- *White lane markings* - Solid white lines are used to mark both edges of two-way roads and the right edge of one-way roads. **You should not drive to the right of the edge line.** A dashed white line between lanes of traffic means that you may cross it to change lanes if it is safe. A solid white line between lanes of traffic means that you should stay in your lane unless a special situation requires you to change lanes.
- *Yellow lane markings* - Solid yellow lines mark the left edge of one-way roads and separate traffic moving in opposite directions. A dashed yellow line between opposing lanes of traffic means that you may cross it to pass if it is safe to do so.



Dashed yellow line - All traffic may pass when safe.

Solid yellow lines - No passing allowed.

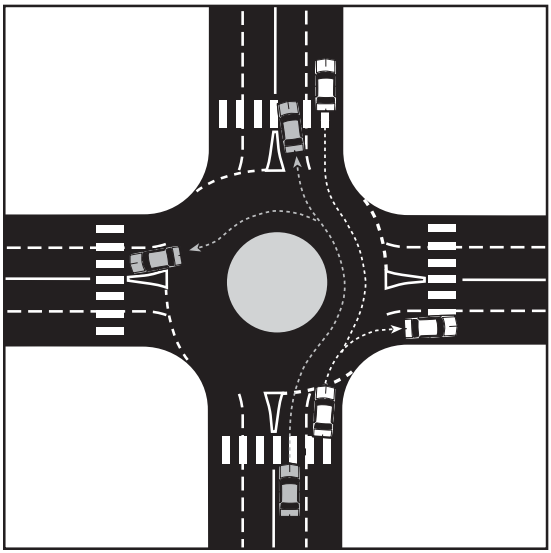
One solid, one dashed yellow line - Traffic next to the dashed line may pass when safe.

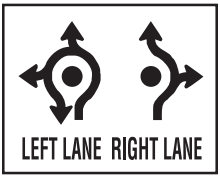
Some passing zones have signs that tell you where passing is permitted and where you cannot pass. Where there is both a solid and a dashed yellow line between opposing lanes of traffic, you may not pass if the solid yellow line is on your side. If the dashed line is on your side you are in the passing zone and may pass if it is safe. You must return to your side before the passing zone ends. Two solid yellow lines between lanes of traffic means neither side can pass. You may cross yellow lane markings, except medians, to turn left if it is safe.

- *Medians* - When a highway is divided into two or more roadways, it is illegal to drive within, over, or across the space. This separation can be an open space, a highway divider, or a median island. It can also be formed either by 18 inch solid yellow pavement markings or by yellow crosshatchings between two solid yellow lines.
- *Crosswalks and stop lines* - When required to stop because of a sign or signal, you must stop before your vehicle reaches the stop line or crosswalk, if there is one. Crosswalks define the area where pedestrians may cross the roadway. You must yield to pedestrians in or about to enter a crosswalk. Some crosswalks may also have in-pavement lights that are activated by crossing pedestrians. You must yield when these lights are flashing. Not all crosswalks are marked. Be alert for pedestrians when crossing intersections or turning.
- *Other traffic control devices* - There are other traffic control devices used to discourage speeding and reduce collisions in residential areas. These devices have a variety of shapes. If you see speed bumps, curbing that narrows the roadway, or circular islands in intersections, slow down and keep to the right unless otherwise posted.

Roundabouts

A roundabout is an intersection control device with traffic circulating around an island. Approaching vehicles must yield to the traffic in the circle. Always yield to pedestrians and bicyclists who are legally crossing the road. Inside the circle, always drive around the circle to the right.

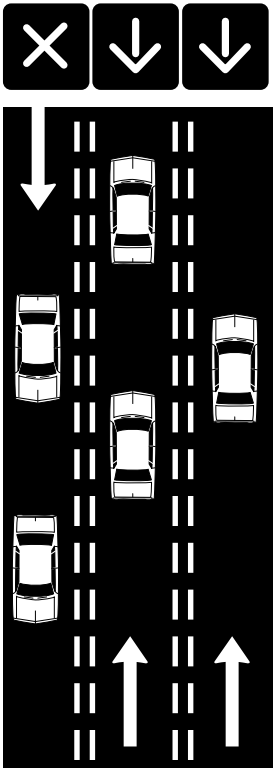




How to drive in a roundabout:

1. **Slow down as you approach the intersection; roundabouts are designed for speeds of 15-20 mph.**
2. **Enter the roundabout when there is a gap in traffic. Once inside, do not stop. Follow directions on signs or pavement markings about which lane to use.**
3. **You may exit at any street or continue around if you miss your exit.**

Reversible Lanes



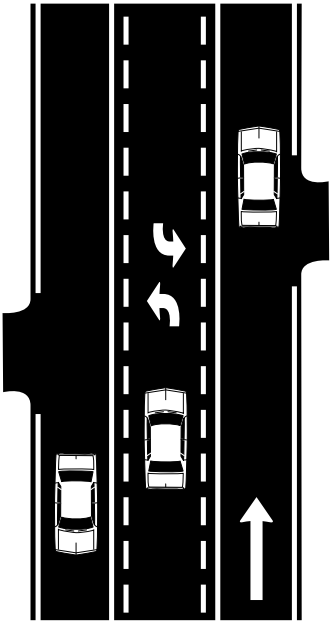
Some travel lanes are designed to carry traffic in one direction at certain times and in the opposite direction at other times. These lanes are usually marked by double-dashed yellow lines. Before you start driving in them, check to see which lanes you can use at that time. There may be signs posted by the side of the road or overhead. Special lights are often used. A green arrow means you can use the lane beneath it, a red "X" means you cannot. A flashing yellow "X" means the lane is only for turning. A steady yellow "X" means that the use of the lane is changing and you should move out of it as soon as it is safe to do so.

Reserved Lanes

On various roadways, one or more lanes may be reserved for special vehicles. Reserved lanes are marked by signs stating that the lane is reserved for special use. These lanes often have a white diamond posted at the side of the road or painted on the road surface.

- "Transit" or "bus" means the lane is for bus use only.
- "Bicycle" means the lane is reserved for bicycles.
- "HOV" stands for "High Occupancy Vehicles" and indicates lanes reserved for vehicles with more than one person in them. Signs say how many people must be in the vehicle, as well as the days and hours to which it applies. For example, "HOV 3" means there must be at least three people in the vehicle.

Two-Way Left Turn Lane



These center lanes are reserved for vehicles making left turns in either direction from or into the roadway (or U turns when they are permitted). These lanes cannot be used for passing and cannot be used for travel further than 300 feet. On the pavement, left turn arrows for traffic in one direction alternate with left turn arrows for traffic coming from the other direction. These lanes are marked on each side by a solid yellow and dashed yellow lines. Enter the lane only when it is safe to do so.

General Rules

General driving - If you back your vehicle, look carefully and move slowly. Drivers do not expect a vehicle to be backing towards them and may not realize it until it is too late. If you miss your turn or exit, do not back up, but go on to the next turn or exit or where you can safely turn around. It is illegal to back up on a shoulder or a freeway.

Do not stop in travel lanes for any reason (confusion, breakdown, letting out a passenger). Keep moving until you can safely pull off the road.

In Washington State it is illegal to give or to seek a ride on any limited access roadway such as a freeway unless otherwise posted. No person seeking a ride may stand on or along a public highway or street where a vehicle cannot safely stop off the main traveled portion of the roadway.

On a road with two lanes traveling in opposite directions, you must drive on the right side of the road except when you are legally passing another vehicle.

On a road with two or more lanes traveling in the same direction, stay in the right lane except to pass. On a road with three or more lanes traveling in the same direction, if there is a lot of entering or exiting traffic, use the center travel lane.

Unless directed to do so by officials or signs, never drive on the shoulder of the road.

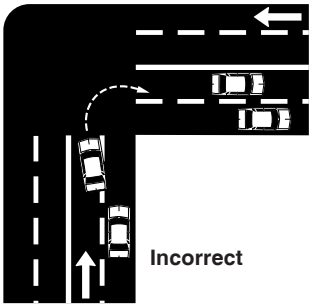
Passing - On a road with two lanes traveling in the same direction, the left-hand lane is intended to be used for passing slower vehicles. On roads with more than two lanes traveling in the same direction, use the right lane for slower speeds, the middle lanes for higher speeds, and the left-hand lane for passing only. If you pass on the right, the other driver may have difficulty seeing you and might suddenly change lanes in front of you. Never pass on the shoulder, whether it is paved or not. Other drivers will never expect you to be there and may pull off the road without looking.

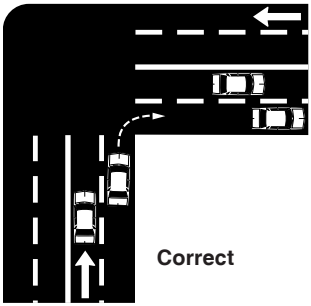
On limited access roadways of three or more lanes in one direction, vehicles towing a trailer or vehicles over ten thousand pounds may not use the left-hand lane unless otherwise posted. However, this does not prevent these vehicles from using the HOV lanes.

Driving on ocean beaches - Driving is allowed on ocean beaches in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. The beach is considered a state highway so all road, vehicle registration, and driver licensing regulations apply. The speed limit is 25 mph and pedestrians have the right-of-way at all times. You may only enter the beach with your vehicle through marked beach approaches and you may only drive on hard-packed sand. Watch for beach closure signs and signs that occasionally prohibit beach driving.

Turning - Where there are no signs or lane markings to control turning, you should turn from the lane that is closest to the direction you want to go and turn into the lane closest to the one you came from. This way, you will cross the fewest lanes of traffic. When making turns, go from one lane to the other as directly as possible without crossing lane lines or interfering with traffic. Once you have completed your turn, you can change to another lane if you need to.

- *Right turns*. On right turns avoid moving wide to the left before going into the turn. If you swing wide, the driver behind you may think you are changing lanes or turning left and may try to pass you on the right. If you swing wide as you complete the turn, drivers who are in the far lane will not expect to see you there.





- *Left turns*. When making a left turn, avoid starting the turn so soon that you are turning on the wrong side of the street. However, be sure to leave room for oncoming vehicles to turn left in front of you.
- *Multiple lanes turning*. If there are signs or lane markings that allow for two or more turning lanes, stay in your lane during the turn.
- *U Turns*. You should only make a U turn when it is safe. U turns should not be made on any curve or when approaching the crest of a hill when your vehicle cannot be seen by others. Some towns and cities do not allow U turns. Check with local police to be sure.

Right-Of-Way

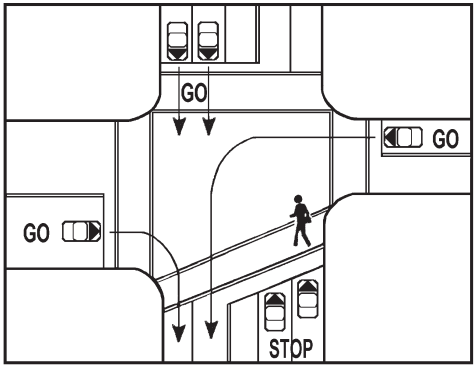
There will be many times when you will need to slow down or stop your vehicle to allow another vehicle, pedestrian, or bicyclist to continue safely. Even if there are no signs or signals to regulate traffic, there are laws governing who must yield the right-of-way.

The law says who must *yield* the right-of-way, it does not *give* anyone the right-of-way. You must do everything you can to prevent striking a pedestrian, on foot or in a wheelchair, or another vehicle, regardless of the circumstances.

