

2. Traffic Signs and Rules of the Road

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

Traffic signs tell you about traffic rules, hazards, where you are, how to get where you are going, and where services are located. The shape and color of these signs give clues to the type of information they provide.

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

Traffic Signs

Standard Colors



Red

Stop, yield or do what is shown on the sign.



Green

Direction. These signs indicate where a place is, or how far a place is from where you are.



Blue

Services for travelers. These signs direct you to places such as rest areas, tourist sites, hospitals, hotels, gas stations, eating places, campgrounds or picnic areas.



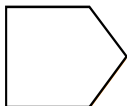
Yellow

General warning.



Fluorescent Yellow-Green

Pedestrian, bicycle and school warning signs. The new color for these signs is much easier to see in low light and foggy/rainy weather.



White

These signs include information regarding enforceable laws and ordinances.



Orange

Road work, temporary traffic control, and maintenance warnings. Be sure to watch for workers on the road.



Brown

Recreation and cultural points of interest. These signs point out historical sites, parks or recreational areas.

Standard Shapes



Octagon - Stop

Come to a full stop at an intersection controlled by this sign. Stop at the marked stop line or before entering the crosswalk or before your vehicle enters the intersection. Let other vehicles or pedestrians pass if they are in your path.



Equilateral triangle

Yield the right of way. Slow down and let vehicles crossing your path go by. If necessary, stop before going ahead. If pedestrians are in or about to enter the crosswalk, stop until they have crossed the roadway, then proceed.



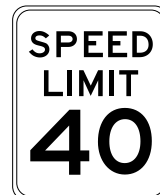
Pennant

This sign will be on the left-hand side of the road or highway. It warns you of a no passing zone.



Diamond

Warning. These signs alert you to special road hazards. Words or pictures on the sign will show you why you need to slow down or use extra caution.



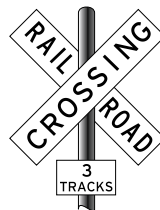
Rectangle

Regulatory or guide. Vertical signs indicate what you should or should not do. Horizontal signs give directions or information about services drivers may want.



Pentagon

School crossing. Signs mark school areas and school crossings. The color of this sign may also be yellow.



Crossbuck

Railroad crossing signs are placed at each crossing. A number sign under the crossbucks shows how many sets of train tracks you must cross.



Circle

Railroad crossing ahead. These signs give you early warning of railroad crossings.

Warning Signs

These signs are yellow with black lettering or symbols and most are diamond-shaped. These signs warn you to slow down and be prepared to stop if necessary; a special situation or hazard is ahead. Some common warning signs are shown below.



Intersection/Crossroad
There is another road ahead that crosses the road you are on. Watch carefully for cross traffic in your path.



Merge Left
Two lanes of traffic will soon become one lane of traffic. Right-lane traffic must yield when merging.



Gradual Right Curve
Road ahead curves gradually to the right. Be prepared for the change in direction.



Signal Ahead
These signs are used on roads with higher speeds. Be ready for an intersection and a stop light.



Farm Machinery
Farm equipment may be crossing the road. Be ready to slow down for slow-moving equipment.



Slippery When Wet
Road ahead becomes slippery in wet weather. Slow down under these conditions.



Merging Traffic
If you are on the main road and see this sign, be prepared for other vehicles blending into your lane.



Pedestrian Crossing
Watch out for people who might walk or run in front of your vehicle.



Chevron Sign
Used in addition to the curve signs when there is a need to draw added attention to a change in the road's direction.



Two-Way Traffic
Keep to the right because you are leaving a one-way road and entering a two-way road.



Deer Crossing
There may be deer trying to cross the roadway in the area. Slow down and watch carefully.



Ramp Speed
The recommended speed on an exit ramp.



Divided Highway Begins
You are getting close to the place where two-way traffic will be divided by a center strip.



Hill
This sign is a warning to all vehicles that the road ahead goes down a hill. You should check your brakes before going down the hill.



Advance School Crossing
You are nearing a school area with a crossing. Watch for children and the marked school crossing. The color of this sign may be yellow.



Divided Highway Ends
Two-way traffic will no longer be divided by a center strip. Watch out for oncoming vehicles.



T-Intersection Ahead
The road you are on does not go straight ahead. Prepare to turn right or left.



Horse-drawn Vehicle
Be alert for slow-moving, horse-drawn vehicles on the roadway. Reduce your speed and pass slowly.



