

Better living series

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Enjoy the drive!

This handbook is meant for people who fall in one of more of the following categories:

- Who believe that they can bring in change
- Who are confident, patient and courageous enough to take ownership of a solution to the problem they see around themselves
- Who will not trade their principles for short-time comforts
- Who know that if we are not part of the solution then we are part of the problem
- Who believe that if we do not actively participate in creating the future we want, we lose our right to complain about the future we get

If you happen to be one of those people who are my target audience then read on and I can promise that we'll create a better future for our kids and ourselves. For all others, I would recommend that they pass this booklet on to someone else and not waste time reading it, as anyway you will not care to make any difference.

Why I wrote this handbook?

The most common sentence I have heard in India is '*Who cares?*' Whether it is about careless driving, crime, unethical behavior, lack of manners or whatever; it seems that no one cares. Well, **I DO** because I always ask myself – The future I leave for my kids, will it be a blessing or a curse? And this is not just in terms of money or education but more importantly a better life style, a better city and a country that they'll be proud of. Citizens of a country play a very important role in creating and maintaining the country and we all need to actively participate before the legislation moves in. In developed countries the lawmakers have created such laws that if people do not behave themselves there are economic repercussions. If you are a bad driver, your car insurance premium will be more; if you are found littering the road you'll have to pay a fine of \$1000!!! I would rather improve myself by self-discipline rather than having to abide by the politicians' whims and fancies.

What can you do to bring about the change? Take time to understand and follow a better way of life. Promote it wherever possible. Pass this booklet (and the others that I'll write) along to as many people as you know and help me translate it to as many Indian languages as possible so that people who do not read English will be able to take part in this grassroots moment.

So, next time if someone tells you '*Who cares?*' you can proudly proclaim – **I DO** and do not hesitate to speak your mind. Sooner or later enough of us will care and participate in bringing in the change in our lives. One day the world will watch and say – India in the most 'civilized' country in the world in spite of the fact that there are very few lifestyle-policing laws in the country.

DISCLAIMER

When using this handbook, please remember that it is not a book of rules for the road. It can be used as a summary of the laws and regulations and not the complete text of the prevailing traffic laws. Keep in mind that new laws get introduced every so often and it is your responsibility to be aware of them and abide by them.

DRIVING IS A PRIVILEGE NOT A RIGHT

The way we drive, it seems that we consider it our birthright and the road belongs to us! The driver behind the wheel may be the head honcho of a large corporation or a knowledge worker, but will show complete lack of courtesy, manners and disrespect for the rules of road!

We feel proud that we got our driving license delivered to our home, without having to visit the RTO or of the fact that we paid some money to a tout who got us the license in less than 30 minutes, where it would have taken 4 hours if we followed the correct procedure. Yes, you may have saved time and the effort of passing the test, but at what cost? You compromised on principles, your and your family's safety along with the safety of fellow people on the road and set a wrong example for your kids and others.

As you read this booklet, think back on how you drive today and what improvements can be made. Even if you have been driving for the last thirty years, don't presume that your driving cannot be improved. Times have changed along with traffic, vehicles and the roads. Make your and others' drive enjoyable by courteous and safe driving practices.

LAWS AND RULES OF THE ROAD

To drive safely, you must follow many rules and laws. They tell you where and when you can drive. To follow these rules, you must know what traffic lights and signs mean. You must understand “right-of-way” laws and how to use traffic lanes. You must know where and when you can park. In absence of laws use common sense and courtesy guidelines so that you do not become a nuisance to the flow of traffic. Be smart, aware and enjoy the drive rather than endure it!

TRAFFIC CONTROL AT INTERSECTIONS

Traffic lights, signs and “right-of-way” rules tell you when to go or stop at an intersection. These are what the colors of traffic lights mean:

Red



A red signal light means “STOP”. A left turn can be made against a red light after you stop and yield to pedestrians and vehicles in your path. DO NOT turn if there is a sign posted for “NO TURN ON RED”, or “NO FREE LEFT”.

Red Arrow



A red arrow means “STOP” until the green signal or green arrow appears. A turn may not be made against a red arrow. The red arrow, when used for left turn means that you cannot make free left turn.

Flashing Red



A flashing red signal light means exactly the same as a stop sign: namely, STOP! After stopping, proceed when safe, observing the right-of-way rules. A flashing red may also mean that the traffic police in managing the traffic at that intersection.

Yellow



A yellow signal light warns you that the red signal is about to appear. When you see the yellow light you should stop, if you can do so safely. If you can't stop, look out for the vehicles that may enter the intersection when the light changes. NEVER STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF INTERSECTION as you will disrupt the traffic. If you are not sure that you will be able to cross the intersection before the light turns red, do not enter the intersection.

Flashing Yellow



A flashing yellow signal light warns you to be careful. Slow down and be especially alert. The traffic police may be manually directing the traffic.

Yellow Arrow



A yellow arrow means the “protected” turning time period is ending. Be prepared to obey the next signal that could be the green or red light or the red arrow. Sometimes, a red flashing arrow is used instead of a yellow arrow.

Green



A green light means “GO”, but first you must let any vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians remaining in the intersection get through before you move ahead. Make the right turn only if you have enough space to complete the turn before any oncoming vehicle, bicycle, or pedestrian becomes a hazard.

Green Arrow



Green arrow means “GO”. Turn in the direction the arrow is pointing, but first you must yield to any vehicle, bicycle, or pedestrian still in the intersection. The green arrow pointing right or left allows you to make a “protected” turn. This means oncoming vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians are stopped by a red light as long as the green arrow is lighted.

Do not enter an intersection, even when the light is green, unless there is enough space to completely cross before the light turns red. Heavy traffic may cause you to block traffic and that will aggravate the traffic problem for everyone.

Traffic Signal Blackout

If all traffic signal lights are not working because of an electrical power failure, you must **STOP** at the intersection and then proceed when you know other turning and approaching vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians will also be stopping. A blacked-out traffic signal is the same as a **stop sign** controlled intersection in all directions.

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS

Many street crossings have pedestrian signals that show the sign of a walking person in green meaning “WALK” and walking person in red meaning “DON'T WALK”.

Pedestrian signals direct pedestrians when it is safe to cross the street.

When the “WALK” sign appears (that is the walking person is green) it is safe to start crossing. When the “DON'T WALK” sign appears (that is the walking person is red) you may not start across the street. The flashing signal means you should not begin to cross because you may not have enough time to make it to the other side before vehicles start moving across your path. If the flashing starts after you have already started to cross, you may finish crossing the street. At a crossing where there are no pedestrian signals, pedestrians must obey the red, yellow, or green signal lights.

TRAFFIC SIGNS

The shape of a sign gives you a clue about the information contained on the sign. Here are the common shapes used:



The *eight-sided red STOP sign* means that you must make a full stop before entering a crosswalk or at a white “limit line”. A limit line is a wide white line painted on the street. When a crosswalk or limit line is not marked, stop at the corner. Check for traffic before crossing. Wait until it is safe before going forward. On divided highways, a STOP sign for crossing or turning vehicles is often placed on the island or dividing strip. You must also stop there.



The *three-sided red YIELD sign* means slow down & be ready to stop, and let traffic (including people walking or riding bikes) pass before you go ahead. Go only when it is safe.



A red circle with a red line through it always means NO. The words inside the circle show what you cannot do. The sign may be shown with or without words under it.

Examples of Regulatory Signs



No U-turn



No Left Turn



STOP



Do Not Enter / No Entry



No Right Turn

Examples of Warning Signs



Crossroad



Two Way Traffic



Lane Ends



Slippery When Wet



Traffic Signal Ahead



Merging Traffic



End Divided Highway



Divided Highway

RIGHT-OF-WAY RULES

Right-of-way rules help people drive safely. These rules go along with courtesy and common sense. Bicycle, moped riders, and pedestrians must follow these rules, too.

Never insist on taking the right-of-way

If another driver does not yield to you when he or she should, forget it. Let the other driver go first. You will help prevent accidents and make driving more pleasant.

However, do not always insist on others going ahead of you. If another vehicle expects you to take your legal turn, you may delay traffic by stopping or slowing unnecessarily to allow another vehicle to go ahead of you.

Pedestrians

A pedestrian is a person on foot or using a conveyance propelled by human power (roller skates, skateboards, etc.) other than a bicycle. The definition of pedestrian includes persons who are disabled and use self-propelled wheelchairs, or tricycles because they are not able to move about as a pedestrian. These individuals must be given the same rights as any other pedestrian.

- Always stop for any pedestrian crossing at corners or other crosswalks. Do not pass a car from behind that has stopped at a crosswalk. A pedestrian you can't see may be crossing
- Remember -just because you make eye contact with a pedestrian doesn't mean that the pedestrian will yield the right-of-way to you

Other Vehicles

- At an intersection without STOP or YIELD signs, slow down and be ready to stop. Yield to vehicles already in the intersection or just entering it. Also yield to the vehicle that arrives first *or* to the vehicle on your right if it reaches the intersection at the same time as your vehicle. At a "T" intersection, vehicles on the through road have the right-of-way
- On a 'roundabout' the vehicle that has entered the roundabout has the right of way. Wait for the other vehicle to cross before you enter the roundabout
- When there are STOP signs at all corners, stop first; then follow the above rules
- When you turn right, give the right-of-way to all vehicles on the same road coming from the opposite direction close enough to be dangerous. Turn only when you can see that it is safe. Look for motorcyclists and bicyclists. On divided highways, or highways with several lanes, watch out for cars coming in any lane you must cross
- Whenever you have parked off the road, before you enter the road again, you must yield to traffic

SPEED LIMITS

The “Basic Speed Law “ says that you must never drive faster than is safe for the present conditions, regardless of the posted speed limit.