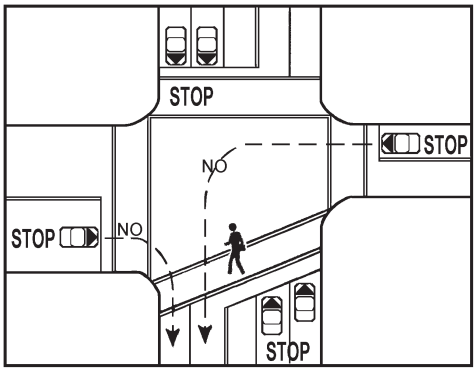
For their own safety pedestrians should walk toward oncoming traffic and off the roadway. You should be ready to yield to pedestrians in case they step into your path.

The following right-of-way rules apply at intersections:

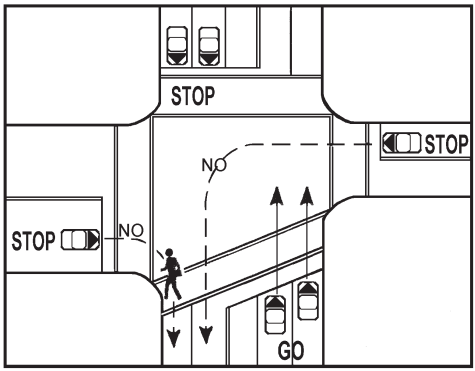
- Pedestrians and bicyclists have the right-of-way at crosswalks and intersections, whether the crosswalk is marked or not. Drivers must yield where necessary to avoid striking pedestrians and bicyclists who are crossing the road.



- Vehicles must stop if a pedestrian or bicyclist is in their half of the roadway.



- Vehicles must stop if a pedestrian or bicyclist is within one lane of their half of the roadway.



- Once the pedestrian or bicyclist is beyond one lane of their half of the roadway, the vehicles may go.

- Drivers crossing a sidewalk while entering or exiting a driveway, alley, or parking lot must stop and yield to pedestrians. It is illegal to drive on a sidewalk except to cross it.
- Pedestrians using a guide dog or carrying a white cane have absolute right-of-way. Do not use your horn as it could confuse or frighten the blind pedestrian.
- Drivers turning left must yield to oncoming vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Drivers entering a roundabout must yield to drivers already in the circle.
- At an intersection where there is no stop sign, yield sign, or traffic signal, drivers must yield to vehicles in the intersection and to those coming from the right.
- At a four-way stop the driver reaching the intersection first, goes first (after coming to a complete stop). If more than one vehicle arrives at the same time, the vehicle on the right goes first.
- Drivers entering a road from a driveway, alley, parking lot, or roadside must yield to vehicles already on the main road.
- Drivers must not enter an intersection unless they can get through it without having to stop. You should wait until traffic ahead clears so you are not blocking the intersection.
- Drivers passing a vehicle going in the same direction must be ready to yield in case the other driver suddenly turns, slows down, or stops.
- You must yield the right-of-way to trains crossing the roadway.

- You must yield the right-of-way to a police vehicle, fire engine, ambulance, or other emergency vehicle using a siren, air horn, or a red or blue flashing light. Pull over to the right edge of the road, or as near to the right as possible, and stop when you see or hear an emergency vehicle approaching from any direction. If you are in an intersection, drive through the intersection before you pull over. If the light is red, stay where you are. Follow any instructions given over the emergency vehicle's loudspeaker.
- You must stop for a school bus that is stopped with its red lights flashing whether it is on your side of the road, the opposite side of the road or at an intersection you are approaching. You are not required to stop for a school bus with red lights flashing when the stopped school bus is traveling in the opposite direction and the roadway:
  - has three or more marked traffic lanes,
  - is separated by a median, or
  - is separated by a physical barrier.

  After the school bus red lights have stopped flashing, watch for children along the side of the road and do not proceed until they have completely left the roadway.
- You must yield to any transit vehicle (bus) that has signaled and is pulling back onto the roadway.

Parking

Drivers are responsible for making sure their vehicle is not a hazard when it is parked. Whenever you park, be sure it is in a place that is far enough from any travel lane to avoid interfering with traffic and visible to vehicles approaching from either direction.

- Always park in a designated area if possible.
- Always set your parking brake when you park. Leave the vehicle in gear if it has a manual transmission or in “park” if it has an automatic transmission.
- Check traffic before you open the door. Get out of the vehicle on the curb side if you can. If you have to use the street side, check traffic before you get out. Shut the door as soon as you can after getting out.
- Never leave the ignition key in a parked vehicle. It is a good habit to lock the doors whenever you leave your vehicle.
- It is against the law to leave children under 16 years of age alone in a parked car with the engine running.
- If you must park on a roadway, park your vehicle as far away from traffic as possible. If there is a curb, park as close to it as you can.

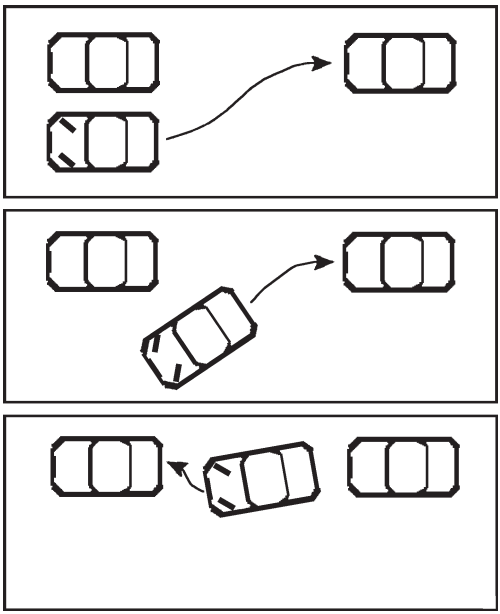
Parking on a Hill

When you park on a hill:

- with a curb and are facing uphill, set your parking brake and turn your steering wheel away from the curb. This way, if your vehicle starts to roll, it will roll into the curb.
- facing downhill, set your parking brake and turn your steering wheel toward the curb.
- and there is no curb, set your parking brake and turn your steering wheel toward the edge of the road. This way, if your vehicle starts to roll, it will roll away from traffic.

Parallel Parking

When you parallel park, park within 12 inches of the curb. Here are the steps to parallel parking:



- Stop even with the car ahead. Turn the wheel sharp right and back slowly toward the car behind.
- When clear of the car ahead, turn the wheel sharp left and back slowly to the car behind.
- Turn the wheel sharp right and pull toward the curb in the center of the parking space.

No parking zones - There are many areas where you cannot park. Check for signs that may prohibit or limit parking. Some parking restrictions are indicated by colored curb markings. Do not park:

- in an intersection,
- on a crosswalk or sidewalk,
- in a construction area if your vehicle will block traffic,
- within 30 feet of a traffic signal, stop sign, or yield sign,
- within 20 feet of a pedestrian safety zone,
- within 15 feet of a fire hydrant,

- within 50 feet of a railroad crossing,
- more than 12 inches from the curb,
- within 20 feet of a fire station driveway on the same side of the street or within 75 feet of the fire station driveway on the other side of the street,
- within 5 feet of a driveway, alley, private road, or area of the curb removed or lowered for access to the sidewalk,
- on a bridge or overpass or in a tunnel or underpass,
- on the wrong side of the street,
- in a space marked for the disabled unless you have a disabled license plate or placard,
- on the road side of a parked vehicle (double parking),
- on railroad tracks,
- on the shoulder of the freeway unless you have an emergency, or
- wherever there is a sign that says you cannot park.

Other parking restrictions may be indicated by signs or curbs painted:

- white - indicates that only short stops are permitted,
- yellow/red - indicates a loading zone or some other restriction.

SAFE DRIVING TIPS

No driver manual can teach you how to operate a vehicle or be a safe driver. Driving requires skills you can only gain through instruction and practice. The following offers some basic driving information.

Starting

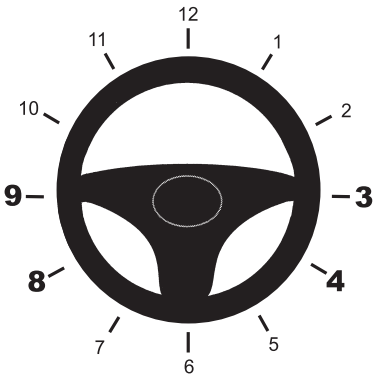
Check the vehicle owner's manual to determine the best way to start the vehicle. Make sure the parking brake is on before you start the vehicle. If the vehicle has a manual transmission, it must not be in gear and in some vehicles the clutch must be depressed. For a vehicle that has an automatic transmission, you must put the shift selector in "park."

Accelerating

Accelerate gradually and smoothly. Trying to start too fast can cause your wheels to spin, particularly on slippery surfaces, and cause the vehicle to slide. With a manual-shift vehicle, practice using the clutch and accelerator so the engine does not over-rev or stall when shifting gears.

Steering

Your hands should be placed on opposite sides of the steering wheel (left hand between 8 and 9 o'clock and right hand between 3 and 4 o'clock). This position is comfortable and on high speed roads it allows you to make turns without taking your hands off the wheel. It also positions your hands out of the way of the air bag. Leaning against the door, putting your elbow out the window, or driving with one hand can keep you from reacting quickly in an emergency.



Look well down the road and on both sides of the road, not just at the road in front of your vehicle. Look for traffic situations where you will need to steer before you get to them. This way, you have time to steer smoothly and safely.

When turning sharp corners, turn the steering wheel using the "hand-over-hand" technique. When you complete a turn, straighten out the steering wheel by hand. Letting it slip through your fingers could be dangerous.

Speeding and Speed Limits

The best way to avoid speeding is to know how fast you are going. Check the speedometer often. People are not very good at judging how fast they are going. It is easy to be traveling much faster than you think. This is especially true when you leave high speed roads and are driving on much slower local roads.

Obey speed limit signs. They are there for your safety. Speed limits, **unless otherwise posted**, are:

- 20 mph in school zones,
- 25 mph on streets of cities and towns,
- 50 mph on county roads, and
- 60 mph on state highways.
- Parts of interstate highways may be posted with higher maximum speeds.

Stopping

Be alert so that you know well ahead of time when you will have to stop. Stopping suddenly is dangerous and usually points to a driver who was not paying attention. When you brake quickly, you could skid and lose control of your vehicle. You also make it harder for drivers behind you to stop without hitting you.

Try to avoid panic stops by seeing events well in advance. By slowing down or changing lanes, you may not have to stop at all, and if you do, you can make a more gradual and safer stop.

Seeing Well

Most of what you do in driving depends on what you see. To be a good driver, you need to see well. You must not drive with more than three people in the front seat if it blocks your view or interferes with your control of the vehicle. The single biggest contributor to collisions is failing to see what is happening. You must look down the road, to the sides, and behind your vehicle and be alert for unexpected events. At night and at other times when it's hard to see, you must use your headlights.

You must be alert to what is going on around you. Many collisions occur because drivers do not pay enough attention to their driving. Do not take your eyes off the road for more than a few seconds at any one time. If you need to look at a map, pull safely off the road before you try to look at it. Do not try to read the map while you are driving. In many collisions with motorcycles, bicycles and pedestrians, drivers reported that they were looking but did not see them.

If you have a cellular phone or CB radio, avoid using it when the vehicle is in motion. Even with "hands free" equipment, conversing on a phone or radio takes your attention away from driving and can prevent you from seeing a dangerous situation.

Do not drive with head or earphones that cover or go in your ears. These are illegal in Washington and many other states and make it hard to hear emergency horns or sirens. This law does not apply to motorcyclists wearing a helmet with built-in headsets or earphones or to hands-free cellular phone systems.