School Bus Stop Ahead
Watch for children. Be prepared to stop. You are nearing an area where a stopped school bus will pick up or discharge passengers.



School Crossing
Watch for children. Reduce speed. Obey crossing guard signals. Look out for children playing. The color of this sign may also be yellow.

Regulation Signs

These signs give you information about rules for traffic direction, lane use, turning, speed, parking and other special situations.

Some regulation signs have a red circle with a red slash over a symbol. These indicate you cannot do something; for example, no left turn, no right turn, or no U-turn.



Speed Limit Signs

These signs indicate the maximum or minimum safe speed that is allowed. The maximum limits are for ideal conditions and you must reduce your speed when conditions require it, such as when the roadway is slippery (during rain) or it is difficult to see clearly down the road (during fog). Some high speed roads have minimum speed limits. If this minimum speed is too fast for you, then you should use another route.

Lane Control Signs

These signs mark where you can go and where you can turn, and often



use an arrow symbol. The signs are along the road or hanging over the road. Sometimes arrows may be painted on the road.

Passing Signs

These signs mark where it may be safe to pass another vehicle and where you cannot. Passing areas are based on how far you can see ahead. They consider unseen hazards such as intersections, driveways and other places a vehicle may enter the roadway. The signs indicate where you may pass, or the beginning and ending of a passing zone, or where you may not pass. Where passing is allowed, you may do so only if it is safe.



Stop Sign

A stop sign is red, with white letters, and has eight sides. It means you must come to a full stop. You must wait until crossing vehicles and pedestrians have cleared. You must stop at the stop line if one is present. If necessary, you may then pull forward to the stop sign or the edge of the intersection and then proceed when it is safe to do so.



Yield Sign

A yield sign is shaped like a downward pointing triangle. It is red and white with red letters. It means you must slow down and yield the right of way to traffic in the intersection you are crossing or roadway you are entering.



Divided Highway

The road ahead is divided. This sign directs traffic to the right of an island or barrier.



Wrong Way

You made a wrong turn and have entered a lane of oncoming traffic. Get out the safest and quickest way possible.



One Way

Traffic moves only in the direction of the arrow.



Do Not Enter Sign

A square sign with a white horizontal line inside a red circle means you cannot enter. You will see this sign at roadway openings you are not to enter and when traffic is one way against you. You will see them at exit ramps, in crossovers on divided roadways, and at numerous locations on one-way roads.



Slow-Moving Vehicle Sign

A reflective orange triangle on the rear of a vehicle means it is traveling 35 mph or less. You may see this sign on road work equipment, farm vehicles, or horse-drawn wagons or carriages. It shows up as a solid orange triangle by day and a hollow red triangle at night.



Guide Signs

These signs are square or rectangular shaped, and are green or brown with white lettering. They show directions and distance to various locations, or areas such as cities, airports, state lines; or to special areas such as national parks, historical areas or museums.



Service Signs

These signs are square or rectangular shaped, and are blue with white letters or symbols. They show the location of various services; such as rest areas, gas stations, campgrounds or hospitals.



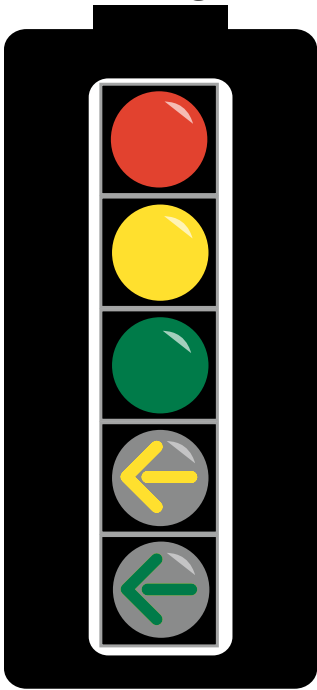
Route Signs



The shape of route signs indicate the type of roadway, interstate, U.S., state, or county.

When planning a trip, use a highway map to determine your route. During the trip, follow the route signs. This will help you stay on your route.

Traffic Signals



Red

Come to a complete stop at the stop line or before entering the intersection.

Yellow

Do not enter the intersection if you can stop safely. **If you cannot stop safely, proceed through the intersection with caution.** A yellow light warns pedestrians there is not enough time to cross the street. Anyone crossing the street on a yellow light shall yield the right-of-way to all vehicles.

Green

Go, but only when the intersection is clear. You must yield to vehicles and pedestrians in the intersection. When

the light changes, traffic may be caught in the intersection. You must give them the right of way while they clear the intersection.