Maximum Speed Limit

Driving faster than the posted speed limit or than it is safe for current conditions, on any road is dangerous and illegal. High speed increases your stopping distance. The faster you go, the less time you have to avoid a hazard or accident. The force of a 60 kmph crash isn't just twice as great as at 30 kmph, it's **four times as great!**

When You Drive Too Slowly

If you block the normal and reasonable movement of traffic you may be driving too slowly. Sometimes, of course, you may have to go slowly. If you are driving slower than other traffic, do not drive in the “fast” lane (right most lane). If you are in the right (or fast) lane, move to the left when another driver is close behind you and wishes to drive faster.

When you are driving a bus, towing a vehicle or a trailer, or driving a large truck, you will usually be traveling slower than other vehicles. You must drive in the left-hand lane or closer to the left of the road.

Special Speed Limits

Around children

- Always drive more carefully near schools, playgrounds, and parks because children may suddenly dart into the street. You should **never** drive faster than 15 kmph when the school ground has no fence and children are outside
- Watch for bicycles and pedestrians near schools
- Look for stopped school buses. Be prepared for children crossing the street

Blind intersections and alleys

- Blind intersections are intersections where you cannot see for 100 feet in either direction during the last 100 feet before crossing
- Trees, bushes, buildings, or parked cars at intersections can block your view of cars coming from the side
- You need to approach a “blind “ intersection slowly enough (25 kmph) to be able to stop if a vehicle pulls out suddenly. However, you may drive as fast as the posted speed limit if YIELD or STOP signs on the side streets give you the right-of-way
- The speed limit in any alley (narrow street) should be observed at 25 kmph

Near railroad tracks

The speed limit is 25 kmph when you come within 100 feet of a railroad crossing and you cannot see the tracks for 400 feet in both directions. You may go faster than 25 kmph if gates, a warning signal, or a flagman controls the crossing.

Animals on or around the road

If you see animals or livestock, slow down. Obey the person in charge of the animals. If you see a stray animal in your path, slow down or stop, if it is safe to do so.

Many roads have two or more lanes going in your direction. Broken white lines separate these lanes. You must choose which lane to use. Drive in the lane that has the smoothest flow of traffic. **DO NOT DRIVE ON OR OVER THE WHITE LINE.** If there are three lanes on your side of the road, pick the middle lane for the smoothest driving. If you want to go faster, pass, or turn right, use the right lane. When you drive slowly, enter, or turn off the road, use the left lane. If only two lanes go in your direction, pick the right lane for the smoothest driving.

Don't Weave - stay in one traffic lane as much as possible. Before changing lanes, check your mirrors for vehicles that may be ready to pass you; also turn your head and **CHECK BESIDE YOUR VEHICLE** to see if any vehicle, such as a motorcycle, is in your blind spot and to be sure there is enough room for your vehicle in the next lane.

Shaded Areas Represent Driver's Blind Spots



USE OF LANES

White lines painted on the pavement indicate traffic going in your direction (such as one-way streets).

Yellow lines mark the center of a two-way road used for two-way traffic. You may pass on a two-way road if the yellow centerline is broken. When a solid and a broken yellow line are together, you must not pass if you are driving next to the solid line. Two solid yellow lines mean "no passing." **Never drive to the right of these lines.** Stay on your side of the road.

Exceptions:

- When turning right at an intersection or into or out of a private road or driveway
- When the left half of the road is closed or blocked

Lanes For Through Traffic

Once you start through an intersection, keep going. If you start to make a turn, follow through as last-second changes may cause accidents. If you missed a turn, continue to the next intersection and work your way back to where you want to go.

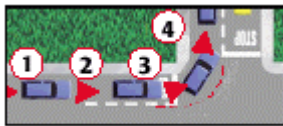
Lanes For Turning

Below are some rules to help you when turning at a street corner.

Right Turn: Get close to the center divider line or into the right turn lane (if there is one). When turning right, don't turn too soon and "cut the corner" of the lane belonging to cars coming toward you.

Left Turn: If you are turning left, get close to the left edge of the road (watch for bicycles or motorcycles between your car and the curb). On a left turn, don't turn wide. Stay in the left lane until you have finished your turn.

How to make a left turn



(1) *Begin signaling*

- *Look over right shoulder*
- *Move as close to the left as possible*

(2) *About 100 feet from corner, reduce speed.*

(3) *STOP BEHIND LIMIT LINE and look both ways.*

(4) *Turn into left lane.*

How to make a right turn on a two way street



(1) *About 100 feet from corner:*

- *Begin signaling*
- *Reduce speed*

(2) *STOP BEHIND LIMIT LINE*

- *Look left, then right, then left again.*
- *If safe, make turn.*

Sidewalks

Never drive on a sidewalk unless you are crossing a sidewalk to enter or leave a driveway or alley. When crossing a sidewalk, stop for any pedestrian.

Lanes For Passing

Never drive off the paved or main-traveled portion of the road or on the shoulder to pass. When you want to pass a vehicle or bicycle going in your direction, **pass on the right**. In a narrow traffic lane wait until the traffic is clear coming from the opposite side before passing. Pass on the left only:

- If an open highway is clearly marked for two or more lanes of vehicles moving in your direction of travel
- If the driver of the other vehicle is making a right turn. Never drive off the road or pass to the left of a driver who is signaling a right turn. (Be careful. Sometimes

drivers use the wrong turn signal.) Don't honk when you pass on the left. The other driver may think you are on the right and "pull over" right into you.

If you need to move into another lane, move only after you have finished a turn you want to make and when traffic is clear.

TURNS

Left Turn Against A Red Light

Signal and stop for a red traffic light at the limit line, if there is one, or before entering the intersection. If there is no sign that prohibits a left turn on the red light, you may turn left. Be careful that you do not interfere with pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles moving on their green light.

Right Turn Against Red Light On A One-Way Street Only

Signal and stop for a red traffic light at the limit line, if there is one, or before entering the intersection. On a one-way street, you may turn right into a one-way street where traffic moves right if there is no sign that prohibits the right turn. If the light is red, be very careful that you do not interfere with pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles moving on their green light.

NO TURN AGAINST RED ARROW. A right or left turn may not be made against a red arrow or red traffic light.

Examples Of Right And Left Turns

Don't forget to signal in each situation.

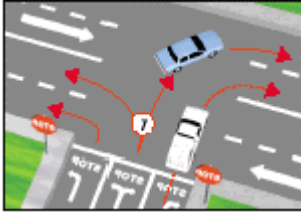


Right turn from a two-way street

Start the turn at the right hand edge of the lane closest to the middle of the street. You may complete the turn in either lane of the cross street (as shown by arrows) if it is safe to do so. You must use a right turn lane if there is one. A right turn from the next lane may be made if signs or arrows show it is okay

Left turn

The blue car is turning correctly. It began the turn in the lane nearest the left-hand curb. It will end the turn in the lane nearest the left-hand curb. Do not swing wide into another lane of traffic. You may start a left turn from other than the left lane only where pavement or overhead markings show that using that lane for a left turn is permitted



Turn at a “T” intersection from a one-way into a two-way street

Through traffic has the right-of-way. You may turn either right or left from the center lane. Watch for vehicles and bicycles inside your turn

Legal U-Turns

When you make a U-turn, you turn around and go back the way you came. Signal and then make the turn only from the far right lane on your side of the road. You may cross a double yellow line to make a U-turn, if the turn can be made safely and legally.

At an intersection, you may make a U-turn on a green light or green arrow unless a “No U-turn” sign is posted. Before you make a U-turn on a divided highway, be sure you won't drive over or across any dividing section, curb, or strip. This includes:

- Two sets of double lines marking a center divider -except through an opening provided for turns
- The unpaved median in the middle of the freeway

Illegal U-Turns

Never make a U-turn on a highway by crossing a curb, or strip of land, or two sets of double lines. You may not make a U-turn:

- Where you cannot clearly see 200 feet in each direction because of a curve, hill, rain, fog, or other reason
- Where a “NO U-TURN” sign is posted
- When vehicles may hit you
- On a one-way street

Signs & Road Markings

Many streets have signs to indicate that:

- Cars in the right lane may go straight **or** must turn right
- Cars in the left lane may turn left **or** must go straight
- Cars in the center lane must go straight
- Similar markings are often painted on the road

PARKING

Parking On A Hill

When you park headed downhill, turn your front wheels into the curb or toward the side of the road. **Set the parking brake.**

When you park headed uphill, turn your front wheels away from the curb and let your vehicle roll back a few inches until the rear of one front wheel gently touches the curb. Then **set the parking brake.**

For either uphill or downhill parking, if there is no curb, turn the wheels toward the side of the road so the car will roll away from the center of the road if the brakes fail. When you park on a sloping driveway, turn the wheels so that the car will not roll into the street if the brakes fail. **Always** set your parking brake and leave the vehicle in gear.