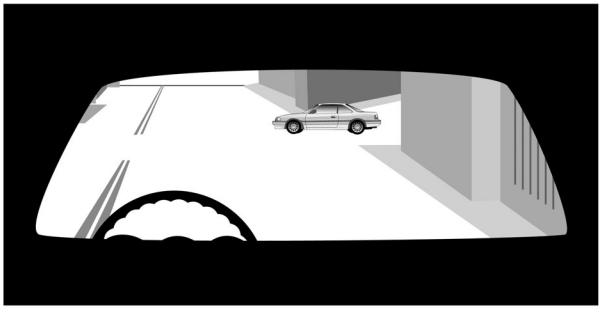
Do not slow down just to look at a crash, someone getting a ticket, or other roadside activity. This could cause you to be in a collision. If you take your eyes off the road to look at something, you could run into a vehicle ahead that has slowed or stopped. This also can increase congestion. When you pass these roadside activities, keep your eyes on the road and get past them as soon, and as safely, as you can.

Scanning

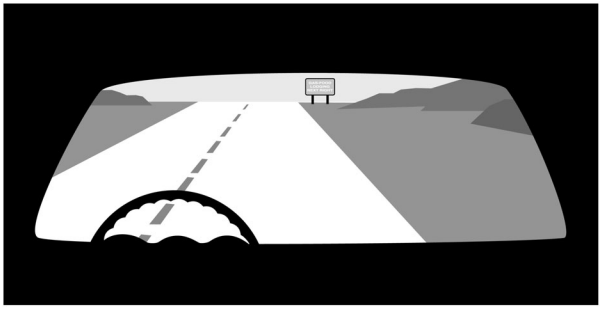
To be a good driver, you must know what is happening around your vehicle. You must look ahead, to the sides, and behind the vehicle. Scanning helps you to see problems ahead, vehicles and people that may be in the road by the time you reach them, signs warning of problems ahead, and signs giving you directions.

Look ahead - In order to avoid last-minute braking or the need to turn, you should look well down the road. By looking well ahead and being ready to stop or change lanes if needed, you can drive more safely, save on fuel, help keep traffic moving at a steady pace, and allow yourself time to see better around your vehicle and along the side of the road. This will also help you to steer straight with less weaving. Safer drivers tend to look at least ten seconds ahead of their vehicle. How far is this? It is the distance that your vehicle will travel in ten seconds.

In the city ten seconds is about one block. When you drive in city traffic, you should try to look at least one block ahead. On the highway ten seconds is about four city blocks or a quarter of a mile.



In the city look ten seconds ahead.



On the highway look ten seconds ahead.

How do you know how many seconds you are looking ahead? Here is how to figure how far ahead you are looking.

1. Find a non-moving object, like a sign or telephone pole, near the road about as far ahead as you are looking.
2. Start counting: one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, etc., until you reach the object.
3. The number of seconds you have counted is the number of seconds ahead that you were looking.

You can be a safer driver by looking well ahead. You can avoid the need to stop or turn quickly. The less you have to stop or turn quickly, the less likely you are to run into someone or have someone run into you.

By looking well ahead, you can save on fuel. Every time you have to stop quickly, it takes time and fuel to get your vehicle back up to speed. Drivers who look ahead can slow down gradually or change lanes and avoid unnecessary braking that leads to lower miles-per-gallon.

Traffic would flow more smoothly if everyone looked well ahead. Making driving changes before the last moment gives drivers behind you more time to react. The earlier you act, the less often someone behind you has to react quickly to your vehicle. By seeing needed driving changes early, you can drive more safely and help drivers behind you drive more safely too.

Look to the sides - As other vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists may cross or enter your path anytime, look to the sides to make sure no one is coming. This is especially true at intersections and railroad crossings.

Intersections - Intersections are any place where traffic merges or crosses. They include: cross streets, side streets, driveways, and shopping center or parking lot entrances. Before you enter an intersection, look to the left and right for vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists. If stopped, look to the left and right before you start moving. Look across the intersection before you start to move to make sure the path is clear all the way through the intersection and you will not block it if you have to stop.

Before you turn left across oncoming traffic, turn on your left turn signal at least 100 feet ahead and look for a safe gap in the traffic. Check the street you are turning into to make sure that no vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists are in your path. Look one more time in the direction of oncoming traffic before you turn.

Before turning right, turn on your right turn signal at least 100 feet ahead and make sure that there is no traffic approaching from your left and no oncoming traffic turning left into your path. Do not begin your turn without checking for pedestrians crossing where you will be turning. After stopping, you may turn right on red unless prohibited. You may also turn left from a one-way or two-way street into a one-way street unless prohibited.

Do not rely on traffic signals or signs to tell you that no one will be crossing in front of you. Some drivers do not obey traffic signals or signs. At an intersection look left and right even if other traffic has a red light or a stop sign.

This is especially important just after the light has turned green. This is when people on the cross street are most likely to hurry through the intersection before the light changes to red. Others who may not stop are individuals who may be driving under the influence or other reckless drivers.

Make sure you can clearly see crossing traffic before entering an intersection. If you were stopped and your view of a cross street is blocked, edge forward slowly until you can see. By moving forward slowly, crossing drivers can see the front of your vehicle before you can see them. This gives them a chance to slow down and warn you if needed.

Whenever there is a lot of activity along the side of the road, there is a good chance that someone will cross or enter the road. Therefore, it is very important to look to the sides when you are near shopping centers, parking lots, construction areas, busy sidewalks, playgrounds, and school yards.

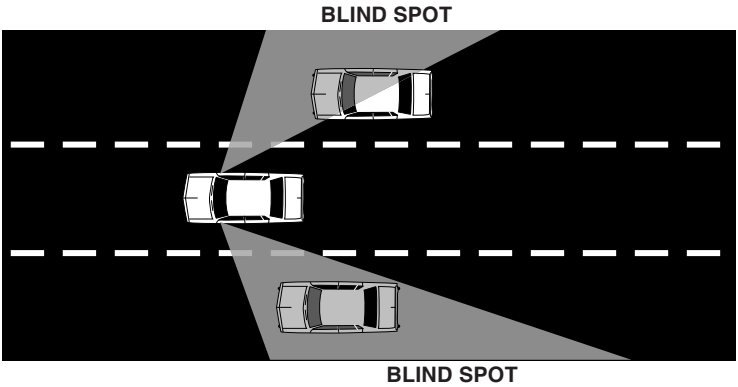
Railroad crossings - As you approach any railroad crossing slow down and look up and down the tracks to make sure a train is not coming. Assume that a train is coming even if you have never seen one at that crossing before. Assuming that a train is not coming is one of the leading causes of fatalities at railroad crossings. If you are not sure it is safe to cross the tracks, turn your radio down or off, stop talking, put the window down, and look and listen for a train. Make sure there is room for your vehicle on the far side before you cross the tracks.

At crossings with more than one track, wait until the passing train is well down the track before starting to cross. Another train may be hidden by the one that just passed.

Look behind - Besides watching traffic ahead of you, check traffic behind you. You need to check more often when traffic is heavy. This is the only way you will know if someone is following too closely or coming up too fast and will give you time to do something about it. It is very important to look for vehicles behind you when you change lanes, slow down, back up, or are driving down a long or steep hill.

When changing lanes - Whenever you want to change lanes, you must check that there are no vehicles in the lane you want to enter. This means you must check for traffic to the side and behind your vehicle before you change lanes. Changing lanes includes: changing from one lane to another, merging onto a roadway from an entrance ramp, and entering the roadway from the curb or shoulder. When changing lanes, you should:

- Turn on your turn signal in the direction you are moving.
- Look in your rear view and side mirrors. Make sure there are no vehicles in the lane you want to enter. Make sure that nobody is about to pass you.
- Look over your shoulder in the direction you plan to move. Be sure no one is near the rear corners of your vehicle. These areas are called "blind spots" because you cannot see them through your mirrors. You must turn your head and look to see vehicles in your blind spot.



- Check quickly. Do not take your eyes off the road ahead for more than an instant. Traffic ahead of you could stop suddenly while you are checking traffic to the sides, rear, or over your shoulder. Also, use your mirrors to check traffic while you are preparing to change lanes, merge, or pull onto the roadway. This way you can keep an eye on vehicles ahead of you at

the same time. Check over your shoulder just before you change lanes for traffic in your blind spot. Look several times, if you need to, but not for too long a period at any one time. You must keep track of what traffic is doing in front of you and in the lane you are entering.

- Check the far lane. Be sure to check the far lane, if there is one. Someone in that lane may be planning to move into the same lane you want to enter.
- Check for other road users. Remember that there are other road users such as motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians that are harder to see than cars and trucks. Be especially alert when you are entering the roadway from a curb or driveway.

When you slow down - You must check behind your vehicle whenever you slow down. This is very important when you slow down quickly or at points where a following driver would not expect you to slow down, such as driveways or parking spaces.

When you back up - It is hard for you to see behind your vehicle. Try to do as little backing as possible. In a shopping center try to find a parking space you can drive through so you can drive forward when you leave. Where backing is necessary, here are some hints that will help you back your vehicle safely.

- Check behind your vehicle before you get in. Children or small objects cannot be seen from the driver's seat.
- Place your right arm on the back of the seat and turn around so you can look directly through the rear window. Do not depend on your rear view or side mirrors to help you see directly behind your vehicle.
- Back slowly, your vehicle is much harder to steer while you are backing. You must stop before backing across a sidewalk or into a street. Look left and right and yield to any pedestrians or vehicles.
- Whenever possible use a person outside the vehicle to help you back.

When going down a long or steep hill - Check your mirrors when you are going down hills or mountain roads. Vehicles often build up speed going down a steep grade. Be alert for large trucks and buses that may be going too fast.

Use Your Lights

By law, your vehicle's headlights must be turned on from a half hour after sunset until a half hour before sunrise. Lights must also be on any time conditions make it difficult to see people or other vehicles. Here are some things you can do that will help you see better:

- Use your high beams whenever there are no oncoming vehicles. High beams let you see twice as far as low beams. It is important to use high beams on unfamiliar roads, in construction areas, or where there may be people along the side of the road.
- Dim your high beams whenever you come within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle.
- Use your low beams when following 300 feet or less behind another vehicle.
- Use the low beams in fog or when it is snowing or raining hard. Light from high beams will reflect back, causing glare and making it more difficult to see ahead. Some vehicles have fog lights that you should also use under these conditions.

If a vehicle comes toward you with high beams on, look away from the headlights and toward the right side of the road until the car has passed. This will keep you from being blinded by the other vehicle's headlights and allow you to see enough of the edge of the road to stay on course. Do not try to "get back" at the other driver by keeping your bright lights on. If you do, both of you may be blinded.

Letting Others Know You Are There

Collisions often happen because one driver does not see another driver or when one driver does something the other driver does not expect. It is important that drivers let other road users know they are there and what they plan to do.

Some drivers do not always pay attention to what is going on around them. It is important that other road users know you are there.

Use headlights - Besides helping you to see at night, headlights help other people see you. Turn on your headlights whenever you have trouble seeing others.

- On rainy, snowy, or foggy days, it is sometimes hard for other drivers to see your vehicle. In these conditions, headlights make your vehicle easier to see. Remember, if you turn on your wipers, turn on your headlights.
- Turn on your headlights when it begins to get dark. Even if you turn them on a little early, you will help other drivers see you.
- Whenever driving and lights are necessary, use your headlights. Parking lights are for parked vehicles only.
- When driving away from a rising or setting sun, turn on your headlights. Drivers coming toward you may have trouble seeing your vehicle.
- If you stop along the road at night, turn on your emergency flashers and leave your low beams on.

Use your horn - People cannot see you unless they are looking your way. Your horn can get their attention. Use it whenever it will help prevent a collision. If there is no immediate danger, a light tap on the horn should be all you need. Give your horn a light tap:

- when a person on foot or on a bike appears to be moving into your lane of travel,
- when you are passing a driver who starts to turn into your lane,
- when a driver is not paying attention or may have trouble seeing you, and
- when coming to a place where you cannot see what is ahead, like a steep hill, a sharp curve, or exiting a narrow alley.

