

# Driving Tips to Keep You Safe



Cars are not toys. They are huge, heavy pieces of machinery that have the potential to cause immense amounts of damage to both property and people. Whether you're driving alone or with passengers, your top priority should always be safety. Modern life is more distracting than ever

before, so you need to know basic driving safety and practice it constantly. Here are some tips for safer driving:

## Focus

- Don't multitask. Keep your full attention on the road and on driving at all times.
- This should go without saying, but... DON'T use your phone (or any other device) while driving.
- Stick to the speed limit, or drive even slower in adverse conditions. The faster you're going, the less time you have to react to avoid an accident, and the more damage you'll do to yourself and others if you're involved in a collision.

## Practice Defensive Driving

- Pay attention to the positioning and behavior of the drivers around you. Expect them to move erratically and do unexpected, often stupid things.
- Keep a buffer of three seconds between you and the car ahead of you – don't tailgate.
- If the weather is bad, keep a buffer of six seconds.

## **Have a Safe Driving Plan**

- If you're running late, you might be tempted to speed. Make sure you account for the time you need to take rest breaks, get food, make phone calls, et cetera.
- Adjust your seat and mirrors BEFORE you start rolling, not after.
- Don't eat while driving. Just pull over for a few minutes.

## **Safety Inside the Car**

- Don't keep loose objects in your car that could move around while your vehicle is moving.
- Do not try to pick up anything that falls on the floor.
- Keep whatever you need – toll fees, toll cards, parking passes, etc. – within easy reach.
- Wear your seatbelt, and never drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

## **Extra tips**

- Don't let children climb around in the car's cabin or fight. They should be securely buckled into their seats (or special car seats for younger children) at all times. Noise and motion can distract you when you should be paying attention to the road.
- Tired driving has been proven to be just as dangerous as drunk driving, so don't do it. Period. Some medications can cause drowsiness, so beware of those if it's time to drive.
- Be careful when you change lanes. Changing lanes too quickly, cutting other drivers off, or not using your turn signals can lead to accidents.
- Watch out for wildlife, especially during deer season.

## **What to Do if You're in an Accident**

If you have the misfortune to be involved in an accident, your first step should be to make sure that nobody in your car is hurt. After that, check on the passengers in the other vehicle, as well as anyone else in the area. Then:

- **Stay at the scene of the accident.** Leaving will turn the accident into a hit-and-run violation, which will come with a hefty fine – or worse.
- **Call 911.** Dispatch will send an officer and appropriate medical personnel to the accident as quickly as possible. When they arrive, you'll need to wait while they put together an accident report.
- **Don't get out of the car.** If your accident took place on a busy road or a highway, stay in the car and wait for emergency personnel to arrive. It's dangerous to stand along the side of a busy road.
- **Remain calm.** Exchange your contact and insurance information with the other driver. That's it. Don't let it turn into a fight or an argument. If you can, try to get names and phone numbers from anyone else who witnessed the accident.
- **Get in touch with your insurance provider.** Call them and report your claim. The agent will need any paperwork you can get regarding the accident, and will help by giving you information about how and where to get your car repaired.

## What to Do When You Get Pulled Over

You probably know the drill already when it comes to getting pulled over – drive onto the shoulder as quickly as you can, and turn the car off. Then wait for the police officer to approach your vehicle. Then, be ready to:

- **Turn the light on.** If you're pulled over at night, turn on your car's interior lights. Then keep your hands where the police officer can see them to avoid him or her jumping to any conclusions and taking action against you.
- **Keep your hands where they can be seen.** Keeping your hands on the steering wheel is a good neutral position. Don't reach for anything, though – whether before the officer approaches, or after. If you move to grab something, the officer might assume it's a weapon.
- **Hand over your documents.** The officer may ask you to hand over your driver's license and your proof of insurance. If you need

to reach for them, inform the officer and move slowly. If the officer asks you to get out of your car, do this slowly as well.

- **Be polite.** Keep your composure, and don't start an argument, insult the officer, or behave in a disorderly manner. This should go without saying, but don't try to bribe an officer, either.

If the officer decides to give you a ticket or a citation, and you feel that your treatment was unfair, take it to a traffic court. You'll be given a lawyer, and heard by a judge or a magistrate if it is deemed necessary.