Parking At Colored Curbs

A painted curb means that you must follow special rules to park there. The colors on curbs mean:

White: You may stop only long enough to pick up or drop off passengers or delivery, such as airport passenger terminals.

Green: You may park for a limited time. The time is usually shown on a sign next to the green zone, or painted on the curb.

Yellow: You may stop here only long enough to load or unload passengers or freight - no longer than posted. Drivers of noncommercial vehicles are usually required to stay with their vehicle.

Red: No stopping, standing, or parking. A bus may stop at a red zone marked for buses.

No Parking

Never park where you will block traffic. Do not park or leave your car:

- In an intersection
- On a crosswalk (marked or unmarked); or on a sidewalk
- In front of a driveway
- At a red curb
- In a tunnel or on a bridge, except where permitted by signs
- Where signs say "No Parking"
- On or within 7 1/2 feet of a railroad track
- On the wrong side of the street

Never park in the street just because all the parking places at the curb are taken. That is called "double parking" and double parking is *always* against the law. If you must stop on a highway, park completely off the pavement. You must leave enough space for other vehicles to pass freely. Your car should be visible 200 feet in each direction.

Special Parking Rules

- When you park alongside a curb, the front and back wheels must be parallel and within 18 inches of the curb. If there is no curb, parallel parking is required
- Never leave your car until you have stopped the engine and set the parking brake
- Don't open your door on the traffic side unless it is safe to do so and doesn't interfere with traffic. Look for passing bicycles and motorcycles. Do not leave the door open any longer than is necessary to load or unload passengers

MORE RULES YOU MUST KNOW

You must not drive a vehicle so loaded, either with property or persons that you can't see ahead or to the sides or cannot control it.

You must not carry anything in or on a passenger vehicle which protrudes beyond the line of the fenders on the left side, or more than six inches beyond the line of the fenders on the sides. A load extending more than four feet from the back of the vehicle must display a 12-inch red or fluorescent orange square flag or two red lights at night.

DON'T LITTER the roadside with bottles, cans, paper, or anything else.

The driver of a vehicle must not wear a headset over, or earplugs in, both ears.

SIGNALS FOR DRIVERS AND BICYCLISTS

Signal to other drivers when you plan to turn left or right, slow down, or stop. Signals may be given by hand-and-arm positions, or by signal lights on the vehicle. Watch for signals from other drivers.

If your vehicle is built so that hand-and-arm signals cannot easily be seen, signal lights must be used. Signal your left or right turn during the last 100 feet before reaching the turning point. At highway speeds, it is best to signal at least five seconds before you change lanes. If bright sunlight makes signal lights hard to see, use hand-and-arm signals also. Motorcyclists often use hand signals to make themselves more visible.

SAFE DRIVING PRACTICES

VISUAL SEARCH (SEEING WELL)

Looking Ahead

In order to avoid last minute moves, you should look down the road 10 to 15 seconds ahead of your vehicle. A driver needs to look that far ahead to see hazards early. Constantly staring at the road just in front of your car is dangerous. If you look ahead, you will be able to see important things that you can't see later on, such as someone getting into a parked car.

Take In the Whole Scene

Looking 10 to 15 seconds ahead does not mean looking only at the middle of the road. It means looking at the side of the road as well. "Scanning" the roadside helps you to see:

- Cars and people that may be in the road by the time you reach them
- Signs warning of problems ahead
- Signs giving you directions

Keep your eyes moving. Look near and far. Turn your head before changing lanes, because mirrors have blind spots. These blind spots can hide a motorcycle or bicycle. Watch for things about to happen like a ball rolling into the street; a car door opening; a swerving bicycle.

Watch for Hazards

Look beyond the car ahead of you. Don't develop a "fixed stare." Look around. Keep your eyes moving. Check your rear view mirrors frequently (every 2 to 5 seconds) so that you know the position of vehicles near you.

On the freeway, be ready for changes in traffic conditions. Watch for signals from other drivers. Expect merging vehicles at onramps and interchanges. Be prepared for rapid changes in road conditions and traffic flow. As you look ahead, think about what will (or might) happen on the road. Be alert for vehicles on either side, to the front, and to the rear. Use your mirrors.

Leave enough space between you and the vehicle ahead for safe stops. Always leave yourself an "out." Mistakes cause accidents. To protect yourself, know which lanes are clear so you can use them if you need to.

Looking To The Sides

Any time you come to a place where people may cross or enter your path, you should look to the sides to make sure no one is coming. Always look to the sides at intersections, crosswalks, and railroad crossings.

An **intersection** is any place where one line of traffic meets another. It includes:

- Cross streets, side streets, and alleys
- Freeway entrances
- Driveway and shopping center entrances, etc

Follow these rules at intersections:

Look Both Ways

- Look to the left first, since cars coming from the left are closer to you
- Look to the right
- Take one more look to the left before you pull out, just in case there is someone you didn't see the first time

Don't Rely On Traffic Signals

- Some drivers do not obey traffic signals
- At an intersection, look left, right, and left again even if other traffic has a red light or a stop sign. A drunk or reckless driver may not stop
- While entering an intersection, look left, right, and ahead for approaching traffic

Make Sure You Have A Good View

Make sure you can see before crossing an intersection. If your view of a cross street is blocked by a building or a row of parked cars, edge forward slowly until you can see.

Crosswalks

Every intersection where streets with sidewalks meet "at about right angles" has a crosswalk for pedestrians to cross the street even though there may be no painted lines.

The crosswalk is that part of the pavement where the sidewalk lines would extend across the street and are areas set aside for people to cross the street. They are often marked with white lines. Yellow crosswalk lines may be painted at school crossings.

Most crosswalks are at corners. Sometimes they are in the middle of the block. Before turning a corner, watch for people who are about to cross the street. Remember, if you have a green light, the light is also green for them. Some crosswalks, especially in residential areas, are not marked.

Pedestrians have the right-of-way in crosswalks. If you stop in the crosswalk, you put pedestrians in danger. Those pedestrians often have to go into the traffic lanes to avoid being hit by you because you have violated their right-of-way.

Roadside Areas

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 and parking lots
- Construction areas
- Busy sidewalks
- Playgrounds and school yards, etc

Looking Behind

It is a good idea to check traffic behind you often. This way, you will know if cars are tailgating or coming up behind you too fast. You may have time to get out of the way before being hit from the rear. It is very important to check behind you before you change lanes, slow down quickly, back up, or drive down a long or steep hill. On long, steep downgrades, keep a look out for large vehicles that can gather speed very quickly.

Whenever you change lanes, check behind you to make sure you are not getting in the way of cars in that lane. Changing lanes includes:

- Changing from one lane to another
- Entering the freeway from an onramp
- Entering the road from a curb or shoulder

Before changing lanes, signal and always check traffic behind and beside you by:

- Checking all mirrors
- Glancing over your left or right shoulder to make sure the lane you want is clear. If you use only your left or inside rearview mirrors when looking for cars, you may not see vehicles near the rear of your car because of a “blind spot.”
- Always check traffic to the sides quickly. Do not take your eyes off the road ahead for more than an instant. Check for other cars with their turn signals on. Someone in another lane may plan to move into the same spot you want

When you must **slow down suddenly**, take a quick glance in your mirrors. You should also check your mirrors when you are preparing to turn into a side road or driveway, and when you are stopping to pull into a parking space.

Backing up is always dangerous because it is hard to see what is behind your vehicle. Whenever you need to back up or back out of a parking space, follow these rules:

- Check behind the car before you get in. Children and pets are hard to see from the driver's seat
- Turn and look over your right shoulder when backing the vehicle. Do not depend only on your mirrors or only looking out a side window
- Always back slowly to avoid accidents

Having Clear Windows And Mirrors

Keep your windshield and side windows clean inside and out. Bright sun or headlights on a dirty window make it hard to see out. You should clear ice, frost, or dew from all windows **before** you drive.

Do not block your view of the road by putting signs or other objects on the front windshield. Don't hang things on the mirror. Don't block your view through the back or side windows with objects or signs. Tinted safety glass is allowed in a vehicle but make sure that the front glass is not tinted and other glasses are not tinted so dark that it will be a driving hazard at night.

Windshield stickers, etc. should be put only in one of the following four places:

- A seven inch square in the lower corner of the windshield farthest from the driver
- A five inch square in the lower corner of the windshield nearest the driver
- A seven inch square in the lower corner of the rear window farthest removed from the driver
- Side windows to the rear of the driver

Make sure you are able to see and be seen. If you drive in rain or snow, you may have to stop sometimes to wipe mud or snow off your windshield, headlights, and taillights.

Adjusting Your Seat And Mirrors

You should always adjust the seat, mirrors, and safety belt before starting your car. You may have an accident if you try to adjust them while driving.

Adjust your seat so that you are high enough to see the road. If you are still too low, you should use a seat cushion. Do this *before* putting on your safety belt.