If there is danger, do not be afraid to sound a sharp blast on your horn. Do this:

- when a child or older person is about to walk, run, or ride into the street,
- when another vehicle is in danger of hitting you, and
- when you have lost control of your vehicle and are moving toward someone.

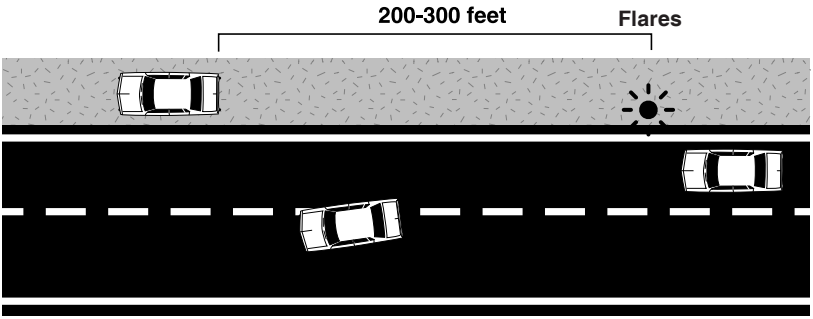
When not to use your horn - There are several occasions when you should not use your horn. They include:

- encouraging someone to drive faster or get out of the way,
- letting other drivers know of an error,
- greeting a friend,
- around blind pedestrians,
- passing bicyclists, and
- when approaching horses.

Use emergency signals - If your vehicle breaks down on a highway, make sure that other drivers can see it. All too often collisions occur because a driver did not see a stalled vehicle until it was too late to stop.

If available, use your two-way radio or cellular phone to notify authorities that your vehicle, or someone else's, has broken down. Many roadways have signs that tell you the CB channel or telephone number to call in an emergency. If you are having vehicle trouble and have to stop:

- Get your vehicle off the road and away from traffic, if at all possible.
- Turn on your emergency flashers to show you are having trouble. At night, leave your headlights on.
- Try to stop where other drivers have a clear view of your vehicle if you cannot get your vehicle off the roadway. (Do not stop just over a hill or just around a curve.)
- Try to warn other road users that your vehicle is there. Place emergency flares 200 to 300 feet behind the vehicle. This allows other drivers to change lanes if necessary.



- If you do not have emergency flares or other warning devices, stand by the side of the road where you are safe from traffic and wave traffic around your vehicle.

- Never stand in the roadway. Do not try to change a tire if it means you have to be in a traffic lane.
- Lift the hood or tie a white cloth to the antenna, side mirror, or door handle to signal an emergency.

Stay out of the blind spot - Drive your vehicle where others can see you. Do not drive in another vehicle's blind spot.

- Avoid driving on either side of another vehicle and don't tailgate. You will be in the driver's blind spot. Either speed up or drop back so the other driver can see your vehicle more easily.
- When passing another vehicle, get through the other driver's blind spot as quickly as you can. The longer you stay there, the longer you are in danger of that vehicle turning into you.
- Never stay beside a large vehicle such as a truck or bus. These vehicles have large blind spots.

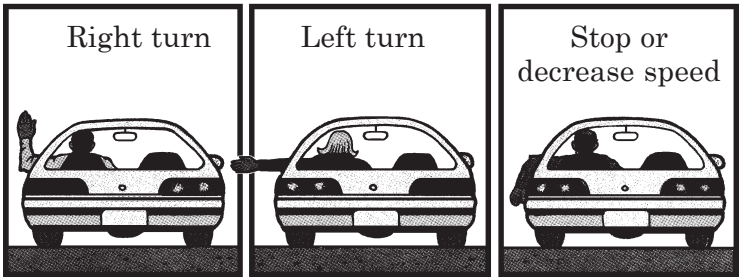
Letting Others Know What You Are Doing

Generally, other drivers expect you to keep doing what you are doing. You must warn them when you are going to change direction or slow down. This will give them time to react if needed, or at least not to be surprised by what you do.

Signal when you change direction - Signaling gives other drivers time to react to your moves. Use your turn signals before you change lanes, turn right or left, merge into traffic, or park.

- Get into the habit of signaling every time you change direction. Signal even when you do not see anyone else around. It is easy to miss someone who needs to know what you are doing.
- Signal at least 100 feet before you make your move.

- If another vehicle is about to enter the street between you and where you plan to turn, wait until you have passed it to signal your turn. If you signal earlier, the other driver may think you plan to turn where they are and they might pull into your path.
- After you have made a turn or lane change, make sure your turn signal is off. After small turns, the signals may not turn off by themselves. Turn it off if it has not clicked off by itself. If you don't, others might think you plan to turn again.
- Use hand signals when signal lights cannot be seen by other drivers.



Signal when you slow down - Your brake lights let people know that you are slowing down. Always slow down as early as it is safe to do so. If you are going to stop or slow down at a place where another driver does not expect it, tap your brake pedal three or four times quickly to let those behind you know you are about to slow down.

Signal when you slow down:

- to turn off a roadway which does not have separate turn or exit lanes.
- to park or turn just before an intersection. Following traffic expects you to continue to the intersection.
- to avoid something in the road, stopped traffic, or slowing vehicles that a driver behind you cannot see.

Adjusting to Road Conditions

The faster your vehicle is going, the more distance it will take to turn, slow, or stop. For example, at 60 mph it may take you three times as far to stop as it takes to stop at 30 mph. Driving safely means obeying speed limits and adjusting for road and traffic conditions.

There are various road conditions where you must slow down to be safe. For example, you must slow down before a sharp curve, when the roadway is slippery, or when there is standing water on the road.

The only contact your vehicle has with the road is through the tires. How good a grip the tires have with the road depends on the type and condition of the tires and the type and condition of the road surface.

Many drivers do not pay enough attention to the condition of their tires or to the condition of the roadway. It is important that your tires be in good condition and have enough air. See the vehicle owner's manual for correct tire pressure.

You do not have as much traction on gravel or dirt roads as you do on concrete or asphalt roads. When driving on gravel or dirt, you must slow down. It will take you much longer to stop and it is much easier to skid when turning.

Curves - A vehicle can travel much faster in a straight line than it can in a curve. It is easy to go too fast in a curve. If you go too fast, the tires will not be able to grip the road and the vehicle will skid. Always slow down before you enter a curve so you do not have to brake in the curve. Braking in a curve can cause the vehicle to skid.

Slippery roads - Slow down at the first sign of rain, snow, or sleet. These all make the roadway slippery. When the road is slippery, the vehicle's tires do not grip as well as they do on a dry road. How slow should you go? On a wet road you should reduce your speed about 10 mph. On packed snow you should cut your speed in half. Use snow tires or chains when the road has snow on it and any time it is required on posted signs. On ice you must slow to a crawl. It is very dangerous to drive on ice.

If at all possible, do not drive when the roads are icy. In Washington and some other states, studded tires are allowed during winter months.

Some road surfaces are slippery at certain times or places. Here are some clues to help you spot slippery roads:

- On cold, wet days, shady spots can be icy. These areas freeze first and dry out last.
- Overpasses and other types of bridges can have icy spots. The pavement on bridges can be icy even when other pavement is not. This is because bridges do not have earth underneath them to help insulate against the cold.
- When the temperature nears the freezing point, ice can become wet. This makes it more slippery than at temperatures well below freezing.
- If it starts to rain on a hot day, pavement can be very slippery for the first few minutes. Heat causes the oil in the asphalt to come to the surface. The road is more slippery until the oil is washed off.

Water on the roadway - When it is raining or the road is wet, most tires have good traction up to about 35 mph. However, as you go faster, your tires will start to ride up on the water, like water skis. This is called "hydroplaning." In a heavy rain, your tires can lose all traction with the road at about 50 mph. Bald or badly worn tires will lose traction at much lower speeds. The best way to keep from hydroplaning is to slow down in the rain or when the road is wet.

If it feels like your tires have lost traction with the surface of the road you should:

- Ease your foot off the gas pedal.
- Keep the steering wheel straight. Only try to turn if it's an emergency. If you must turn, do it slowly or you will cause your vehicle to skid.
- Do not try to stop or turn until your tires are gripping the road again.

Adjusting to Traffic

Vehicles moving in the same direction at the same speed cannot hit one another. Collisions involving two or more vehicles often happen when drivers go faster or slower than other vehicles on the road.

Keep pace with traffic - If you are going faster than traffic, you will have to keep passing others. The vehicle you are passing may change lanes suddenly, or on a two-lane road, an oncoming vehicle may appear suddenly. Slow down and keep pace with other traffic.

Going much slower than other vehicles can be as hazardous as speeding. It tends to make vehicles bunch up behind you and causes the other traffic to pass you. Either drive faster or consider using another road with slower speeds. If you are driving a slow moving vehicle on a two-lane road where it is unsafe to pass, and five or more vehicles are in a line behind you, you must pull over and stop when safe to let them pass.

Entering into traffic - When you merge with traffic, signal and enter at the same speed that traffic is moving. High-speed roadways generally have ramps to give you time to build up your speed for merging into traffic. Do not drive to the end of the ramp and stop or you will not have enough room to get up to the speed of traffic. Also, drivers behind you will not expect you to stop and you may be hit from the rear. If you have to wait for space to enter a roadway, slow down on the ramp so you have some room to speed up before you have to merge.

Leaving traffic - Keep up with the speed of traffic as long as you are on the main road. If the road you are traveling has exit ramps, do not slow down until you move onto the exit ramp. When you turn from a high speed, two-lane roadway, try not to slow down too early if you have traffic following you. Tap your brakes and reduce your speed quickly but safely.

Slow moving traffic - Some vehicles cannot travel very fast or have trouble keeping up with the speed of traffic. If you spot these vehicles early, you have time to change lanes or slow down safely. Slowing suddenly can cause a collision.

- Watch for large trucks and small underpowered cars on steep grades or entering traffic. They can lose speed on long or steep hills and it takes longer for them to get up to speed when they enter traffic.
- Farm tractors, animal-drawn vehicles, and roadway maintenance vehicles usually go 25 mph or less. These vehicles should have a slow-moving vehicle decal (an orange triangle) on the back.

Trouble spots - Wherever people or traffic gather, room to maneuver is limited. Here are some of the places where you may need to slow down:

- Shopping centers, parking lots, and downtown areas - These are busy areas with vehicles and people stopping, starting, and moving in different directions.
- Rush hours - Rush hours often have heavy traffic and drivers that always seem to be in a hurry.
- Narrow bridges and tunnels - Vehicles approaching each other are closer together.
- Toll plazas - Vehicles are changing lanes and preparing to stop and then speeding up again when leaving the plaza. The number of lanes could change both before and after the plaza.
- Schools, playgrounds, and residential streets - These areas often have children present. Always be alert for children crossing the street or running or riding into the street without looking.
- Railroad crossings - You need to make sure there are no trains coming and there is room to cross. Some crossings are bumpy so you need to slow down to safely cross.
- Work zones - Watch for warning signs, flaggers, and traffic.

How Well Can You See?

If something is in your path and you need to stop, you need to see it in time to be able to stop. It takes much longer and further to stop than many people think. If you have good tires and brakes and dry pavement:

- At 50 mph, it can take about 400 feet to react to something you see and bring your vehicle to a stop. That is about the length of a city block.
- At 30 mph, it can take about 200 feet to react and stop. That is almost half a city block in length.

If you cannot see 400 feet ahead, it means you may not be driving safely at 50 mph. If you cannot see 200 feet ahead, you may not be driving safely at 30 mph. By the time you see an object in your path, it may be too late to stop without hitting it.

Here are some things that limit how well you can see and hints you can follow to be a safer driver.