## Speeding and Traffic Laws

Some roads are classified legally as low-speed zones. These are typically areas with a lot of foot traffic, like school zones and streets that have a lot of intersections close together. If you drive over the speed limit, particularly in these areas, you could be putting yourself and others at risk of injury. Keep these things in mind:

- Don't pass a school bus if it has its stop sign out on the left side. This indicates that the children could be crossing the road, and with the bus in the way, you can't see to confirm whether or not it's safe.
- If you hear police (or other emergency vehicles') sirens approaching from behind you, get into the right lane or pull over to the side of the road. Then, stop and wait for the vehicle to pass you.
- Avoid the "California stop." Come to a *complete* stop at stop signs, and double-check for pedestrians and other cars before you keep going.
- Adhere to the posted speed limits. Speeding tickets are expensive, and there's no guarantee that a ticket is the worst punishment you'll receive. Other penalties for speeding include fines, appearances in court, and the loss or suspension of your driver's license. A speeding ticket on your record can also lead to your insurance company raising your rates.
- When you're parking, watch out for handicapped signs, fire hydrants, bus stop zones, permit-required parking spots, and

restrictions on parking during specific hours. Pay attention to all of the signs you see, even if it means giving up a convenient (but illegal) spot in order to circle the block, or you end up parking a few blocks away. It's still better than paying a fine or having your car towed, or both.

## **DUIs and DWIs**

Depending on where you live, you may have heard one or the other of these terms, but they amount to the same thing – Driving Under the Influence (DUI) or Driving While Intoxicated (DWI). Alcohol can slow your reflexes, decrease your mental acuity, and compromise your ability to drive safely. Even just being “buzzed” can be dangerous, and it still legally counts as drunk driving.

Being arrested on a DUI charge comes with expensive consequences. These include the loss of the time that you'll be spending in jail, the money you'll spend on Uber when your license gets suspended, and fines. If you hit or kill anyone while driving under the influences, the consequences will be even more severe.

Bear in mind that it is also illegal to have an open container of alcohol in your car while driving, even if you aren't drinking any of it. If you're carrying alcohol with you, keep it sealed and keep it in the trunk, where it will be clear that it wasn't within your reach.

In the US, all 50 states share the same legal limit for Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). For individual drivers, it's .08%. For commercial drivers, it's half that – .04%. If you're under 21, it's 0%. Any amount, no matter how small, will lead to a DUI arrest.

In some cities, police officers will set up checkpoints along the road to stop and stop drunk (or otherwise impaired) drivers. These are more common during big holiday weekends or during big sporting events – any time there might be more drinking and driving going on than average.

If you get stopped at one of these checkpoints, police officers will ask you a few questions, and might give you a sobriety test such as walking along one of the painted lines on the road or saying the alphabet backwards. They may also ask you to blow into a breathalyzer. If any of these tests show or suggest that you have a high BAC, you might be arrested.

## **Safe Winter Driving**

Winter can be a beautiful season, but it's just a headache when it comes to driving. You'll get to deal with snow, rain, slush, and ice, all of which make driving significantly more dangerous. To handle these additional variables and stay safe, you should:

1. Buckle up. It's illegal to drive without a seatbelt in most states anyway, and beyond that... it's just plain dumb. Use common sense and wear your seatbelt. Of all the safety features in modern cars, seatbelts are still the most effective.
2. Be careful in places that get icy quickly, such as intersections, bridges and overpasses, and shady spots on the road.
3. Check weather reports online or on TV so that when bad weather hits, you'll be prepared. On really bad days, schools and workplaces often close or delay opening. If you don't absolutely have to drive in poor weather conditions, just stay inside.
4. Keep an emergency kit somewhere in your car. This should contain a first aid kit, blankets, and jumper cables, at the bare minimum.
5. Try to keep your cell phone charged, and try to keep plenty of gas in your tank.

Driving is something that most people take for granted. It's something that a lot of people do every single day, and for many it is necessary in order to get to work. It's easy to become complacent, and that's when it starts to get dangerous. Keep in mind that driving is a big responsibility, and do your part to keep yourself and others safe on the road.

[Link to the original article here](#)