Adjust your rear and side mirrors *before* you start driving. If your vehicle has a day/night mirror, learn how to use it. The night setting reduces the headlight glare from cars behind you and helps you see better.

Wearing Glasses Or Contact Lenses

Follow your eye doctor's advice about glasses or corrective contact lenses. If your eye doctor tells you to wear them for driving, *do it*. Never wear dark glasses or sunglasses at night. Consult your eye doctor before wearing tinted contact lenses at night. They can make it hard to see. Don't wear eyeglasses with temples wide enough to keep you from seeing clearly to the sides.

How Well Can You See And Stop?

If something is in your path, you need to see it in time to be able to stop. Assuming you have good tires, good brakes, and dry pavement:

- At 60 kmph, it takes about 400 feet to react to something you see and to bring the car to a complete stop
- At 40 kmph, it will take about 200 feet to react and to bring the car to a complete stop

If you can't see 400 feet ahead, it means you can't drive safely at 60 kmph. If you can't see 200 feet ahead, you can't drive safely at 40 kmph. By the time you saw an object in your path, it would be too late to stop without hitting it.

Adjust your driving to the weather. You should slow down in rain or fog. Turn on your lights during the day if it is hard to see. **It is always unsafe to drive with only your parking lights on.**

Fog: The best advice for driving in the fog is DON'T. You should consider postponing your trip until the fog clears. If you must drive, then slow down and turn on your **low-beam** headlights because the light from high beams will reflect back and cause glare. Never drive with just your parking or fog lights. Increase your following distance and be prepared to stop within the space you can see in front of your vehicle. Avoid crossing or passing lanes of traffic unless absolutely necessary. Listen for traffic you cannot see. Use your wipers and defroster (if available) as necessary for best vision. If the fog becomes so thick that you can barely see, pull **completely** off the road. Do not continue driving until you can see better. Turn off your lights or someone may see your taillights and drive into you.

Darkness: Be very careful when you drive at night. Drive more slowly because you cannot see as far. Motorcycles are harder to see at night because most have only one taillight. You will have less time to stop if a hazard lies ahead. Make sure you can stop within the distance lighted by your headlights. For safe driving, you must turn your headlights on 30 minutes after sunset and leave them on until 30 minutes before sunrise. You must turn your lights on any time you can't see at least 1000 feet ahead. Use your low beam headlights whenever it is raining.

Do not blind other drivers with your high beam headlights. Dim your lights by switching to low beams before you are 500 feet from a vehicle coming toward you. If you are following another vehicle, change to low beams when you get closer than 300 feet. Use your high beams whenever possible as long as it is not unsafe and impolite to other drivers (i.e., in open country when other cars are not near or on dark city streets when no other traffic would be affected by your high beams).

When leaving a brightly lit place, drive slowly until your eyes adjust to the darkness. Don't look directly into oncoming headlights. Look toward the right edge of your lane. Watch the oncoming car out of the corner of your eye. 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.

Drive as far to the left as possible if a vehicle with one light comes toward you. It could be a bicycle or motorcycle, but it could also be a vehicle with a missing headlight.

In a very heavy rain or snowstorm, you may not be able to see more than 100 feet ahead. When you can't see any farther than that, you cannot safely drive faster than 30 kmph. You may have to stop from time to time to wipe mud or snow off your windshield, headlights, and taillights.

If you drive in snowy areas, carry chains in case you find yourself in conditions where you can't drive without them. Make sure you carry the correct number of chains and that they will fit your drive wheels. Learn how to put the chains on **before** you need to use them. Slow down at the first sign of rain, drizzle, or snow on the road. This is when many road pavements are most slippery because oil and dust have not been washed away. It is wise to turn on your low beam headlights when visibility is poor- even in daylight. Light from high beams will reflect back and cause glare.

Hills and Curves: You never know what is on the other side of a steep hill or a sharp curve. If a car is stalled on the road just over the hill or around a curve, you must be going slowly enough to stop. When you come to a hill or curve, slow down so you can stop if a vehicle is there.

HORN, HEADLIGHTS, AND EMERGENCY SIGNALS

Use of Horn

- Sound your **ONLY** horn when necessary to avoid accidents. Don't honk at other times
- Try to get "eye contact" with other drivers. Sometimes it may be necessary to tap your horn to alert another driver who may want to turn in front of you
- On narrow mountain roads, drive as far to the left as possible and sound your horn where you cannot see at least 200 feet ahead or on steep curves
- If a driver is going slowly, don't honk just to make a slow driver hurry. The driver may be ill, lost, or may be having problems with the car
- Never honk if slowing or stopping **your** car will prevent an accident. It's safer to use the brakes than push the horn
- Don't honk simply to show other drivers that they have made a mistake. Your honking may upset them so much that they may make more mistakes
- Never honk because **you** are angry or upset
- Honking **IRRITATES** drivers and increases noise pollution. If you drive safely and courteously honking will not be required

MAKE DRIVING A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE. USE HORN SPARINGLY!

Use Your Headlights

- When it is cloudy, raining, snowing, or foggy
- On frosty mornings when other drivers' windows may be icy or "foggy"

- Any time you have trouble seeing other cars. Other drivers will be having trouble seeing you, too
- On small country or mountain roads. It is a good idea to drive with your headlights on, even on sunny days. This will help other drivers see you. Your headlights may help you avoid a head-on crash. Don't forget to turn them off when you park! You may have to flash your headlights under certain circumstances to get the attention of another driver who may not see you

Use Your Emergency Signals

When your car breaks down on the road, make sure that other drivers can see it. Many accidents happen because a driver didn't see a stalled car until it was too late to stop. If you are having car trouble, and have to stop, follow these rules:

- If at all possible, pull off the road away from all traffic
- If you cannot get completely off the road, try to stop where people can see you and your car from behind. Don't stop just over a hill or just around a curve
- Turn on your emergency flashers to show a hazard or accident is ahead. You should also use your emergency flashers if you are not moving. If your car doesn't have flashers, turn signals may be used instead
- If it is safe, lift the hood to signal an emergency
- Give other drivers plenty of warning. If you have them, place emergency flares or triangles 200 to 300 feet behind the car. This allows other drivers time to change lanes, if necessary. Be very careful when using flares. They may cause fires, especially when used near flammable liquids
- If you don't have emergency flares, follow the rules listed above and stay in your vehicle until help arrives. Be careful for your safety and **stay off the road**. Remember, don't even try to change a tire if it means you have to stand in a traffic lane

Signal When You Change Direction

Signal to let other drivers know your plans and watch for other drivers' signals too. **Always** signal before pulling next to or away from the curb, before turning and changing lanes. Use arm signals or the signal lights on your car. On sunny days, signal lights may be hard to see. If the sun is bright, use arm signals as well as signal lights. Even though you signal, do not automatically assume that the space you wish to occupy is clear. Look over your shoulder to check your blind spot, before making a lane change.

Signal during the last 100 feet before turning and on the freeway, it is best to signal at least five seconds before changing lanes. Always signal when you change direction even when you don't see any vehicle around as the vehicle may be in your blind spot. If you plan to turn beyond an intersection, don't signal until you are actually in the intersection. If you signal too early, another driver may think you will turn before you reach him or her and might pull into your path. If you plan to turn at an intersection (for example), which is close to a business driveway, be especially careful. People leaving that business may think you are turning into the driveway when you really intend to turn at the intersection. These drivers may pull out right in front of you. In a case like this, it might be better to signal after the driveway but before the intersection.

Check your signal after turning. Turn it off if it hasn't clicked off by itself.

Signal When You Slow Down Or Stop Suddenly

Never stop on the road, blocking traffic, unless necessary for safety or to obey a law. If you can see an accident ahead, warn drivers behind you of any stop you must make. Turn on your emergency flashers or tap the brake pedal quickly three or four times as a warning. You can also use the hand signal for slowing and stopping. When slowing, you should start braking early as a signal to the cars behind you.

FOLLOWING DISTANCE

When another driver makes a mistake, you need time to react. You can give yourself this time by keeping enough space between your car and the vehicles around you. Keep a "space cushion" on all sides of your car. It will give you space to brake or maneuver if you need it. The shaded areas in the picture illustrate the area around the car that should be empty whenever possible.

Keep A Cushion Ahead

Many drivers don't see as well as they should because they follow too closely, and the vehicle ahead blocks their view of the road. Good drivers keep a safe following distance so they can see better. The more space they allow between their car and the car ahead, the more time they will have to see a hazard or accident down the road. They will have more time to stop, or to avoid the hazard.

Keep enough space between your car and the car ahead so that you will have "a bigger picture" of what lies down the road and steering to avoid trouble will be easier. You can travel in the center of the lane instead of hugging one side or the other to let you see ahead.

Most rear end accidents are caused by following too closely and to avoid this, use the "three-second rule". When the vehicle ahead of you passes a certain point, such as a sign, count "one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three". This takes about three seconds. If you pass the same point before you finish counting, you are following too closely.