Darkness - It is harder to see at night. You must be closer to an object to see it at night than during the day. You must be able to stop within the distance you can see ahead with your headlights. Your headlights will let you see about 400 feet ahead. You should drive at a speed that allows you to stop within this distance or about 50 mph.

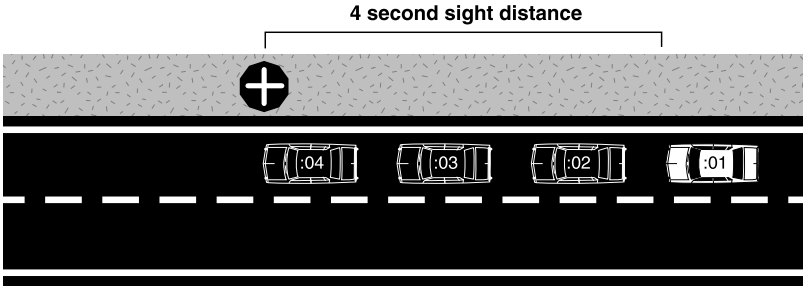
Rain, fog, or snow - In a very heavy rain, snowstorm, or thick fog, you may not be able to see much more than 200 feet ahead. When you cannot see any farther than that, you cannot safely drive faster than 30 mph. In a very heavy downpour, you may not be able to see well enough to drive. If this happens, pull off the road in a safe place and wait until it clears.

Hills and curves - You may not know what is on the other side of a hill or just around a curve, even if you have driven the road many times. If a vehicle is stalled on the road just over a hill or around a curve, you must be able to stop. Whenever you come to a hill or curve where you cannot see over or around, adjust your speed so you can stop if necessary.

Parked vehicles - Vehicles parked along the side of the road may block your view. People may be ready to get out of a vehicle or walk out from between parked vehicles. Give parked vehicles as much room as you can.

Sight distance rule - Drive at a speed where you can always safely stop. To tell if you are driving too fast for conditions, use the "Four-Second Sight Distance Rule." Pick out a stationary object as far ahead as you can clearly see (such as a sign or a telephone pole). Start counting "one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, four-one-thousand." If you reach the object before you finish saying "four-one-thousand," you need to slow down. You are going too fast for your sight distance.

You should also use the Four-Second Sight Distance Rule at night to make sure you are not over-driving your headlights.



Speed limits - You must comply with speed limits. They are based on the design of the road and the type of vehicles that use them. They take into account things you cannot see, such as side roads and driveways where people may pull out suddenly, and the amount of traffic that uses the road.

Remember, speed limits are posted for ideal conditions. If the road is wet or icy, if you cannot see well, or if traffic is heavy, then you must slow down. Even if you are driving under the posted speed limit, you can get a ticket for traveling too fast under these conditions.

Sharing Space

You must always share the road with others. The more distance you keep between yourself and everyone else, the more time you have to react in an emergency. This space is like a safety cushion. The more you have, the safer it can be. This section describes how to make sure you have enough space around you when you drive.

Space Ahead

Rear-end collisions are very common. If you follow too closely, you may not have enough time to stop if the vehicle in front of you slows or stops suddenly. If you are driving at 30 mph or less, a following time of two to three seconds may be enough to stop safely. However, at higher speeds, the best rule to use is the four-second rule.

- Watch when the rear of the vehicle ahead passes a sign, pole, or any other stationary point.
- Count the seconds it takes you to reach the same spot. ("One-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, four-one-thousand.")
- You are following too closely if you pass the mark before you finish counting.
- If so, drop back and then count again at another spot to check the new following distance. Repeat until you are following no closer than four seconds.

There are situations where you need more space in front of your vehicle. In the following situations you may need a longer following distance to be safe:

- *On slippery roads* - Because you need more distance to stop your vehicle on slippery roads, you must leave more space in front of you. If the vehicle ahead suddenly stops, you will need the extra distance to stop safely.

- *When the driver behind you wants to pass* - Slow down to allow room in front of your vehicle. Slowing also will allow the pass to be completed sooner.
- *When following motorcycles* - If the motorcycle should fall, you need extra distance to avoid the rider. The chances of a fall are greatest on wet or icy roads, gravel roads or metal surfaces such as bridges, gratings, or streetcar or railroad tracks.
- *When following drivers who cannot see you* - The drivers of trucks, buses, vans, or vehicles pulling campers or trailers may not be able to see you when you are directly behind them. They could stop suddenly without knowing you are there. Large vehicles also block your view of the road ahead. Falling back allows you more room to see ahead.
- *When you have a heavy load or are pulling a trailer* - The extra weight increases your stopping distance.
- *When it is hard for you to see* - When it is hard for you to see ahead because of darkness or bad weather, you need to increase your following distance.
- *When being followed closely* - If you are being followed closely, you should allow extra room. You will then be able to stop without being hit from behind.
- *When following emergency vehicles* - Police vehicles, ambulances, and fire trucks need more room to operate. Do not follow closer than 500 feet to any emergency vehicle.
- *When approaching railroad crossings* - Leave extra room behind vehicles required to come to a stop at railroad crossings, including transit buses, school buses, or vehicles carrying hazardous materials.
- *When stopped on a hill or incline* - Leave extra space when stopped on a hill or incline. The vehicle ahead may roll back when it starts up.

Space Behind

It is not always easy to maintain a safe distance behind your vehicle. However, you can help keep the driver at a safe distance by keeping a steady speed and signaling in advance when you have to slow down or turn.

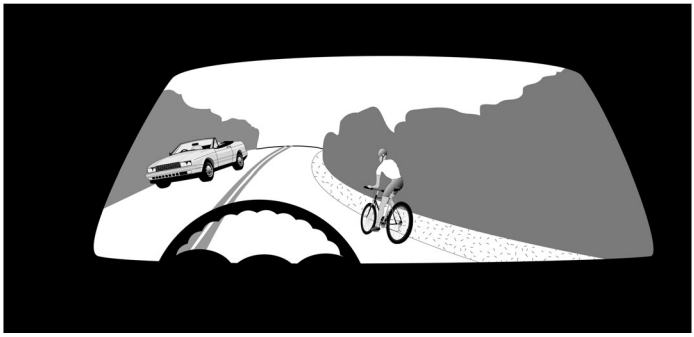
- *Stopping to pick up or let off passengers* - Try to find a safe place, out of traffic, to stop.
- *Parallel parking* - If you want to parallel park and there is traffic coming behind you, put on your turn signal, pull next to the space, and allow following vehicles to pass before you park.
- *Driving slowly* - When you have to drive so slowly that you slow down other vehicles, pull to the side of the road when safe to do so and let them pass. There are turnout areas on some two-lane roads you can use. Other two-lane roads sometimes have passing lanes.
- *Being tailgated* - Every now and then you may find yourself being followed closely or "tailgated" by another driver. If you are being followed too closely and there is a right lane, move over to the right. If there is no right lane, wait until the road ahead is clear then reduce speed slowly. This will encourage the tailgater to drive around you. Never slow down quickly to discourage a tailgater. Doing that increases your risk of being hit from behind.

Space to the Side

You need space on both sides of your vehicle to have room to turn or change lanes.

- Avoid driving next to other vehicles, especially large trucks, on multi-lane roads. Someone may crowd your lane or try to change lanes and pull into you. Move ahead or drop back of the other vehicle.

- Keep as much space as you can between yourself and oncoming vehicles. On a two-lane road this means not crowding the center line. Generally, it is safest to drive in the center of your lane.
- Make room for vehicles entering on a roadway that has two or more lanes. If there is no one next to you, move over a lane.
- Keep extra space between your vehicle and parked cars. Someone could step out from a parked vehicle, or from between vehicles, or a parked vehicle could pull out.
- Give extra space to pedestrians or bicyclists, especially children. They can move into your path quickly and without warning. Do not share a lane with a pedestrian or bicyclist. Wait until it is safe to pass in the adjoining lane.
- Split the difference between two hazards. For example, steer a middle course between oncoming and parked vehicles. However, if one is more dangerous than the other, leave a little more space on the dangerous side. For example, if the oncoming vehicle is a tractor-trailer, leave a little more room on the side that the truck will pass.
- When possible, take potential hazards one at a time. For example, if you are overtaking a bicycle and an oncoming vehicle is approaching, slow down and let the vehicle pass first so that you can give extra room to the bicycle rider.



Space to Merge

Anytime you want to merge with other traffic, you need a gap of about four seconds. If you move into the middle of a four-second gap, both you and the vehicle behind you have a two-second following distance. You need a four-second gap whenever you change lanes, enter a roadway, or when your lane merges with another travel lane.

- Do not try to merge into a gap that is too small. A small gap can quickly become even smaller. Enter a gap that gives you enough space cushion to be safe.
- If you want to move over several lanes, take them one at a time. Like going up or down stairs one step at a time, it is safest and easiest to merge one lane at a time.
- When other traffic is trying to merge into your lane, move to another lane to give them space when it is safe.

Space to Cross or Enter

When you cross traffic, you need a large enough gap to get all the way across the road. When you enter traffic, you need enough space to first turn and then to get up to speed.

- When you cross traffic, you need room to get all the way across. Stopping halfway across is only safe when there is a median divider large enough for your vehicle. Do not stop in a divider where part of your vehicle is sticking into traffic.
- If you are turning left, make sure there are no vehicles or pedestrians blocking your path. You do not want to be caught waiting for a path to clear while stuck across a lane that has vehicles coming toward you.
- Even if you have a green light, do not start across an intersection if there are vehicles blocking your way. If you are caught in the intersection when the light changes to red, you will block traffic. You can get a ticket for blocking an intersection.

- Never assume another driver will share space with you or give you space. For example, do not turn just because an approaching vehicle has a turn signal on. The driver may plan to turn after they pass your vehicle or may have forgotten to turn the signal off from a prior turn. This is particularly true of motorcycles because their signals often do not cancel by themselves. Wait until the other driver actually starts to turn and then proceed.
- When you cross railroad tracks, make sure you can cross without having to stop on the tracks.

Space to Pass

Whenever signs or road markings permit you to pass, you will have to judge whether you have enough room to pass safely. Do not count on having enough time to pass several vehicles at once. Be safe. As a general rule, only pass one vehicle at a time.

- *Oncoming vehicles* - At a speed of 55 mph, you need about ten seconds to pass another vehicle. That means you need a ten-second gap in oncoming traffic and sight-distance to pass. You must judge whether you will have enough space to pass safely. When passing another vehicle on a two-lane roadway, you must return to the right side of the roadway at least 200 feet before any vehicle coming from the opposite direction.

  At 55 mph, you will travel over 800 feet in ten seconds. So will an oncoming vehicle. That means you need over 1600 feet or about one-third of a mile to pass safely. It is hard to judge the speed of oncoming vehicles at this distance. They do not seem to be coming as fast as they really are.

  A vehicle that is far away generally appears to be standing still. In fact, if you can actually see that it is coming closer, it may be too close for you to pass. If you are in doubt, wait to pass until you are sure that there is enough space.

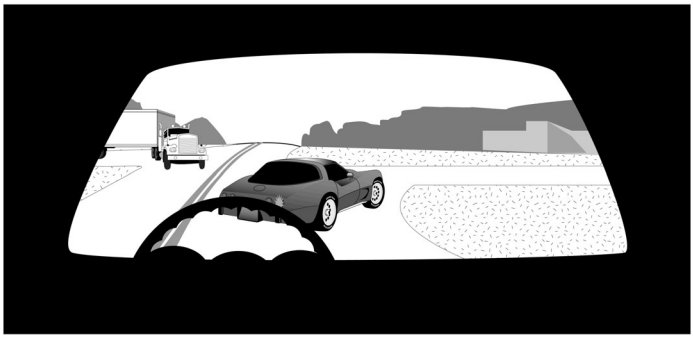
- *Hills and curves* - You have to be able to see at least one-third of a mile or about ten seconds ahead. Anytime your view is blocked by a curve or a hill, you should assume there is an oncoming vehicle just out of sight. Do not start to pass if you are within one-third of a mile of a hill or curve.