Yellow Arrow

Do not enter the intersection if you can stop safely. **If you cannot stop safely, proceed only in the direction of the arrow.**

Green Arrow

Drive only in the direction of the arrow. Yield the right of way to other vehicles and pedestrians already in the intersection.



Flashing Red

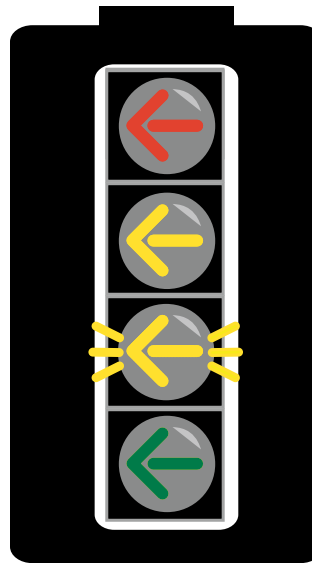
Treat it the same as a stop sign.



Flashing Yellow

Proceed with caution. Yield to vehicles and pedestrians, and proceed when it is safe.

Left-Turn Signal Head



The new left-turn signal head has four signals.

Steady Red Arrow

Drivers turning left must stop and wait.

Steady Yellow Arrow

The left-turn signal is about to turn red. Do not enter the intersection if you can stop safely. Complete your left turn if you are already within the intersection.

Flashing Yellow Arrow

Yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians; then turn left proceeding with caution. Oncoming traffic has a green light.

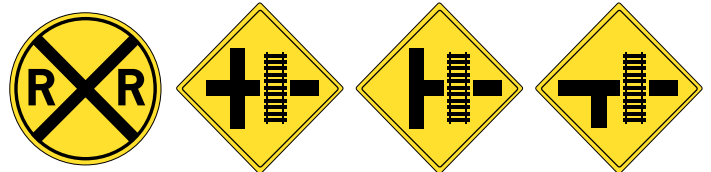
Steady Green Arrow

Drivers can proceed with the left turn. Oncoming traffic must stop. Do not go straight.

Railroad Crossings

- Motorists must use extra caution at railroad crossings. Trains cannot stop quickly.
- Never try to beat a train across the tracks. Even if it is a tie, you will be the loser.
- It is not wise to shift gears when crossing railroad tracks; you might stall.
- **Never stop your vehicle on the railroad tracks.**

Advance warning signs and pavement markings indicate railroad tracks cross the road ahead. Be prepared to stop before you get to the tracks if a train is approaching the crossing. Pavement markings are a large "X" with the letters "RR" on the road. These marks are not used at all crossings.



Railroad/highway/side road intersection

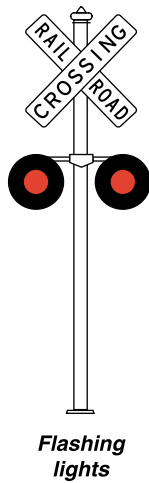
Crossbuck signs have been put at many public railroad crossings. This sign means look both ways, listen for and yield to trains. A number sign under the crossbuck indicates there is more than one set of tracks following the sign.

Flashing light signals may be used with crossbucks. Stop when the lights are flashing. Do not cross until you can do it safely. If there is more than one track, be careful to watch for trains from either the same or opposite direction.

Gates are used with flashing lights at some crossings. Stop when the lights start to flash before the gate goes down. Remain stopped until the gates go up and the lights stop flashing. **Never drive around the gates.** It is dangerous and against the law.

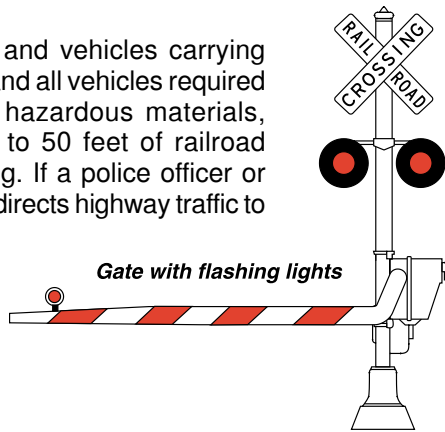
Railroad gates and warning lights are to alert you that a train is in the area. You may collide with a train if you go onto the tracks.

It is against the law to pass any vehicle within 100 feet of a railroad crossing.



