



DRIVING TIPS

Many of you are turning 16, or will be turning 16 within the next couple of years, so you might be thinking about driving. We decided that some driving tips might come in handy. These are not necessarily laws; these are tips that we have come across.

Here are a few tips for driving and parking at school:

- ❖ Pay close attention to the streets & sidewalks – there will be kids getting on & off school buses, as well as walking to school.
- ❖ School zones have speed limits of 15 mph during arrival & departure times – be aware of these, they are strictly enforced. A ticket in a speeding zone will cost you a minimum of \$140 and 3 points on your license, and may cost as much as \$500 and even more points. Additionally, tickets and points may increase the cost of your insurance.

The weather is always a factor when driving.

- ❖ A good rule of thumb is to turn your lights on whenever you need your windshield wipers. In fact, this is the law in many states.
- ❖ Keep in mind that the color of your car affects your visibility. For example, a light colored car is more difficult to see in snow than a dark colored one. If weather conditions match your car, turn your lights on.
- ❖ If you have to dig your car out of a snow bank, make sure the exhaust pipe is clear before you start driving. If it is blocked, carbon monoxide can build up inside your car, causing you to get dizzy, sick, pass out, or even die.



When driving in heavy fog, follow these tips:

- ❖ Keep your low beams on. High beams will be reflected by the fog, making it even harder to see.
- ❖ Keep an eye on your speed – fog can create an illusion of slowness when you may actually be speeding.
- ❖ Listen for traffic you may not be able to see. Open a window an inch or two to hear better.
- ❖ Use the line painted on the right hand side of the road (or the road edge if there is no line) as a guide so that you do not drift out of your lane.

One of the most difficult things to deal with while driving is distractions. Many car accidents are caused by distracted drivers. Here are some ways to deal with common distractions:



- ❖ Do not talk on your cell phone while you drive. Find a place to pull over. It will only take a few moments. Don't make excuses, even if you are running late. It's better to arrive somewhere late than not arrive at all.
- ❖ Memorize the radio/CD player controls before you start driving, so you don't have to look at what you're doing. If you are driving with a passenger, ask them to change the station or adjust the volume. If you are alone, wait until you come to a stop sign or red light to change the CD or anything else that requires you to take your eyes off the road.
- ❖ Do not eat while you are driving. If you have to eat while you are driving, avoid messy items like burritos or cheeseburgers – have a granola bar or something similar.
- ❖ If a bee or a fly gets in your car, do not try to kill it while you are driving! Either roll down your window, have a passenger take care of it, or pull over and deal with it.
- ❖ Try to avoid emotional or stressful situations while driving. If you are arguing with a passenger, either put the discussion on hold for later, or find a safe place to stop the car and deal with it.

If you drive in the city, sooner or later you will come across bicyclists using city roadways. While it may be frustrating to be behind one if you are in a hurry, remember that they have every right to be there. Here are some ways to keep everyone – cyclists and motorists alike – safe.



- ❖ Do not use your horn to tell cyclists to move. A cyclist is out in the open, where everything is very loud. A sudden noise from behind, like a horn, can scare cyclists, causing them to fall or swerve in front of you.
- ❖ When it is safe to do so, you may pass cyclists. Be sure to give them plenty of room – the recommendation is at least five feet between car and bike. If you are unable to pass safely, your only option is to follow them at a safe distance until you are able to pass safely.
- ❖ Remember, most cyclists are well aware of the fact that they move more slowly than cars, and will give you room to pass whenever possible. However, they also have to watch out for themselves. When passing cyclists, be aware of obstacles in front of them that may force them to move further into your lane.
- ❖ Even when it is dark out, people will cycle on streets. Be aware of reflectors or flashing lights that may indicate cyclists.

Finally, we'd like to leave you with a few general tips:

- ❖ Try not to keep valuables in your care (cash, wallets, purses, sports equipment, ipod, etc.). If you must leave these items in your car, hide them under the seat or in the trunk. Leaving them in view may invite break-ins.
- ❖ Whenever driving, think ahead. Are you in an area where children might be playing? Do you know what's coming up around the next bend? Being aware of your surroundings will make you better prepared for anything unexpected.
- ❖ If you see one deer near the road, watch for others. Deer often travel in groups.
- ❖ Watch for semi trucks making wide right turns. This means the truck will swing out to the left before making a right turn – do not try to pass on the truck's right. Watch for turn signals.
- ❖ At lights, make sure you stop where signs & lines say "Stop here on red." This leaves enough room for buses and semi trucks to make right turns without hitting your vehicle.
- ❖ Do not bother speeding. Chances are, you will end up stopped at a red light, and anyone you passed will catch up to you. Additionally, many signals are timed, so that if you drive the speed limit, you will get all green lights.
- ❖ If you are approaching a crosswalk and see another car stopped, you should also stop. There may be people crossing that you can not see.
- ❖ Similarly, please remember that pedestrians have the right of way inside crosswalks and at intersections. In America, over 4,500 pedestrians were killed by vehicles in 2001.
- ❖ Do not make assumptions about what other drivers are going to do. Many people do not use turn signals, while many others forget and leave theirs on beyond their turn. Other drivers may run stop signs and red lights, intentionally or unintentionally. Your first concern should be keeping yourself and the people around you safe. If other drivers get upset that you are slowing down, ignore them. They are the ones more likely to end up in accidents.



Finally, remember that driving laws vary by state. For instance, in some states you cannot turn right on red. When driving in different states, keep this in mind, and watch for signs that might notify you of certain laws.

Hopefully these tips will come in handy!