- *Intersections* - It is dangerous to pass where a vehicle is likely to enter or cross the road. Such places include intersections, railroad crossings, and shopping center entrances. While you are passing, your view of people, vehicles, or trains can be blocked by the vehicle you are passing. Also, drivers turning right into the approaching lane will not expect to find you approaching in their lane. They may not even look your way before turning.

  Large trucks, buses, and vehicles pulling trailers swing wide and sometimes must cross the center line to make turns. Do not crowd the intersection or attempt to pass these vehicles, especially on the right side.

- *Lane restrictions* - Before you pass, look ahead for road conditions and traffic that may cause other vehicles to move into your lane. You might lose your space for passing because of:

  - people or bicyclists near the road,
  - a narrow bridge or other situation that causes reduced lane width, or
  - a patch of ice, pothole, or something on the road.



- *Space to return* - Do not pass unless you have enough space to return to the driving lane. Do not count on other drivers to make room for you.
- *Railroad grade crossing* - Do not pass if there is a railroad grade crossing ahead.

Before you return to the driving lane, be sure to leave enough room between you and the vehicle you have passed. When you can see both headlights of the vehicle you just passed in your rear view mirror, it is safe to return to the driving lane.

Space for Bicyclists

The safety of bicycle riders is a responsibility shared by both motorists and cyclists. Bicyclists are not out of place on the roadway - they are part of the traffic and share the road with other drivers. Every bicycle rider has the same rights, duties, and responsibilities of a motor vehicle driver. Motorists and riders who don't obey traffic laws can be ticketed. All persons who use public roads must understand state traffic laws and use safe driving habits.

Sharing the road with bicyclists - Over 39,000 bicyclists are killed or injured in the United States every year. If motorists and cyclists understand and obey the following state laws, it will help make the roads safer for everyone:

- Drivers must stop for bicyclists crossing in a painted or unpainted crosswalk when the bicyclist is within one lane of their half of the roadway. *(see diagram under Right-of-Way)*
- Drivers crossing a sidewalk must yield to bicyclists on the sidewalk. Bicyclists riding on a sidewalk or in a crosswalk are granted all the rights and duties of a pedestrian. Local agencies may prohibit bicycling on some sections of sidewalks.

- Bicycle lanes are marked with solid white lines. You must yield to bicycles in a bicycle lane. Do not drive in a bicycle lane except when making a turn, entering or leaving an alley, private road or driveway, or when you need to cross the bicycle lane to park near the curb. Do not park in a bicycle lane.
- At intersections you must yield to bicycle riders, the same as you would for any other motorist.
- Pass a bicycle the same way you would a car. You must allow at least three feet of space when overtaking and passing a bicycle.
- If parked at a curb, look before you open any door in the path of a car, bicycle, or pedestrian.
- Bicyclists have the *choice* to ride on the roadway, on the shoulder of a road, in a bicycle lane, or on a sidewalk. Bicyclists must yield to pedestrians on sidewalks or in crosswalks. Use an audible signal to warn pedestrians before passing.
- Bicyclists may use the shoulders of freeways and other highways, except where signs say it is illegal.
- Bicyclists ride with the flow of traffic and as near to the right side of the road as is safe. Riders may move left before and during turns, or when passing another bicycle or vehicle. Riders on a one-way road, other than a freeway, may ride as near to the left side of the road as is safe.
- Bicycle riders should use hand signals before turning.
- All bicyclists and any passengers must have their own seat.
- Bicyclists must not hold onto or be pulled by any other vehicle.
- Bicyclists may ride in groups on bicycle paths and lanes. On public roads they may ride either single file or in pairs.
- Bicyclists cannot carry packages unless the rider can keep at least one hand on the handlebars at all times.

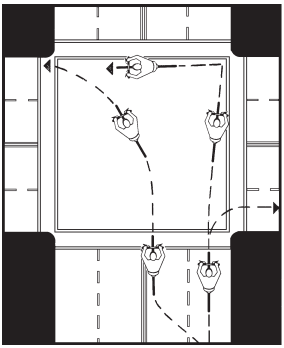
- When riding at night, the bicycle must have a white headlight visible for 500 feet and a red reflector visible for 600 feet to the rear. A flashing taillight or a steady red taillight may be used in addition to the red reflector.
- Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake that will allow the rider to make the braked wheels skid on dry, level, clean pavement.

In addition to state law, the following safety tips will help motorists and cyclists prevent injuries and collisions.

- *Teach your children* - Parents are responsible for teaching their children about traffic and bicycle safety. Children cannot see things to the side as well as adults, they have trouble judging the speed and distance of moving cars, and they lack a sense of danger. They believe adults will look out for them. Remind them often of how important it is to always look out for themselves.
- *Look for bicyclists* - Scan intersections before entering or turning and yield to bicycles when necessary. When changing lanes, making turns, or when backing, motorists need to check carefully for bicyclists out of their normal range of view.
- *Do not crowd bicyclists* - When the lane is too narrow to pass a cyclist safely, wait until the next lane is clear and give the bicycle all the rights of any other slow moving vehicle.
- *Make sure your bike is safe* - Pedals, seat, handlebars, tires, and brakes should be in good condition and work properly. Bike shops can help make sure your bike is safe.
- *Obey all traffic laws* - Traffic law violations cause most bicycle/motorist collisions. By following the traffic laws, bicyclists help tell drivers where they are going and when. Drivers should take responsibility for knowing the laws that apply to bicyclists.

- *Wear a bicycle helmet - CPSC, Snell, or ATSM* approved helmets are recommended for all riders. Head injuries cause most bicycle-related deaths. Helmets can only do their job if they fit and are properly adjusted. If you can push your helmet off your head without unbuckling it, it needs to be adjusted. Always get a new helmet if yours has been in a crash.
- *Enhance your visibility* - Wear light-colored or fluorescent clothing and accessories and apply reflective tape to your helmet and bike.
- *Ride predictably and defensively* - Avoid weaving in and out of the "parking lane." Leave about three feet between yourself and parked cars so that an opened door will not block your path.
- *Scan the road for hazards* - Watch out for wet or icy surfaces, low-light areas, slotted storm drains, potholes, and train tracks. Ride at speeds appropriate for conditions. Always yield to pedestrians and vehicle traffic before entering or crossing a roadway.
- *Be responsible for yourself* - When riding in a group, watch out for yourself instead of simply following the rider in front of you.
- *Never ride against traffic* - Motorists do not look for, or expect, bicyclists riding on the wrong side of the roadway.
- *Ride in a straight line* - Whenever possible, ride in a straight line and to the right of traffic but about the width of a car door away from parked cars.
- *Do not pass on the right* - Do not pass on the right side of vehicles in traffic at intersections. Motorists turning right may not look for, or see, a bicycle passing on the right.
- *Watch for cars pulling out* - Even though you look a driver in the eye, the driver might not see you and may pull out in front of you.

- *Turning* - When turning left, a bicyclist can turn from the left lane or the left turn lane. Or, the rider can stay in the right lane, cross the street, and stop at the right corner. The rider may go with traffic or when the light turns green.



- *Scan the road behind you* - Even if you use rear view mirrors, learn to ride and look back over your shoulder without losing your balance or swerving left.
- *Keep both hands ready to brake* - To stop in time, you will need both hands. Allow extra distance for stopping in the rain or on a wet road. Your brakes may not work properly when wet, and tires skid more easily.
- *Watch for dogs* - Dogs are attracted by the spinning of your wheels and feet. If a dog starts to chase you, ignore it or, using a firm, loud voice, yell "NO!" If the dog does not stop, get off your bike and put it between you and the dog.

Space for Special Situations

There are certain drivers and other road users you should give extra room. Some are listed here.

Those who cannot see you - Anyone who cannot see you may enter your path without knowing you are there. Those who could have trouble seeing you include:

- drivers at intersections or driveways whose view is blocked by buildings, trees, or other vehicles,
- drivers backing into the roadway, or backing into or out of parking spaces,

- drivers whose windows are covered with snow or ice or are steamed-up,
- pedestrians with umbrellas in front of their faces or with their hats pulled down, or
- pedestrians who are walking in the same direction as traffic flow. Since they have their back to you, they cannot see you.

People who are distracted - Even when others can see you, allow extra room and be extra cautious if you think they may be distracted. People who may be distracted include:

- delivery persons,
- construction workers,
- children, or
- drivers who are not paying attention to their driving.

People who may be confused - People who are confused may cause an unsafe situation. These people may include:

- tourists or others who do not seem to know where they are going,
- drivers slowing for what seems like no reason, or
- drivers looking for street signs or house numbers.

Drivers in trouble - If another driver makes a mistake in passing you, do not make it worse. Slow down and let them return to the drive lane safely. If another driver needs to suddenly change lanes, slow down and let them merge. These actions will keep traffic moving smoothly and safely.

BE IN SHAPE TO DRIVE

Driving safely is not always easy. In fact, it is one of the most complex things that people do. It is also one of the few things we do regularly that can injure or kill us. It is worth the effort to be a careful driver.

Being a safe driver takes a great deal of skill and judgment. This task is even more difficult when you are just learning to drive. Driving can easily take every ability you have. If anything happens so you are not up to your ability, you may not be a safe driver. Your ability to be a safe driver depends on being able to see clearly, not being overly tired, not driving while on drugs or alcohol, being generally healthy, and being emotionally fit to drive. In other words, you are responsible for being in shape to drive safely.

Vision

Good vision is a must for safe driving. You drive based on what you see. If you cannot see clearly, you will have trouble identifying traffic and road conditions, spotting potential trouble, or reacting in a timely manner.

Vision is so important that the law requires that you pass a vision test before you get a driver license. This test measures that you have at least 20/40 vision in at least one eye, with or without corrective lenses.

Other important aspects of vision are:

- *Side vision* - You need to see out of the corner of your eye. This lets you spot vehicles and other potential trouble on either side of you while you look ahead. Because you cannot focus on things to the side, you must also use your side mirrors and glance to the side if necessary.

- *Judging distances and speeds* - Even if you can see clearly, you still may not be able to judge distances or speeds well. In fact you are not alone, many people have problems judging distances and speeds.
  It takes practice to be able to judge both. It is especially important in knowing how far you are from other vehicles and judging safe gaps when merging and when passing on two-lane roads, or when judging the speed of a train before crossing tracks safely.
- *Night vision* - It is more difficult for everyone to see at night than in the daytime. Some drivers have problems with glare while driving at night, especially with the glare of oncoming headlights. If you have problems seeing at night, don't drive more than is necessary and be very careful when you do.

Because seeing well is so important to safe driving, you should have your eyes checked every year or two by an eye specialist. You may never know you have poor vision unless your eyes are tested.

If you need to wear glasses or contact lenses for driving, remember to:

- Always wear them when you drive, even if you are only going down to the corner. If your driver license says you must wear corrective lenses, and you get stopped without them, you could get a ticket.
- Try to keep an extra pair of glasses in your vehicle. If your regular glasses are broken or lost, you can use the spare pair to drive safely. This also can be helpful if you do not wear glasses all the time because it is easy to misplace them.
- Avoid using dark glasses or tinted contact lenses at night, even if you think they help with glare. They will also cut down the light that you need to see clearly.

Hearing

Hearing can be helpful to safe driving. The sound of horns, sirens, or screeching tires can warn you of danger. Hearing problems, like bad eyesight, can come on so slowly that you do not notice it. Drivers who know they are deaf or have hearing problems can adjust and be safe drivers. These drivers learn to rely more on their vision and tend to stay more alert. Studies have shown that the driving records of hearing impaired drivers are just as good as those drivers with good hearing.