Required Stops

All school buses and vehicles carrying passengers for hire, and all vehicles required to be placarded for hazardous materials, must stop within 15 to 50 feet of railroad tracks before crossing. If a police officer or highway traffic signal directs highway traffic to proceed, you do not have to stop. You also do not have to stop if the crossing is marked with an "EXEMPT" sign.



Road Work Zones



These traffic control devices and signs are used to mark construction, maintenance, survey and utility work zones. These help direct drivers and pedestrians safely through the work area while keeping it safe for workers on the highway. Stay alert and drive cautiously as fines may double in work area zones.

The most commonly used traffic control devices are signs, barricades, vertical panels, drums, cones, tubular markers, flashing arrow panels and flaggers. Most signs in work areas are diamond-shaped, although a few signs are rectangular. Orange is the basic color of these signs and warning devices. These signs and traffic control devices are reflectorized to attract your attention at night.

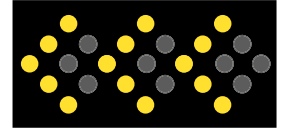
Slanting stripes on a panel or barricade tell you on which side to pass. Stripes sloping down to the right mean pass on the right. Stripes sloping down to the left mean pass on the left.

You may encounter road work zones throughout the year which can be a danger to motorists and road workers alike due to careless or inattentive drivers. In work zones, remember these tips:

- Adjust your speed to the traffic conditions.
- Obey all instructions provided by signs, traffic signals and flaggers.
- Don't follow other vehicles too closely.
- Always "Expect the unexpected in 'The Work Zone.'"

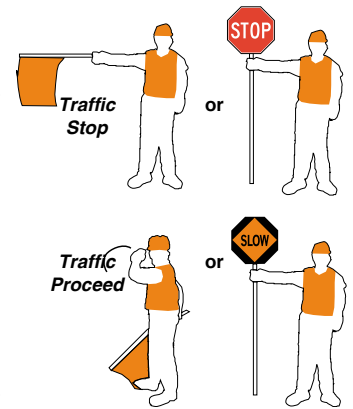
Flashing Arrow Panels

Large flashing arrow panels may be used in work areas to direct drivers into certain traffic lanes. These panels also alert you that part of the roadway is closed to traffic.



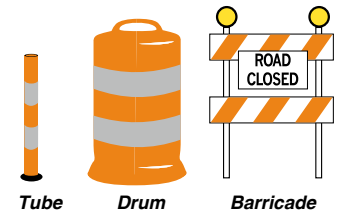
Flaggers

People with stop/slow paddles help control traffic in work zones. Follow their instructions. They should be wearing lime green or orange vests, shirts or jackets. They will normally use stop/slow signs. Red flags may be used occasionally.



Channelizing Devices

Barricades, vertical panels, drums, cones and tubular markers are the most commonly used devices to alert drivers of unusual or potentially dangerous conditions in highway and street work areas, and to guide drivers safely through the work zone. Flashing lights are used to alert motorists of a hazard.



Pavement Markings and Other Lane Controls

Pavement markings help direct and regulate traffic, just like highway signs. You will find them alone or used with signs and traffic signals. White lines separate traffic moving in the same direction. Yellow lines separate traffic moving in opposite directions.



One direction roadway



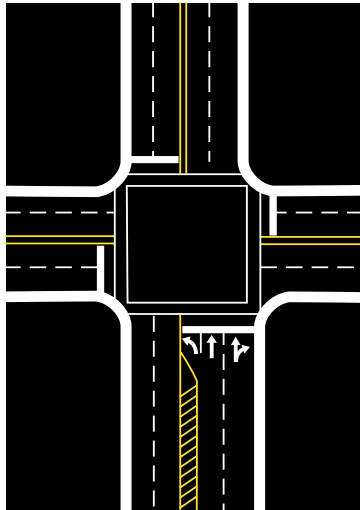
Two direction roadway

On two-way roads you will see a solid yellow line with a broken line beside it in some places. Passing is not allowed on the side with the solid yellow line. Vehicles on the side with the broken line may pass when the way is clear.

At intersections, special arrow markings or heavy white lines give you directions or mark off pedestrian crosswalks.