Sometimes you will need more than a "three-second" cushion so give yourself a "four-second or more" cushion in the following situations:

- When you are crowded by a tailgater: You should allow extra room between your car and the car ahead. Then, if you need to slow down you can do so gradually. You will be able to avoid braking suddenly-and being hit from behind by the tailgater!
- On slippery roads: If the car ahead should slow or stop, you will need more distance to stop your car
- When following motorcycles: If the motorcycle falls, you'll have to avoid hitting the rider. Motorcycles fall more often on wet or icy roads, on metal surfaces such as bridge gratings or railroad tracks, and on gravel
- When the driver behind you wants to pass: Slow down to allow room in front of your car so the driver will have space to move into

- When you are pulling a trailer or carrying a heavy load: The extra weight makes it harder to stop
- When following large vehicles that block your view ahead: You need the extra room to see around the vehicle and to the sides
- When you see a bus, school bus, or vehicle carrying hazardous materials: These vehicles must stop at railroad crossings. Expect the stops; slow down early to allow plenty of room

When you follow too closely and another driver “cuts” in front of you, the normal reaction is to slam on your brakes and swerve out of the way. Swerving out of the way most often results in cutting someone else off or possibly driving off the roadway. It might also result in the car behind you crashing into you or other cars around you.

If another driver “cuts” in front of you, it would be better if you just take your foot off the gas. This will give you space between your car and the other driver without swerving into another lane. Don't overreact if you are cut off. Plan your emergency escape route before an emergency happens.

Keep A Cushion To The Side

Keep a space cushion on each side of your car.

- Don't drive in the blind spot of another driver. The other driver may not see your car and could change lanes and hit you
- Avoid driving alongside other cars on multilane streets. Someone may crowd your lane or try to change lanes and pull into you. Move ahead of the other car or drop back
- Keep as much space as you can between yourself and oncoming traffic. On multilane streets, stay out of the lane next to the centerline, if you can. That way you will have more room to avoid an oncoming car that suddenly swerves toward you. This is very important at intersections where another driver could turn left without giving a signal
- If possible, make room for vehicles entering freeways even though you have the right-of-way
- At freeway exits, don't drive alongside other cars. A driver on the freeway may pull off suddenly or a driver leaving may swerve back on
- Keep a space between yourself and parked cars. Someone may step out from between them. A car door may open. A car may start to pull out suddenly
- Be careful when riding near bicycles. A bicycle rider could be seriously hurt in an accident. Always leave plenty of room between your car and any bicycle. Watch carefully for bicycles before turning

Keep A Cushion Behind

Watch for tailgaters! If one is following you, be careful! Brake slowly before stopping. Tap your brake lightly a few times to warn the tailgater before you slow down. Your brake lights will flash. “Lose” the tailgater as soon as you can by changing lanes. If you can't change lanes, slow down enough to encourage the tailgater to go around you. If this does not work, pull off the road when it is safe and let the tailgater pass.

Splitting The Difference

Sometimes there will be dangers on both sides of the road. For example, there may be parked cars to the left and oncoming cars to the right. In this case, the best thing to do is “split the difference”. Steer a middle course between the oncoming cars and the parked cars. If one danger is greater than the other, give the most room to the worst danger. Suppose there are oncoming cars to the right of you and a child on a bike to the left. The child is most likely to make a sudden move. Therefore, give him or her a lot of room. It may mean moving closer to the oncoming cars.

Allow A Cushion For Problem Drivers

There are certain people you should give a lot of room to. Here are some of them.

- Drivers who cannot see you: Someone who cannot see you may enter your path without knowing you are there. People who have trouble seeing you include:
 - Drivers at intersections or driveways, whose view is blocked by buildings, trees, or other cars
 - Drivers backing out of driveways or parking spaces; drivers whose windows are covered with snow or ice; people with umbrellas in front of their faces or hats pulled down over their eyes
- People who are distracted: Even when others can see you, allow extra room if you think they may be distracted. People who may be distracted include:
 - Delivery persons
 - Construction workers
 - Children, who often run into the street without looking
 - Drivers talking on cellular telephones
 - Drivers or people who are talking to each other, taking care of children, or looking at maps
- People who may be confused: A person who is confused is very likely to make a move without looking. People who may be confused include:
 - Tourists, often at complicated intersections
 - Drivers who slow down for what seems to be no apparent reason
 - Drivers looking for a house number
- Drivers in trouble: If another driver makes a mistake, do what you can to help him or her out. Drivers who need help include:
 - Drivers who pass you as you approach a curve or an oncoming car
 - A driver who is about to be forced into your lane by a vehicle, a pedestrian, a bicyclist, an obstruction, or fewer lanes ahead

SAFETY BELTS

For safety reasons you should always wear seat belts if your vehicle is equipped them. You must wear both your lap and shoulder belt if the vehicle is equipped with both even if the vehicle is equipped with air bags. The safety belt must be in good working order and must be worn by you and your passengers while the car is moving.

Safety belts can reduce injuries and deaths. Many studies and actual crash tests have proven this. Crash tests have also reinforced the proper way for pregnant women to wear lap and shoulder belts. Wear the lap belt as low as possible under the abdomen and the shoulder strap between the breasts and to the side of the abdomen's bulge.

If you wear only a lap belt when driving, your chances of living through an accident are twice as good as those of someone who isn't. If you wear a lap and shoulder belt, your chances are three to four times better.

WARNING: The use of seat belts reduces the chance of being thrown from your vehicle in case of an accident. If you don't install and use a shoulder harness with the lap belt, serious or fatal injuries may happen in some crashes. Lap-only belts increase the chance of spinal column and abdominal injuries-especially in children. Shoulder harnesses may be available for your vehicle, if it is not already equipped with them.

Myths About Seat Belts

About one person in three is injured or killed in a traffic accident. Have you heard some of these stories about seat belts before?

- "Safety belts can trap you inside a car". It actually takes less than a second to take off a safety belt. This scare tactic often describes a car that caught fire or sank in deep water. A safety belt may keep you from being "knocked out". Your chance to escape is better if you are conscious
- "Safety belts are good on long trips, but I don't need them if I'm driving around town". Half of all traffic deaths happen within short distance of home. Don't take chances with your life or the lives of your passengers. Buckle up every time you drive
- "Some people are thrown clear in a crash and walk away with hardly a scratch". Your chances of surviving an accident are five times as good if you stay inside the car. A safety belt can keep you from being thrown into the path of another car
- "I'm only going to the store. My little brother or sister doesn't need a child's car seat, anyway. It's too much hassle". Car accidents are the No. 1 preventable cause of death for children. Buckle them up in an approved safety seat. It's worth it! At 45 kmph this is like hitting the ground from the top of a three-story building

If you were struck from the side, the impact could push you back and forth across the seat. Belts and straps keep you in a better position to control the car.

MERGING, PASSING, AND ENTERING TRAFFIC

Whenever you enter traffic, signal and be sure you have enough room to enter safely. You have to share space with traffic already on the road and must know how much space you need to:

- Merge with traffic
- Cross or enter traffic
- Pass other cars

Space To Merge

Enter the freeway at or near the speed of traffic. (Remember that the maximum speed allowed is 65 mph on most freeways.) **Do not stop before merging with freeway traffic** unless absolutely necessary. Freeway traffic has the right of way. Stay with the traffic flow.

Any time you merge with other traffic, you need a gap of four seconds. That will give both you and the car behind you a two-second following distance. You need a four-second gap whenever you change lanes, enter a freeway from an entrance lane, or merge with another road.

- Don't try to squeeze into a gap that is too small. Leave yourself a big enough space cushion
- Watch for vehicles around you. Use your mirrors and turn signals. Turn your head to look quickly to the side before changing lanes. Leave three seconds of space between you and the vehicle ahead. Make sure you can stop safely if you must
- If you have to cross several lanes, take them one at a time. Filter through traffic slowly. If you stop to wait until all lanes are clear, you will tie up traffic and may cause an accident

DO NOT HONK JUST BECAUSE THE THRU TRAFFIC IS HEAVY. WAIT FOR YOUR TURN AS THE THRU TRAFFIC HAS RIGHT-OF-WAY

Space To Cross Or Enter

Whenever you cross or enter traffic from a full stop, you will need a large enough gap (from cars approaching in either direction) to get moving from a full stop or to get up to the speed of other vehicles. You need a gap that is:

- About half a kilometer on city streets
- About 1 KM on the highway

When you cross through traffic, you need enough room to get all the way across. Stopping halfway across is only safe when there is a center divider large enough to hold your car.

If you are crossing lanes or turning, make sure there are no cars or people blocking the path ahead or the path to the side. You don't want to be caught in an intersection with traffic coming at you.

Even if you have the green light, don't start across if there are cars blocking your way. It is against the law to enter an intersection unless there is space to get completely across it. You are a **nuisance** if you block other traffic.

Don't turn just because an approaching car has a turn signal on. The driver may plan to turn just beyond you. The signal may have been left on from an earlier turn. This is particularly true of motorcycles. Their signal lights don't always turn off by themselves. Wait until the other driver actually starts to turn before you continue.

Space To Pass

Avoid passing other vehicles, including motorcycles and bicycles, on two-lane roads. It is dangerous. Every time you pass, you increase your chances of having an accident. Ask yourself if the risk is worth the few minutes you will gain. Remember, whenever you pass another vehicle on a two-lane road you must enter a lane that belongs to oncoming cars.