Fatigue

You cannot drive as safely when you are tired as when you are rested. You do not see as well, nor are you as alert. It takes more time to make decisions and you do not always make good decisions. You can be more irritable and can get upset more easily. When you are tired, you can fall asleep behind the wheel and crash, injuring or killing yourself or others.

There are things you can do to help from getting tired on a long trip.

- Try to get a normal night's sleep before you leave.
- Do not leave on a trip if you are already tired. Plan your trips so you can leave when you are rested.
- Do not take any medicine that can make you drowsy.
- Eat lightly. Do not eat a large meal before you leave. Some people get sleepy after they eat a big meal.
- Take breaks. Stop every hour or so or when you need to. Walk around, get some fresh air, and have some coffee, soda, or juice. The few minutes spent on a rest break can save your life. Plan for plenty of time to complete your trip safely.

- Try not to drive late at night when you are normally asleep. Your body thinks it is time to go to sleep and will try to do so.
- Never drive if you are sleepy. It is better to stop and sleep for a few hours than to take a chance you can stay awake. If possible, switch driving tasks with another driver so you can sleep while they drive.

Drinking Alcohol and Driving

Alcohol is involved in about 40 percent of the traffic collisions in which someone is killed. If you drink alcohol, even a little, your chances of being in a collision are much greater than if you did not drink any alcohol. No one can drink alcohol and drive safely, even if you have been driving for many years.

Because drinking alcohol and driving is so dangerous, the penalties are very tough. People who drive after drinking alcohol risk heavy fines, higher insurance rates, loss of license, and even jail sentences.

Why Is Drinking and Driving So Dangerous?

Alcohol reduces all of the important skills you need to drive safely. Alcohol goes from your stomach into your blood and to all parts of your body. It reaches your brain in 20 to 40 minutes. **Alcohol affects those areas of your brain that control judgment and skill. This is one reason why drinking alcohol is so dangerous; it affects your judgment.** In a way, it's like alcohol puts good judgment on hold. You do not know when you have had too much to drink until it is too late. It is a little like a sunburn, by the time you feel it, it is already too late.

Alcohol slows your reflexes and reaction time, reduces your ability to see clearly, and makes you less alert. As the amount of alcohol in your body increases, your judgment worsens and your skills decrease. You will have trouble judging distances, speeds, and the movement of other vehicles. You will also have trouble controlling your vehicle.

If You Drink, When Can You Drive?

The best advice is if you drink alcohol, do not drive. Even one drink of alcohol can affect your driving. With two or more drinks in your bloodstream you are *impaired* and could be arrested.

A typical alcohol drink is 1 1/2 oz. of 80-proof liquor (one shot glass) straight or with a mixer, 12 oz. of beer (a regular size can, bottle, mug, or glass), or a 5 oz. glass of wine. Specialty drinks can have more alcohol in them and are the same as having several normal drinks.

It takes about one hour for your body to get rid of each drink. There is no way to sober up quickly. Coffee, fresh air, exercise, or cold showers will not help. Time is the only thing that will sober you up.

There are ways of dealing with social drinking situations. Arrange to go with two or more persons and agree that one of you will not drink alcohol. You can take turns being a "designated driver," use public transportation, or use a cab.

Alcohol and the Law

If you are arrested for drinking and driving, the penalties are severe. You can be arrested for driving with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or more. In Washington, if you are under 21, you also can be arrested for a BAC of .02 or more. BAC is the percentage of alcohol in your blood and is usually determined by a breath, blood, or urine test. You can also be arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) with BAC levels lower than these if you are driving and impaired due to alcohol or drugs.

The Implied Consent Law means that when you operate a motor vehicle, you have agreed to take a breath or blood test to determine the alcohol or drug content of your blood. If a police or traffic officer asks you to take a BAC test, you must do so. You will lose your driver license for at least one year if you refuse to take a BAC test. No occupational license will be available.

Some penalties for drinking and driving come just from being arrested:

- If it is your first arrest within seven years and the breath or blood test result shows a BAC of .08 or more (.02 if you are under age 21), your license will be suspended for 90 days. After 30 days of the suspension has passed, you may be eligible for an Occupational Driver License.
- If it is your first arrest and you refuse to take a breath and/or blood test, your license will be revoked for one year.
- If you have been arrested more than once within the past seven years, your license will be revoked for two years. If you are under 21 your license will be revoked for one year or until age 21, whichever is longer.

In all of these cases, and before the penalties go into effect, you may request a hearing from DOL.

Alcohol-related offenses appear on your driving record for 15 years. If you are found guilty in court of driving impaired and it is your first conviction, you may be fined up to $5,000 plus court costs and other penalties. You could also be sentenced from 1 to 365 days in jail and your license could be suspended or revoked for 90 days to one year. Prior convictions of alcohol violations can result in other penalties, including 150 days of home detention and license suspension or revocation of up to four years.

Other possible penalties for driving under the influence include:

- Required proof of insurance (filing an SR22),
- License reapplication, knowledge and skill testing, and a $150 reissue fee,
- Seizure and loss of your vehicle, and
- Installation and use of an ignition interlock device for up to 10 years. An additional 60 days will be required if you have a passenger under 16 in your vehicle at the time of arrest.

Under the "Open Container Law" it is a traffic infraction:

- To drink any alcoholic beverage in a motor vehicle upon a highway.
- For a person in a motor vehicle upon a highway to possess any receptacle containing an alcoholic beverage if the container has been opened or a seal broken or the contents partially removed.
- To incorrectly label the original container of an alcoholic beverage or place an alcoholic beverage in a container labeled as containing a nonalcoholic beverage or to be in possession of such a container.
- For the registered owner or driver to keep an open container in a vehicle on a highway, unless it is in an area not normally occupied by the driver or passengers. The container cannot be kept in any accessible storage compartment.

There are certain exceptions which apply to the living quarters of motor homes and campers.

Probationary Licenses

If you are convicted of driving or being in physical control of a vehicle while under the influence or are granted a deferred prosecution, a probationary license will be required for five years. In addition to regular licensing fees, the probationary license cost is $50 at issuance and again at time of renewal.

Deferred Prosecution

As of January 1, 1999, a person is eligible for only one deferred prosecution of an alcohol-related offense in a lifetime.

When charged with DUI, and if you suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, or mental problems, you may be eligible for a deferred prosecution. If eligible, your DUI

conviction is postponed while you complete an approved alcohol/drug or mental health program. You also have to meet certain licensing and court-ordered requirements which can include use of an ignition interlock, proof of liability insurance, and other requirements. When you have completed your treatment and have met all court ordered requirements, the DUI charges are dismissed.

Other Drugs and Driving

Besides alcohol, there are many other drugs that can affect a person's ability to drive safely. These drugs can have effects like those of alcohol, or even worse. This is true of many prescription drugs and even many of the drugs you can buy without a prescription. Drugs taken for headaches, colds, hay fever, or other allergies or those to calm nerves can make a person drowsy and affect their driving ability. Pep pills, "uppers," and diet pills can make a driver feel more alert for a short time. Later however, they can cause a person to be nervous, dizzy, unable to concentrate, and they can affect your vision. Other prescription drugs can affect your reflexes, judgment, vision, and alertness in ways similar to alcohol. If you are arrested or convicted of driving under the influence of drugs, the penalties are the same as for any alcohol violation.

If you are driving, check the label before you take a drug for warnings about its effect. If you are not sure it is safe to take the drug and drive, ask your doctor or pharmacist about any side effects.

Many drugs multiply the effects of alcohol or have other side effects. You should read the warnings with your medicine or talk to your pharmacist before you drink and use medicine at the same time. This combination not only affects your ability to be a safe driver but could cause serious health problems, even death.

Illegal drugs frequently affect your ability to be a safe driver. For example, studies have shown that people who use marijuana make more mistakes, have more trouble adjusting to glare, and get arrested for traffic violations more than other drivers.

Juvenile Alcohol/ Drug/ Firearms Violations

If you are age 13 through 17 and convicted of a first alcohol or firearm violation, or age 13 through 20 and convicted of a first drug violation, your driving privilege will be revoked for one year or until age 17, whichever is longer.

For a second offense your driving privilege will be revoked for two years, or until age 18, whichever is longer.

You will not be able to obtain a license/ instruction permit or take driver education during the revocation period. When you are eligible to reinstate your driving privilege, you must have parental consent and take the written and drive tests. You will also need to pay a $20 reissue fee in addition to the usual testing and licensing fees.

Health

Many health problems can affect your driving - a bad cold, infection, or virus. Even little problems like a stiff neck, a cough, or a sore leg can affect your driving. If you are not feeling well and need to go somewhere, let someone else drive.

Some conditions can be very dangerous:

- *Epilepsy* - As long as it is under medical control, epilepsy generally is not dangerous. In Washington, you may drive if you are under the care of a doctor and have been taking your medication and have not had a seizure for six months.
- *Diabetes* - Diabetics who take insulin should not drive when there is any chance of an insulin reaction, blackout, convulsion, or shock. Such a situation could result from skipping a meal or snack or from taking the wrong amount of insulin. It also might be a good idea to have someone else drive for you during times when your doctor is adjusting your insulin dosage. If you have diabetes, you should have your eyes checked regularly for possible night blindness or other vision problems.

- *Heart condition* - People with heart disease, high blood pressure or circulation problems, or those in danger of a blackout, fainting, or a heart attack, should not get behind the wheel. If you are being treated by a doctor for a heart condition, ask if the condition could affect your driving ability.

Emotions

Emotions can affect your ability to drive safely. You may not be able to drive well if you are overly worried, excited, afraid, angry, or depressed.

- If you are angry or excited, give yourself time to cool off. If necessary, take a short walk, but stay off the road until you have calmed down.
- If you are worried, depressed, or upset about something, try to keep your mind on your driving. Some find listening to the radio helps.
- If you are impatient, allow extra time for your trip. By leaving a few minutes early, instead of speeding to your destination, you will avoid a speeding ticket and reduce your chances of a collision.

Road Rage

Today, heavy traffic and tight schedules are the norm. Some drivers take their anger out on the roadways.

When you see other drivers around you acting or reacting in anger, distance yourself from the situation, physically and mentally. Don't make eye contact. Body movements and gestures can provoke an angry response from another driver. Slow down, move over, or do whatever you safely can, to put yourself out of danger. Your courtesy may encourage the same from other drivers.

If you feel you are being followed or harassed by another driver, seek help. Exit only in an area where there are other people and open businesses around you. If you have a cellular phone, use it to call the police.

EMERGENCIES

All drivers, sooner or later, will find themselves in an emergency situation. As careful as you are, there are situations that could cause a problem for you. If you are prepared, you may be able to prevent any serious outcomes.

There is always a chance of a vehicle problem while driving. You should follow the recommended maintenance schedule listed in the vehicle owner's manual. Following these preventive measures greatly reduces the chance your vehicle will have a problem. Possible vehicle failures and what you can do if they happen are listed here.

Brake Failure

If your brakes stop working:

- Pump the brake pedal several times. This will often build up enough brake pressure to allow you to stop.
- If that does not work, use the parking brake. Apply the parking brake slowly so you will not lock the rear wheels and cause a skid. Be ready to release the brake if the vehicle does start to skid.
- If that does not work, start shifting to lower gears and look for a safe place to slow to a stop. Make sure the vehicle is off the roadway. Do not drive the vehicle without brakes.

Tire Blowout

If a tire suddenly goes flat:

- Hold the steering wheel tightly and keep the vehicle going straight.
- Slow down gradually. Take your foot off the gas pedal and use the brakes lightly.
- Do not stop on the road if at all possible. Pull off the road in a safe place.