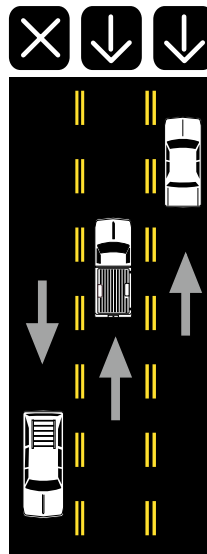
Crosswalks, Stop Lines and Directional Arrow Markings

When required to stop because of a sign or signal, you must stop before your vehicle reaches the stop line, or a crosswalk if there is one. Crosswalks define the area where pedestrians are to cross the roadway. You must yield to pedestrians in or about to enter a crosswalk. Not all crosswalks are marked. Be alert for pedestrians when crossing intersections that do not have defined crosswalks. Special arrow markings may be present.

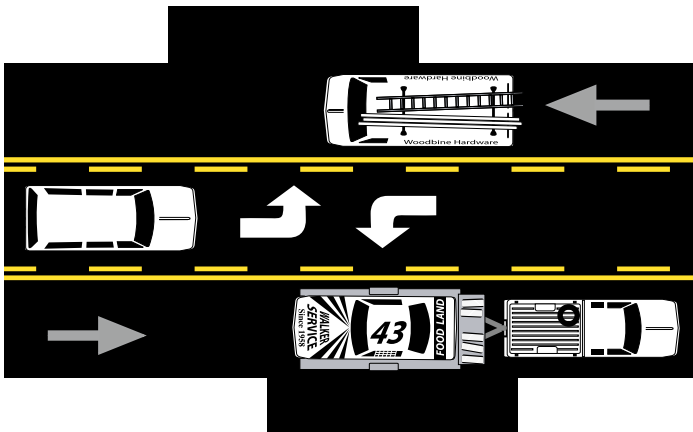


Reversible Lanes

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



Shared Center Lane



These center lanes are reserved for making left turns (or U-turns when they are permitted) but can be used by vehicles traveling in both directions. On the pavement, left-turn arrows for traffic in one direction alternate with left-hand arrows

for traffic coming from the other direction. These lanes are marked on each side by a solid yellow and dashed yellow lines.

General Lane Use

- Do not back a vehicle in a travel lane. It is unsafe to do so. Drivers do not expect a vehicle to be backing towards them and may not realize it until it is too late. If you miss your turn or exit, do not back up on the travel lane or shoulder. Continue to travel to the next exit or crossroad.
- Do not stop in travel lanes for any reason (confusion, breakdown, letting out a passenger). Keep moving until you can safely pull off the road.
- On a road with three or more lanes traveling in the same direction, stay in the right lane except to pass. If there is a lot of entering traffic, then use the center travel lane.
- Unless instructed to do so by a traffic control device or a flagger, never drive on the shoulder of the road.
- On multi-lane roads, the left-most lane is intended to be used to pass slower vehicles. If you pass on the right, the other driver may have difficulty seeing you and might suddenly change lanes in front of you. Never pass on the shoulder, whether it is paved or not. Other drivers will never expect you to be there and may pull off the road without looking.
- Where there are no signs or lane markings to control turning, you should turn from the lane that is closest to the direction you want to go, and turn into the lane closest to the one you came from.
- When making turns, go from one lane to the other as directly as possible without crossing lane lines or interfering with traffic. Once you have completed your turn, you can change to another lane if you need to.

Reserved Lanes

On various roadways one or more lanes may be reserved for special vehicles. Reserved lanes are marked by signs stating that the lane is reserved for special use, and often have a white diamond posted at the side of the road and/or painted on the road surface. Do not travel in one of these lanes unless operating that type of vehicle.



(Left) This sign means the lane is for bus and car pool use only.

(Right) This sign means the lane is reserved for bicyclists.



High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes are reserved for car pools and vehicles with more than one person in them. Signs say how many people must be in the vehicle as well as the days and hours to which it applies. For example, "HOV 4" means there must be at least four people in the vehicle.

When to Yield the Right-of-Way

Where vehicles or pedestrians are likely to meet one another and there are no signs or signals to regulate traffic, there are rules that say who must yield the right-of-way. These rules tell drivers who goes first and who must wait in different traffic situations.

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

Be alert for bicyclists. While bicyclists and motorists must share the rights and responsibilities of using public streets and roads, motorists should realize bicycle riders are very vulnerable in crashes. Therefore, motor vehicle drivers should use good defensive driving skills to avoid collisions with bicyclists.