At highway speeds of 50 to 55 kmph, you need about 8 to 12 second gap in oncoming traffic to pass safely. You must judge whether or not you have enough room to pass whenever you approach:

- An oncoming car
- A hill or a curve
- An intersection
- A road obstruction

Be patient when passing a bicyclist. Slow down and pass only when it is safe. Do not squeeze the bicyclist off the road.

Oncoming Vehicles

At 60 kmph, you will travel over 700 feet in 10 to 12 seconds. So will an oncoming vehicle. That means you need over 1400 feet (or about 1 KM) to pass safely. It is hard to judge the speed of oncoming vehicles 1 KM away. They don't seem to be coming as fast as they really are. A vehicle that is far enough away generally appears to be standing still. In fact, if you can really see it moving closer to you, it is probably too close for you to start to pass.

Hills Or Curves

To pass safely, you must be able to see at least 1 KM. Any time your view is blocked by a hill or a curve, you should assume that there is an oncoming car just out of sight. This means you should only pass if a hill or curve ahead is more than 1 KM away.

You **MUST NOT** drive on the right side of a roadway when coming to a curve or the top of a hill where you can't see far enough ahead to be sure it is safe to pass.

Lane Restrictions

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

- People near the road or bicyclists on the road
- A narrow bridge
- A patch of ice, broken pavement, or something on the road

Space To Return

Always signal before passing: Don't pull out to pass unless you know you have enough space to return. Before you return to the driving lane, be sure you aren't dangerously close to the car you have passed. One way to do this is to look for the car in the rear view mirror. When you can see both headlights, you have enough room to return to the driving lane. Don't count on having enough time to pass several cars at once. Don't count on other drivers making room for you.

On A One Lane Mountain Road

When two vehicles meet on a steep road where neither can pass, the vehicle facing downhill must back up until the vehicle going uphill can pass as the driver going downhill has the greater amount of control when backing.

SHARING THE ROAD WITH OTHER VEHICLES

To reduce the chance of an accident with a large truck, motorists must be familiar with big vehicles' physical capabilities and how they maneuver.

Braking

Large trucks take longer to stop than a car traveling at the same speed. The average passenger vehicle traveling at 60 kmph can stop in about 400 feet. However, a large truck traveling at the same speed can take almost 800 feet to stop. Don't pull in front of a large truck and suddenly slow down or stop. The trucker will not be able to stop quickly enough to avoid crashing into you.

Turning

For all turning vehicles, the rear wheels follow a shorter path than the front wheels. The longer the vehicle, the greater the difference. This is why truck drivers must often swing wide to complete a left turn. When you follow a big truck, look at its turn signals before you start to pass. If you think the truck is turning right - wait a second and check the turn signals again. The driver may actually be turning left.

Trucker's Blind Spots

Passenger vehicle drivers falsely assume that a truck driver can see the road better because they are higher off the road. While they do have a better forward view and bigger mirrors, they still have serious blind spots. Your vehicle can get lost in those blind spots. If you stay in those blind spots you block the trucker's ability to take evasive action to avoid a dangerous situation. Generally speaking, if you can't see the truck driver in his or her side mirror, he can't see you. These blind spots are often called the "NO ZONE."

Maneuverability

Trucks are designed to transport products and they are not as maneuverable as passenger vehicles. Large trucks have longer stopping and starting distances. They take more space for turns and they weigh more. On multilane highways and freeways, large trucks usually stay in the center portion of the lane to help the flow of traffic. This also increases the trucker's options in case he or she must change lanes to avoid a hazard. Here are some of the most common mistakes passenger vehicle drivers must avoid when driving around large trucks.

- **Cutting off a truck in traffic:** Cutting into the open space in front of a truck is dangerous. Trying to beat a truck to a single-lane construction zone, for example, removes the truck driver's cushion of safety and places you in danger. Slow down and take your turn entering the construction zone. Don't speed up to pass a truck so you can exit the roadway. Take a moment to slow down and exit behind a truck-it will only take you a few extra seconds.
- **Don't linger alongside a truck when passing:** Always pass a large truck on the right side and after you have passed the truck move ahead of it. If you linger beside the truck, you make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the trucker to take evasive action if an obstacle appears in the road ahead.

- **Following too closely or tailgating:** When you follow behind a truck and you cannot see the truck driver's side view mirrors, the trucker has no way of knowing you are there. Tailgating a truck, or any vehicle, is dangerous because you take away your own cushion of safety. Where will you go when the vehicle in front of you stops quickly?
- **Never underestimate the size and speed of an approaching tractor-trailer:** A large tractor-trailer often *appears* to be traveling at a slower speed because of its large size. Many passenger vehicle- truck accidents take place at intersections because the passenger vehicle driver did not realize how close the truck was or how quickly it was traveling.

EMERGENCY VEHICLES

You must yield the right-of-way to a police car, fire engine, ambulance, or other emergency vehicle using a siren and red light. Pull as close to the left edge of the road as possible and stop until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed. However, don't stop in an intersection. Continue through the intersection and then pull to the left as soon as you can. Sometimes emergency vehicles will use the wrong side of the street to continue on their way. They sometimes use a loud speaker to talk to drivers blocking their path.

You could interfere with the essential services of police, fire fighter, ambulance crews, or other rescue or emergency personnel if you drive for 'sigh-seeing' to any emergency call site. It is best that you keep the area clear so that the emergency crew can work effectively.

Comply With An Order From Police, Fire Fighters, Traffic Officers, And Others

You must obey any traffic direction, order, or signal by traffic or police officer or a fire fighter. Obey any order in emergency or special situations, even if it conflicts with existing signs, signals, or laws. You must obey instructions from school crossing guards and signal persons at road construction sites. For the crossing guard's safety, allow him or her to get safely to the side of the road before driving ahead.

SLOW MOVING VEHICLES

Some vehicles have trouble keeping up with the speed of traffic. Look for these vehicles and adjust your speed before you reach them. Farm tractors, animal-drawn carts, and road maintenance vehicles usually travel 25 kmph or less. Watch for large trucks and small, underpowered cars because on long or steep hills they lose speed. When entering traffic, they take longer to get up to speed.

IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE DRIVING A SLOW MOVING VEHICLE THEN DRIVE IN THE LEFT LANE OR CLOSER TO THE LEFT SIDE OF THE ROAD.

ANIMAL-DRAWN VEHICLES

Horse or cattle drawn vehicles and riders of horses or other animals are entitled to share the road with you. It is rude to scare horses or stampede livestock as it may cause a worse traffic jam than clearing the road. Slow down or stop, if necessary, and when requested to do so by the riders or herders.

MOTORCYCLES & SCOOTERS

Two wheelers (motorcycles and scooters) have the same rights and responsibilities on public roadways as automobile drivers. While everyone must follow the same traffic laws, motorcyclists face unusual dangers because they require exceptional handling ability. Consider driving two wheelers with the headlight on, even during daylight hours, to increase visibility. Here are a few specific actions you should take to share the road safely with motorcyclists:

- When changing lanes or entering a major thoroughfare, make a visual check for motorcycles, in addition to using your mirrors. Motorcycles are small and this allows them to tuck easily into the blind spots of other vehicles
- Allow a four-second following distance for motorcyclists. Four seconds will allow you time to avoid hitting the motorcyclist if he or she should fall
- Motorcycles are entitled to the same full lane width as all other vehicles. Although it is not *illegal* for motorcycles to share lanes, it is *unsafe*.
- When preparing to make a turn, make sure you check for motorcyclists and know their speed before turning
- Road conditions that are minor annoyances to you, can pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement can cause motorcyclists to change speed or direction suddenly. If you are aware of the effect of these conditions and drive with care and attention, you can help reduce motorcycle accidents, injuries, and fatalities

BICYCLES

Bicycle riders (cyclists) on public streets have the same rights and responsibilities as automobile drivers. Cyclists are not out of place on the roadway—they are part of the normal traffic flow and share the road with other drivers. Here are some critical points for drivers and cyclists to remember:

RIGHT & WRONG

- Cyclists must ride in the same direction as other traffic, not against it. They should ride on the roadway not on the sidewalk
- Cyclists should normally ride in a straight line as near to the left curb or edge of the roadway as practical. However, cyclists can move right to turn right, to pass a parked or moving vehicle, another bicycle, an animal, or to make a turn, avoid debris, or other hazards. They may also choose to ride near the right curb or edge of a one-way street
- Cyclists make left and right turns in the same way that drivers do, using the same turn lanes

- Drivers should look carefully for cyclists *before turning left* and merge safely toward the curb. Do not overtake a cyclist just before making a left turn. Merge first, then turn
- Cyclists should avoid, for safety reasons, riding on a fast moving road like freeway. If you have to drive on a fast road be extra careful to drive near the left curb and use flashers at night
- Drivers must be careful when driving close to cyclists. Drivers should allow a minimum of three feet of space between the vehicle and bi-cycle when passing
- Before passing a cyclist in a *narrow* traffic lane, wait until the traffic is clear in the opposite lane and then change lanes to pass the cyclist. Do not attempt to squeeze past the cyclist

Ride a straight line—don't turn in and out between parked cars. Leave space to avoid suddenly opened doors.