Power Failure

If the engine stalls while you are driving:

- Keep a strong grip on the steering wheel. Be aware that the steering wheel may be difficult to turn, but you can turn it with more effort.
- Pull off the roadway. The brakes will still work but you may have to push very hard on the brake pedal.

Headlight Failure

If your headlights suddenly go out:

- Try the headlight switch a few times.
- If that does not work, put on the emergency flashers, turn signals, or fog lights, if you have them.
- Pull off the road as soon as possible.

Gas Pedal Sticks

The motor keeps going faster and faster:

- Keep your eyes on the road.
- Quickly shift to neutral.
- Pull off the road when safe to do so.
- Turn off the engine.

Avoiding Collisions

When it looks like a collision may happen, many drivers panic and fail to act. There is usually something you can do to avoid the crash or reduce the impact of the crash. In avoiding a collision, drivers have three options: stop, turn, or speed up.

Stopping Quickly

Many newer vehicles have an antilock braking system (ABS). Be sure to read the vehicle owner's manual on how to use the ABS. The ABS system allows you to stop without skidding.

With ABS - If you have an antilock braking system and you need to stop quickly:

- Press on the brake pedal as hard as you can and keep pressing on it.
- You might feel the brake pedal pushing back when the ABS is working. Do not let up on the brake pedal. The ABS system will only work with the brake pedal pushed down.

Without ABS - If you must stop quickly and you do not have an antilock braking system:

- You can cause the vehicle to skid if you brake too hard.
- Apply the brakes as hard as you can without locking them.
- If the brakes lock up, you will feel the vehicle start to skid. Quickly let up on the brake pedal.
- As soon as the vehicle stops skidding, push down on the brake pedal again. Keep doing this until the vehicle has stopped.

Turning Quickly

You should consider turning in order to avoid a collision. In most cases, you can turn the vehicle quicker than you can stop it.

Make sure you have a good grip with both hands on the steering wheel. Once you have turned away or changed lanes, you must be ready to keep the vehicle under control.

Some drivers steer away from one collision only to end up in another. Always steer in the direction you want the vehicle to go.

With ABS - If you have ABS, you can turn your vehicle while braking without skidding. This is very helpful if you must turn and stop or slow down.

Without ABS - If you do not have ABS, you must use a different procedure to turn quickly. You should step on the brake pedal, then let up and turn the steering wheel. Braking will slow the vehicle, put more weight on the front tires, and allow for a quicker turn. Do not lock up the front wheels while braking or turn so sharply that the vehicle wheels start to skid.

Generally, it is better to run off the road than to collide head-on into another vehicle.

Speeding Up

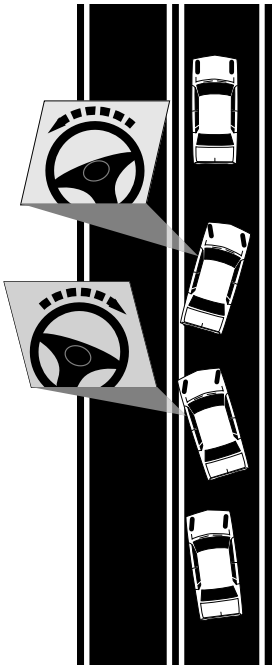
Sometimes it is best, or necessary, to speed up to avoid a collision. This may happen when another vehicle is about to hit you from the side or from behind and there is room to the front of you to get out of danger. Be sure to slow down once the danger has passed.

Dealing with Skids

Any road that is safe under normal conditions can be dangerous when it is wet or has snow or ice on it. High speeds, under normal conditions, also increase the possibility of a skid if you turn or stop suddenly. Skids are caused when the tires can no longer grip the road. Because you cannot control a vehicle when it is skidding, it is best to avoid skidding in the first place. Skids are caused by drivers traveling too fast for conditions.

If your vehicle begins to skid:

- *Stay off the brake.* Until the vehicle slows, your brakes will not work and could cause you to skid more.
- *Steer.* Turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the vehicle to go. As soon as the vehicle begins to straighten out, turn the steering wheel back the other way. If you do not do so, your vehicle may swing around in the other direction and you could start a new skid.
- *Continue to steer.* Continue to correct your steering, left and right, until the vehicle is again moving down the road under your control.



Protecting Yourself in Collisions

You may not always be able to avoid a collision. Try everything you can to keep from getting hit. If nothing works, try to lessen any injuries that could result from the collision. The most important thing you can do is to use your lap and shoulder belts. Besides your seat belts, there are a couple of other things that could help prevent more serious injuries.

- *Hit from the rear* - If your vehicle is hit from the rear, your body will be thrown backwards. Press yourself against the back of your seat and put your head against the head restraint. Be ready to apply your brakes so you will not be pushed into another vehicle.

- *Hit from the side* - If your vehicle is hit from the side, your body will be thrown towards the side that is hit. Air bags will not help in this situation. Your lap and shoulder belts are needed to help keep you behind the wheel. Get ready to steer or brake to prevent your vehicle from hitting something else.
- *Hit from the front* - If your vehicle is about to be hit from the front, it is important to try and have a glancing blow, rather than being struck head-on. This means that if a collision is going to happen, you should try to turn the vehicle. At worst, you hit with a glancing blow. You might miss it. If your vehicle has an air bag, it will inflate. It also will deflate following the crash, so be ready to prevent your vehicle from hitting something else. You must use your lap and shoulder belts to keep you behind the wheel and to protect you if your vehicle has a second collision.

Collisions

Do not stop at a collision unless you are involved or if emergency help has not yet arrived. Keep your attention on your driving and keep moving, watching for people who might be in or near the road. Never drive to the scene of a collision, fire, or other disaster, just to look. You may block the way for police, firefighters, ambulances, tow trucks, and other rescue vehicles. You must obey all lawful orders given by police, firefighters, and other persons authorized to direct traffic at the scene. It is against the law to drive over a firehose. Doing this can damage the hose, injure firefighters or hinder their efforts.

No matter how good a driver you are, there may be a time when you are involved in a collision. If you are involved, you must stop. If involved in a collision with a parked vehicle, you must try and locate the owner. If any person is injured or killed, the police must be notified. It is a crime for you to leave a collision site where your vehicle was involved if there is an injury or death before police have talked to you and obtained the information they need.

You may want to carry a basic vehicle emergency kit. These kits have emergency flares, first aid supplies, and basic tools.

At the Collision Scene

- For all collisions that only damage a vehicle or other property, the driver must move the vehicle off the road, freeway, shoulder or median to an exit ramp shoulder, frontage road, cross street or other suitable location as soon as it is possible to do so.
- For all other collisions, stop your vehicle at or near the collision site. If you can move your vehicle, get it off the road so that it does not block traffic or cause another collision.
- Do not stand or walk in traffic lanes. You could be struck by another vehicle.
- Turn off the ignition of wrecked vehicles. Do not smoke around wrecked vehicles. Fuel could have spilled and fire is a real danger.
- If there are power lines down with wires in the road, do not go near them.
- Make sure that other traffic will not be involved in the collision. Use flares or other warning devices to alert traffic of the collision.

If Someone Is Injured

- Get help. Make sure the police and emergency medical or rescue squad have been called. If there is a fire, tell the police when they are called.
- Do not move the injured unless they are in a burning vehicle or in other immediate danger of being hit by traffic. Moving a person can make their injuries worse.
- First, help anyone who is not already walking and talking. Check for breathing, then check for bleeding.

- If there is bleeding, apply pressure directly on the wound with your hand or with a cloth. Even severe bleeding can be stopped or slowed by putting pressure on the wound.
- Do not give injured persons anything to drink, not even water.
- To help prevent an injured person from going into shock, cover them with a blanket or coat to keep them warm.

Reporting the Collision

- Get the names and addresses of all people involved in the collision and any witnesses, including injured persons.
- Exchange information with other drivers involved in the crash, including: name, address, driver license number, vehicle information (license plate, make, model and year of vehicle) and insurance company and policy number if available.
- Record any damage to the vehicles involved in the collision.
- Provide information to the police or other emergency officials if requested.
- Should the collision involve a parked vehicle, try to find the owner. If you cannot, leave a note in a place where it can be seen with information on how the owner can reach you and the date and time of the collision.
- If the collision results in an injury, death, or property damage of $700 or more to one person's property and a report is not made by a law enforcement officer, you must report it to the Washington Department of Transportation on a Collision Report form within four days. To obtain a report form, go to www.wsdot.wa.gov/mapsdata/tdo/crt.htm or call (360) 570-2355.

VEHICLE LICENSING

All residents of Washington State who own and operate vehicles on public roadways must register their vehicle with DOL. New residents must register their vehicle within 30 days of entering the state.

If you are a resident and purchase a vehicle from another state with the intention of driving it on a Washington roadway, you must register your vehicle immediately.

In Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane areas, most vehicles manufactured less than 25 years ago and more than five years ago must pass an emissions test every two years, even if the vehicle is certified in another state. Call 1-800-272-3780 or go to www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/cars/automotive_pages.htm to find out if you need an emissions test and for testing center locations.

To title and register your vehicle, you must bring the following to a vehicle licensing office:

- The current title and registration for your vehicle. If your title has been lost, you must apply for a duplicate from the state of issuance. If the title is issued by another state and the lien holder retains the title, the registered owner must provide a copy of the current title to obtain a Washington registration.
- The personal identification of all registered owners.
- An odometer reading on a secure odometer form, if your vehicle is less than ten years old.
- Scale weight slip for trucks, trailers (except travel), and propane-powered vehicles, if not shown on the previous title or registration.
- Cash, personal check, cashiers check, or money order for payment of licensing fees and taxes.

Upon proper application, a Certificate of Ownership (title) is issued for all vehicles including mopeds, mobile homes, campers, trailers, and off-road vehicles. The certificate shows the registered and legal owner(s). Keep it

in a safe place, but not in the vehicle. Snowmobiles are not issued titles but they are required to be registered annually.

When ownership is transferred, the certificate must be signed and dated by all the owners and given to the purchaser. The purchaser must transfer ownership within 15 days to avoid penalty fees. If the vehicle is sold by a dealer, the transfer is the dealer's responsibility.

When a vehicle is sold or traded to a private party or dealer, the owner must report the sale within five days. Reports of Sale may be taken to any Washington vehicle licensing office for immediate processing that includes a receipt (a service fee will be charged) or filed electronically at wws2.wa.gov/dol/vehtabs/. Filing a properly completed Report of Sale within five days of selling, trading, gifting, or disposing of your vehicle in any way can help protect you if the new owner does not transfer the title. Submitting a completed Report of Sale within five days may protect you from certain civil liabilities if that vehicle is impounded, abandoned, wrecked, ticketed, or involved in illegal activities. The Report of Sale is the lower portion of newer certificates of ownership or may be obtained from a Washington vehicle licensing office or online.

Vehicle License Plates

License plates must be displayed on both the front and rear of motor vehicles registered in Washington. License renewal month and year tabs are required on rear plates only.

Disabled Parking Privileges - You may obtain temporary or permanent disabled parking privileges and an identification card if you have a disability that limits or impairs your ability to walk. To apply, you and your physician must complete the Disabled Person's Parking Privileges Application form, available at any vehicle or driver licensing office or DOL's website at www.dol.wa.gov. Most vehicle licensing offices can process your application.

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Phone

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KNOW THE FACTS

- For every highway construction or maintenance employee killed or injured in a work zone accident, 12 motorists are killed and 214 are injured.
- Traffic fines double inside a highway work zone.
- It is against the law to drive negligently within a highway work zone or to ignore directions from flaggers or signage.
- Four out of five people killed in highway work zones are drivers and passengers.

SLOW DOWN, SAVE LIVES.

Washington State
Department of Transportation