Intersections

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

- You must yield when you want to make a right turn after stopping at a red light, but before the light turns green. However, turns on red must be permitted at that intersection.
- Drivers crossing a sidewalk entering or exiting a driveway, alley, or parking lot must yield to pedestrians. It is illegal to drive on a sidewalk except to cross it.
- Pedestrians using a guide dog or carrying a white cane have absolute right-of-way. Do not use your horn as it could confuse or frighten the pedestrian who is blind.
- Drivers turning left must yield to oncoming cars that are going straight ahead.
- You should watch out for bicyclists. Be ready to yield the right-of-way, even at times the bicyclists should yield to you. They have no defense against a car or truck, so it is your responsibility as a driver to watch out for them.
- At an intersection where there is no stop sign or traffic signal, drivers must yield to vehicles coming from the right.
- At a four-way stop, the driver reaching the intersection first gets to go first (after coming to a complete stop).
- Drivers entering a road from a driveway, alley or roadside must yield to vehicles already on the main road.
- You must yield or stop for pedestrians in marked crosswalks, and at unmarked crosswalks at intersections.
- You should yield to other vehicles when approaching the triangular shaped "yield" signs.

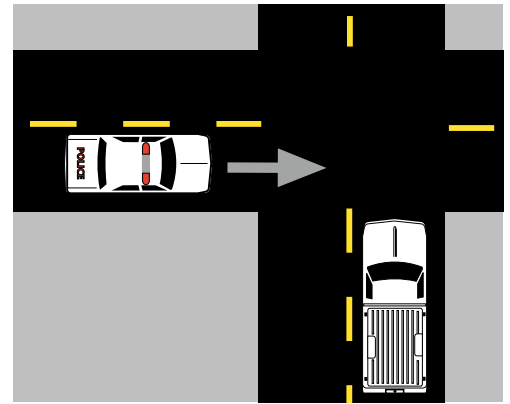
Overtaking Vehicles

Drivers overtaking a vehicle traveling in the same direction must yield to that vehicle and allow the vehicle full use of the lane.

Emergency Vehicles

You must yield the right-of-way to a police vehicle, fire engine, ambulance or other emergency vehicle using a siren or air horn, and a red or blue flashing light. Pull over to the right edge of the road, or as near to the right as possible, when you see or hear an emergency vehicle approaching from any direction. Follow any instructions given over the emergency

vehicle's loud-speaker. If you are in an intersection, drive through the intersection before you pull over. However, if you are on a street or highway separated by a median strip and the emergency vehicle is on the

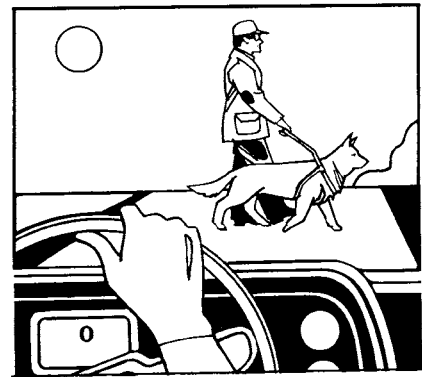


Emergency vehicle

other side, you do not have to stop. You must stay at least 500 feet behind any emergency vehicle using lights and sirens on its way to an emergency.

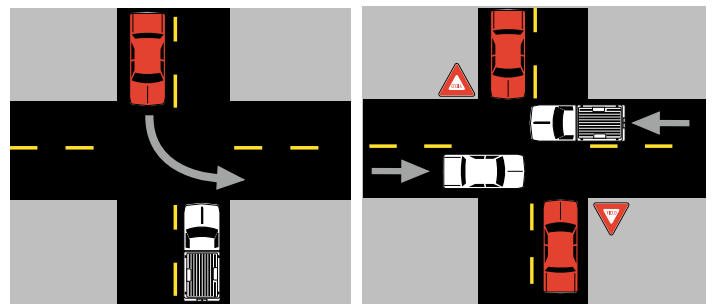
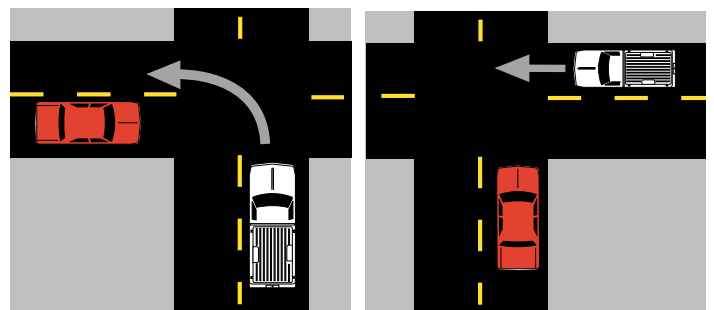
Persons who are Blind

If you approach a person walking with a white cane or a white cane tipped with red, you must stop and take whatever action is necessary to prevent injury to that person. The same applies to a person being led by a guide dog which is wearing a harness and walking by or in front of the person.