PEDESTRIANS

Pedestrian safety is a serious issue. Pedestrians lose in any accident, regardless of who had the right-of-way. Drive cautiously when pedestrians are near and may cross your path. Pedestrians have the right-of-way at corners, whether or not painted white lines mark the crosswalks.

Stop for the safety of anyone crossing the street on foot. Do not pass a vehicle from behind someone who has stopped at a crosswalk. A pedestrian hidden from your view may be crossing. Do not drive on a sidewalk, except to cross it at a driveway or alley. When crossing, yield to any pedestrian.

MOBILITY AND GRIDLOCK

DEALING WITH TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Chronic traffic congestion is the commuter's biggest headache, but even small changes in driving habits could provide fast relief. Here's a list of several driving behaviors that contribute to congestion:

- Rubbernecking: Perhaps the most frustrating of behaviors that means slowing down to look at accidents or virtually anything else out of the ordinary, is one of the worst congestion offenders
- Tailgating: Following too closely is common on our roads, accounting for innumerable accidents which in turn clog major roads, often for hours

- **Unnecessary lane changes:** Although it produces virtually no improvement in arrival times, many motorists insist on weaving in and out of lanes, which slows down all traffic. This is one of the behaviors that can be listed as high as rubbernecking
- **Inattention:** Commuters can commonly be seen eating, grooming in the rearview mirror, and talking on a cellular telephone while they drive. Drivers who do not watch the fuel gauge or maintain their vehicles properly can also cause traffic congestion. These vehicles can malfunction or stall on the road or surface streets and cause bottlenecks and major slow downs in traffic flow

DEALING WITH ROAD RAGE

Road rage happens when one driver reacts angrily to another driver. Angry drivers may lash out by deliberately braking suddenly, pulling close to another car, or taking more violent steps such as coercing a driver to pull over to “settle” the dispute. Here are some suggestions for avoiding behaviors that can provoke other drivers:

- *Don't cut off other drivers:* When you merge, make sure you have enough room and always signal before you merge
- *Don't drive slowly in the fast lane:* Avoid using the fast lane except for the brief time it takes to pass another driver. Driving slowly in the fast lane frustrates other drivers
- *Don't tailgate:* Many drivers get angry when they are followed too closely. Remember to keep the appropriate following distance between you and the car ahead of you
- *Don't signal gestures to other drivers:* Keep your hands on the steering wheel. Making obscene gestures to other drivers may provoke him or her
- *Use your horn for emergencies only:* Even a polite tap of your horn may be enough to provoke another driver. In India, we are too ‘horn happy’ and tend to use the horn *all the time*. It has been medically proven that noise pollution can cause blood pressure to rise. So, use your horn sparingly and enjoy the drive!

You can protect yourself from becoming involved in a potentially violent incident by following some basic tips:

- *Avoid eye contact with an angry driver:* To some people, eye contact is the same as a challenge. If someone is determined to act out his or her frustrations, even a friendly smile can be misinterpreted
- *Give an angry driver plenty of space:* If you make a driving error (even accidentally), it is possible the other driver may try and pick a fight with you. Put as much distance between your vehicle and the other car as you can

DEALING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Cellular telephones are everywhere. In an emergency, they can be a lifesaver. In non-emergency situations, they can be a great tool **if** you use them in a safe and responsible manner. Here are some tips:

- *Pull over to the side of the road to use your cellular telephone:* This is the safest precaution you can take
- *Know your cellular telephone:* Get to know your phone and its many features such as speed dial and redial. Take advantage of these features so you won't take your attention off the road
- *Use hands free devices:* If available, use a hands free device. Two hands on the steering wheel is always safer than one
- *Your phone should be within easy reach:* If your phone is within reach you can grab it without taking your eyes off the road
- *Don't use the telephone during hazardous conditions:* If your driving conditions are hazardous (heavy traffic, hazardous weather conditions, etc.), tell the person you are talking to that you are driving and will call back. Remember, your first responsibility is to pay attention to the road
- *Pay attention to the road:* While you are driving, don't take notes or look up phone numbers. If you are busy doing other things, you are not paying attention to your driving
- *Be sensible about dialing:* If possible, place your calls when you are not moving or before pulling into traffic. However, if you need to dial while driving, dial only a few numbers at a time and check traffic and your mirrors in between. Then continue dialing
- *Don't engage in distracting conversations:* Stressful or emotional conversations don't mix with safe driving. This combination can be dangerous because you are not paying attention to your driving. Tell the person you are talking with that you are driving and will call back. Be safe!

Now-a-days the cars are fitted with a lot of technology like stereos, air-conditioners, power windows etc. You must familiarize with the operations of all these gadgets so that you can operate them without having to take your eyes off the road or losing control of the vehicle. Be considerate of the people around you and do not play your music so loud that others cannot enjoy the music of their liking or silence in their own vehicle.

ACCIDENT AVOIDANCE

Let other drivers know what you plan to do. By following the suggestions below, you may be able to avoid an accident.

Keep Your Car Where It Can Be Seen

The driver's blind spots are shown in the picture below. The driver cannot see vehicles in these blind spots when looking only in the mirrors. The driver must turn his or her head in order to see a car in one of these blind spots. Drive through another driver's blind spot as quickly as you can or drop back.

Shaded Areas Represent Driver's Blind Spots



Adjusting Speed

“Basic Speed Law” says that you must never drive faster than is safe for the current conditions. No matter what the speed limit sign may say your speed should depend on:

- The number, and speed, of other cars on the road
- Whether the road surface is smooth, rough, graveled, wet, dry, wide, or narrow
- Bicyclists, or pedestrians walking on the edge of the road
- The amount of rain, fog, snow, ice, wind, or dust

For example, if you are driving 45 kph in a 55 kph speed zone during a dense fog, you are driving “too fast for conditions”. On the other hand, even though you may think it is safe, you may never legally drive faster than the posted speed limit.

What Is The Road Like

The faster the speed, the less control you have of your vehicle. Rather than just looking at the legal posted speed limit, you should consider what may affect the safe operation of your vehicle. Many new drivers do not slow to safe speeds for each road. That is one reason why new drivers have more “out-of-control” accidents than experienced drivers.

Curves

On curves, there is a strong outward pull on your vehicle. Watch out for it, especially when the road may be slippery. Rain, mud, snow, or gravel make a slippery road. Judge how sharp the curve is and change your speed if necessary. Slow down before you enter the curve as braking on a curve may cause you to skid.

BE EXTRA CAREFUL TO STAY IN YOUR LANE WHILE DRIVING THRU A CURVE. IF YOU CHANGE LANES UNINTENTIONALLY, YOU MAY CAUSE AN ACCIDENT.

Water On The Road

Slow down when there is a lot of water on the road. In a heavy rain, your tires can lose all contact with the road at about 55 kmph. Your car will be riding on water or “hydroplaning”. A slight change of direction or a gust of wind could throw your car into a skid. If your vehicle starts to hydroplane, slow down gradually-don't apply the brakes.

Slippery Roads

Slow down at the first sign of rain on the road. This is when many roads are the most slippery because oil and dust have not been washed away. If the road is slippery, it will not give your tires the grip they need. You must drive more slowly than you would on a dry road.

Some road surfaces are more slippery than others when wet. These roads usually have warning signs. Here are some clues to help you spot slippery roads:

- On cold, wet days, shade from trees or buildings can hide spots of ice. These areas freeze first and dry out last
- Bridges and overpasses can also hide spots of ice. They tend to freeze before the rest of the road does
- If it starts to rain on a hot day, pavement can be very slippery for the first few minutes. Heat causes oil in the asphalt to come to the surface. It makes the road slippery until the oil is washed off
- Close to the freezing point, the road is icy and may be more slippery than at colder temperatures

How Fast Is Traffic Moving?

Accidents tend to happen when one driver is going faster or slower than other cars on the road. If you are going faster than traffic, you will have to keep passing other cars. Each time you pass another car, there is more risk of an accident. The car you are passing may change lanes suddenly. On a two-lane road, an oncoming car may appear suddenly. Studies have shown that speeding does not save more than a few minutes in an hour's driving. Going slower than other cars or stopping all of a sudden can be just as bad as speeding. It tends to make cars bunch up behind you and it could cause a rear-end crash. If many cars are pulling out to pass you, maybe you should increase your speed or move over into the left (slower) lane.

HANDLING EMERGENCIES

Sometimes a road that is normally safe becomes dangerous when slippery. Ice, water and gravel on the road can cause the car to skid, especially if you are driving fast or going downhill. If you do go into a skid, ease off the gas pedal, stop braking, and turn the steering wheel in the direction of the skid. If you can't control your car on a slippery surface, try to find something to stop you. Try to get a wheel on dry pavement or on the shoulder of the road.

To help avoid skidding on slippery surfaces, you should:

- Drive more slowly and stay farther behind the vehicle ahead
- Slow down as you approach curves and intersections
- Avoid fast turns
- Avoid quick stops. "Pump" the brakes to slow or stop. (Antilock brakes should not be pumped)
- Shift to low gear before going down a steep hill

If the brakes get wet, dry them by lightly pressing the gas pedal and brake pedal at the same time so that the car drives against the pressure of the brakes. Do this only until the

brakes begin working. Avoid especially slippery areas, such as ice patches, wet leaves, oil, or deep puddles.