Yielding Situations

(red car shown here must yield to approaching vehicle)



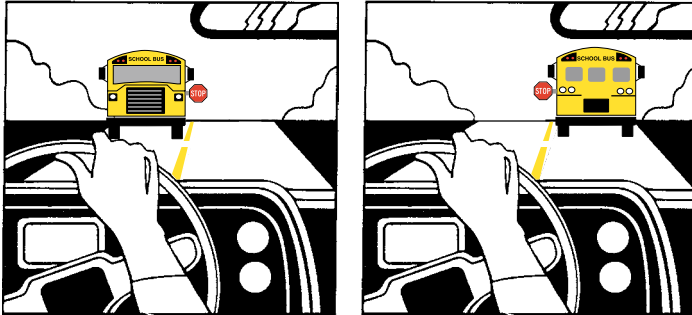
School Buses

When you meet an oncoming school bus displaying flashing amber lights, you must slow down to no more than 20 mph and be prepared to stop. If the red lights are flashing or if the stop arm is out, you must come to a complete stop at least 15 feet from the bus. You must remain stopped as long as the red lights flash or the stop arm is out.

The only exception to this is where you are approaching the bus from the opposite direction on a road with at least two lanes in each direction.

When overtaking a school bus, you may not pass when red or amber warning lights are flashing.

After a school bus has stopped to let students off, watch for children on the side of the road.



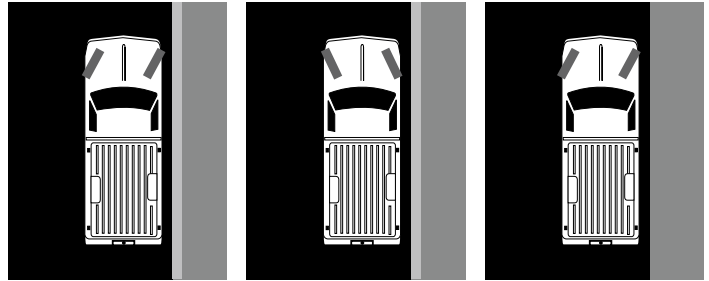
If the red lights are flashing or if the stop arm is out, you must come to a complete stop at least 15 feet from the bus and remain stopped as long as the red lights flash or the stop arm is out.

Parking

Drivers are responsible for making sure their vehicles do not become a hazard after they have been parked. Whenever you park your car, follow these guidelines.

- Park far enough from any travel lane to avoid interfering with traffic.
- Make sure your car is visible to drivers approaching from either direction.
- Park in a designated area, if possible.
- Always set your parking brake when you park. Leave the vehicle in gear if it has a manual transmission, or in “park” if it has an automatic transmission.
- Check traffic before you open the door. Get out of the vehicle on the curb side if you can. If you have to use the street side, check traffic before you get out. Shut the door as soon as you can after getting out.
- Never leave the ignition keys in a parked car. Lock the doors whenever you leave your vehicle if it will be out of your sight at any time.
- If you must park on a roadway, park your vehicle as far away from traffic as possible. If there is a curb, park as close to it as you can.
- When you park headed downhill, turn your front wheels toward the curb or roadside so the vehicle will roll away from traffic if it moves.

- If you are headed uphill, turn your front wheels away from the curb. Then let the car roll back slightly until the right front tire hits the curb. If you are parking uphill and there is no curb, turn your front wheels toward the side of the road. That way, the vehicle will roll away from traffic if it moves.



**Down hill
(with or without curb)**

Up hill with curb

Up hill without curb

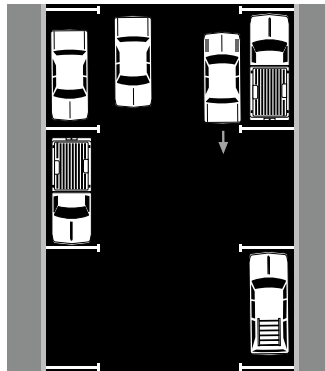
Parking Is Not Allowed

There are many areas where you cannot park. Check for signs that may prohibit or limit parking. Some parking restrictions are indicated by colored curb markings. Do not park:

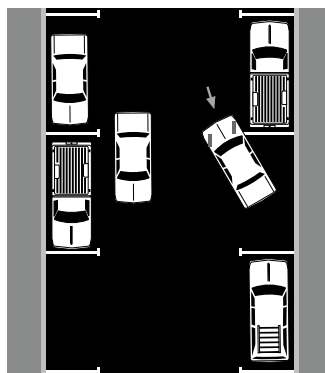
- on a crosswalk;
- in front of a public or private driveway;
- on any bridge outside city limits or in highway tunnels;
- alongside another stopped or parked car (double parking);
- closer than five feet from a fire hydrant;
- closer than 10 feet from a stop sign;
- closer than 20 feet from a fire station entrance;
- closer than 50 feet from a hotel or theater entrance;
- closer than 50 feet from a railroad crossing;
- closer than eight feet parallel to a railroad crossing;
- in “NO PARKING ZONES” which are usually marked with signs or yellow painted curbs;
- in an intersection; or
- on a sidewalk.

Parallel Parking

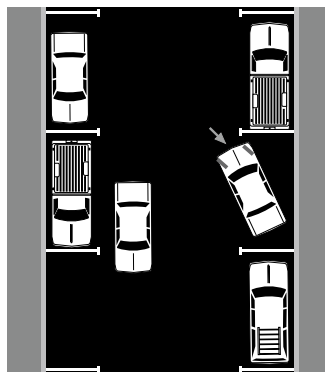
- Signal and stop with the rear bumper of your vehicle even with the rear bumper of the vehicle in front of the place you want to park. The two vehicles should be about one to two feet apart.



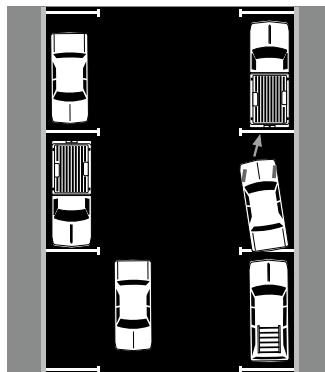
- Turning your steering wheel to the right, back slowly aiming the back of your car towards the front of the car behind you.



- As the front of your car clears the back of the car in front of you, turn your wheels sharply to the left and continue backing slowly until the back of your car almost touches the car behind you.



- Straighten your wheels and pull forward to center the car in the parking space. Your car should be no more than 18 inches from the curb. Put the transmission in park if your car has an automatic transmission and set the brake. Turn off the engine. (It is against the law to leave keys in a running, unattended vehicle.)



To park by the left-hand curb on a one-way street, follow the same directions but reverse right and left in the instructions.

If your car has a manual transmission, leave it in low gear when parked and headed uphill. Leave it in reverse when parked and headed downhill. This will help prevent an ac-

cident if your emergency or parking brake fails.

To leave a parallel parking space, signal your move. Watch for traffic and turn your steering wheel towards the open lane, easing your way into traffic.

If you park on a road outside city limits, you must make sure you are completely off the pavement. In all cases, police are authorized to remove illegally parked vehicles.

Approaching Stationary Vehicles

When approaching a stationary vehicle such as a police car, tow truck, utility or maintenance, garbage/recycling collection, construction vehicle, or any vehicle that is parked along side the road and displaying flashing lights or standard hazard lights, you are required to make a lane change. You must make the lane change only if it is safe to do so according to road and traffic conditions.

If a lane change is not possible, prohibited by law, or unsafe, you must slow down to a reasonable and proper speed for the existing conditions and be prepared to stop.

Cell Phones and Texting While Driving

It is highly dangerous to divide your attention from the task of driving by using cell phones, text messaging devices and electronic entertainment devices.

It is unlawful for any driver in Iowa to read, write or send a text message while driving. Before using a hand-held electronic communication device to write, send, or read a text message, the vehicle must be brought to a complete stop off the traveled portion of the roadway. Exceptions to reading a text message are limited to:

- A member of a public safety agency performing official duties
- A health care professional in the course of an emergency situation
- A person receiving safety-related information including emergency, traffic, or weather alerts.

It is unlawful for persons under the age of eighteen operating a motor vehicle with a Minor Restricted License, Instruction Permit, Intermediate License, or Minor School License to use an electronic communication device (including cell phones) or an electronic entertainment device unless the motor vehicle is at a complete stop off the traveled portion of the roadway.

It is unlawful for a person to text or use a handheld mobile device while driving a commercial motor vehicle, if the person is required to have a commercial learner's permit or commercial driver's license to operate the vehicle.