HANDLING EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS

Brake Failure

If your brakes suddenly give out:

- Downshift to low gear
- Pump the brake pedal fast and hard to build up brake fluid pressure. You will know in three to four pumps if the brakes will work. *Do not pump antilock brakes*
- Apply the parking brake, but be ready to release it if the car begins to skid
- Remember, you can still steer and swerve. You could steer into bushes or something soft
- Sound your horn and flash your lights to warn other drivers
- When you no longer need to change direction, turn off the ignition

Tire Blowout

- Hold the steering wheel tightly and steer straight ahead
- Slow down gradually. Take your foot off the gas pedal slowly but don't apply the brakes
- Slow to a stop off the road
- Apply the brakes when the car is almost stopped

Power Steering Failure

If the engine dies:

- Move to the side of the road as safely as possible. The steering wheel may take more force to turn than normal
- Stop the car. You may have to push the brake pedal hard if your car has power brakes
- Restart the engine and proceed with caution

Headlight Failure

If your headlights suddenly go out at night:

- Try the dimmer switch. That will often put them on again
- Try the headlight switch a few times. If that doesn't work, put on the parking lights, emergency flashers, or turn signals
- Pull off the road as quickly as possible and leave the emergency flashers on

Stuck Gas Pedal

- Shift to neutral
- Apply the brakes
- Keep your eyes on the road
- Look for a way out
- Warn other drivers by blinking and flashing your emergency lights
- Try to drive the car safely off the road
- Turn off the ignition when you no longer need to change direction

When You Are Stuck In Mud Or Snow

- Shift to low gear and keep the front wheels straight
- Gently step on the gas pedal
- Avoid spinning the wheels. Drive forward as far as possible
- Shift to reverse and slowly back up as far as possible. Don't spin the wheels
- Shift to low again and drive forward
- Repeat this forward-backward rocking motion until the car rolls free
- Put boards or tree branches under the tires in deep mud or snow. Never do this when the tires are spinning

You may avoid getting stuck if you always carry chains in your vehicle. Drive as far as possible to the left side of the roadway before installing your chains. Put them on before driving in snow or mud.

Drive Defensively To Avoid Accidents

What is defensive driving? It is driving to defend yourself against possible accidents caused by bad drivers, drunk drivers, poor weather, and heavy traffic.

If you look ahead, and keep your eyes moving, you will spot a hazard more easily. Once you have seen the hazard and decided what to do, act. Never "wait and see." Never think that everything will be all right. Children playing in the street may not see you. The boy on the bike may ride in front of you. The man opening a car door in your lane may not see you. If you have an accident, you may not be legally at fault; however, you may be morally at fault, if you could have prevented the accident, but didn't. Remember, you can prevent most accidents if you drive defensively.

You should think about every "close shave" or accident you have. Decide what went wrong and who made the mistake. Could you have avoided the accident or near accident? What did you do wrong? By asking yourself these questions, you can see if you need to change your driving habits. Such change might help you avoid a serious accident later on.

The Most Common Causes Of Accidents

- Unsafe speed
- Driving on the wrong side of the road
- Improper turns
- Violation of the right-of-way rules
- Violation of stop signals and signs
- Improper or frequent lane changes
- Swaying into other lane on a turn

PROTECTING YOURSELF IN ACCIDENTS

Most drivers hit the brakes first to avoid an accident. Sometimes this locks the wheels and the car begins skidding, making things worse. Remember, you can do three things to avoid an accident. You can stop quickly, turn, or speed up.

- To stop quickly, apply firm, steady pressure on the brake. If the car begins to skid, release the brake. Step on the brake again, using firm, steady pressure.

Repeat this process until the car stops. NOTE: Antilock brakes must not be pumped.

- If you don't have time to stop, then turn. Run off the road if you have to and if there is room. Running off the road is usually better than hitting another car. Try not to brake as you turn
- Sometimes you can speed up to avoid an accident. This may work if a car is going to hit you on the side or rear. If you can't avoid an accident, protect yourself as well as you can

If you are going to be hit from the rear:

- Be ready to brake so that you won't be pushed into another car

If you are going to be hit from the side:

- Brace yourself with the steering wheel. Perhaps you can keep yourself from being thrown against the side of the car

If you are going to be hit from the front:

- Use your arms and hands to protect your face if you are wearing a shoulder strap
- If you are not using a shoulder strap, throw yourself across the seat so that you don't hit the steering column or the windshield

DRUNK DRIVING

Some Basic Facts

Everybody has probably heard the old slogan "Alcohol and driving don't mix." To avoid being involved in a fatal traffic crash, you should not drive a vehicle or operate a vessel after having alcoholic drinks.

It is extremely unsafe to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) that is 0.08% or more. Some myths about drinking alcohol say that taking cold showers, drinking black coffee, or exercising will sober a person up, which is not true. Only time, body weight, the number of drinks, and how much has been eaten, can affect how long it takes anyone to "sober up". It takes about an hour for the body to get rid of each "drink". If a person has had more than one drink an hour, one hour of "sobering up" time should be allowed for each extra drink. *Better still, someone who has not been drinking should drive.*

Women react differently to alcohol than men and you must be aware of the effect alcohol has on you. Remember, if you drink and drive you not only risk your own life but life of other people involved in an accident caused by you.

DRUGS AND DRIVING

Much of what has been said about alcohol also applies to drugs (over-the-counter medicines, legally prescribed medicines, and illegal drugs). The law does not have to say which drugs are involved. Many medicines can affect the way one drives. Alcohol can enhance some of the dangerous side effects of many drugs or medicines, even those that are prescribed by your physician or purchased over the counter. It is important that

you check with your doctor or pharmacist before driving after taking any medication. Read the warning label. Here are some facts:

- Most drugs taken for colds, hay fever, allergy, or to calm nerves can make a person drowsy and this can affect his or her driving
- Medicines taken together, or used with alcohol can be dangerous. Many medicines have unexpected side effects when taken with alcohol
- Pep pills, “uppers,” and diet pills can make a driver more alert for a short time. Later, however, they can cause a person to be nervous, dizzy, and not able to concentrate. They can also affect vision. Make sure you read the label and know the effects of any drug you use. If it is a common drug, read the label. Any drug that “may cause drowsiness or dizziness” is one you should not take before driving

If a traffic police officer suspects that you are under the influence of drugs, the officer can require that you take a breath, blood or urine test.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEDESTRIANS

When crossing or walking on a roadway at places that are not intersections or marked crosswalks, yield the right-of-way to vehicles. Making eye contact with the driver does not mean that the driver will see you or yield the right-of-way. You can make yourself more visible at night by wearing white clothing and retro-reflective materials, or carrying a flashlight. Wearing only white clothing at night does not always guarantee your safety. If you “jaywalk” across a street between intersections, where no pedestrian crosswalks are provided, you must yield the right-of-way to all vehicles.

You must not suddenly leave a curb or other safe place and walk or run into the path of a vehicle that is close enough to be a danger to you. This is true even though you are in a crosswalk. The law says that any driver must take care for the safety of any pedestrian- but if the driver can't stop in time, the law won't help you.

You must always obey traffic signals. Many intersections have signals that show the “WALK” (walking person in green) or “DON'T WALK,” (walking person in red) signs. Whether it has these signals or the usual traffic lights, you must obey the pedestrian rules. When a signal first changes to green or “WALK” for you, look left, right, and then left again, and yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection before the signal changed.

Common Sense Driving

Next time you sit behind the wheel focus on your driving pattern and habits. Ask yourself the following questions and rate yourself as a driver.

- Starting your vehicle: When leaving the curb, do you use your mirrors and turn your head and look back for passing vehicles? Do you signal, and wait until it is safe before entering traffic?
- Controlling your vehicle: Do you use the gas pedal, brake, steering wheel, and other controls correctly? Do you have complete control of your vehicle?
- Driving in traffic: Do you use the proper lane? Do you signal, change lanes carefully, and follow other vehicles at a safe distance? Do you honk frequently?
- Do you turn your head and look back before pulling away from the curb or changing lanes? Do you signal the proper distance before turning?
- How you obey the traffic signals and posted signs.
- How you drive through blind or crowded intersections. Do you scan carefully for signs, signals, pedestrians, and other vehicles?
- Do you yield and take the right-of-way correctly?
- How you steer your vehicle. Do you turn from the proper lane into the proper lane? Is your turn too wide or too sharp?
- Stopping: Do you stop smoothly and at the right spot? Can you stop quickly and safely in an emergency?
- Do you keep the vehicle in gear or push the clutch in and coast to a stop?
- Backing up: Do you look over your right shoulder while backing? Can you back in a straight line?
- How you change your speed to suit the number and speed of vehicles nearby, the people crossing the street, road conditions, weather, the amount of light, and the distance you can see ahead.
- Keeping the distance: Do you stay a safe distance away from other cars when following or passing? Do you stay a safe distance away from people walking or riding on the road?
- How you respect the rights of others. Are you courteous to other drivers and pedestrians?

DO YOU PAY FULL ATTENTION TO THE JOB OF DRIVING?