

DEFENSIVE DRIVING - HABITS TO DEVELOP
SIXTEEN STEPS TO MINIMIZE RISK AND MAXIMIZE CONTROL

1. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A 4 SECOND FOLLOWING DISTANCE. (Keep 4 seconds of open space ahead of you.)
 - * Protects you from sudden stops ahead.
 - * Enables you to see far beyond the car ahead of you.
 - * Makes you more visible to other drivers.
 - * You do not lose time. Establish a 4 second following distance, and then just stay with the traffic flow.

2. LOOK AT LEAST 12 - 15 SECONDS AHEAD OF YOUR VEHICLE.
 - * At 30MPH, 12 – 15 seconds ahead represents 1 ½ football fields!
 - * At 60MPH, it is 3 football fields!
 - * Project vision far down your intended path of travel for smooth tracking.
 - * If you cannot see this far ahead... SLOW DOWN!

3. DELAY YOUR START FROM BEHIND ANOTHER STOPPED CAR
 - * Count 2 seconds before easing your car into motion; this gives you necessary reaction time if the car ahead comes to a sudden stop again.
 - * Helps to create a following distance.

4. TIRE CONCEPT: WHEN STOPPED BEHIND ANOTHER CAR, BE FAR ENOUGH BACK SO THAT YOU CAN *EASILY* SEE WHERE THE REAR TIRES OF THE CAR AHEAD MEET THE PAVEMENT.
 - * If threatened from behind, you have escape options. You can ease forward, or leave lane.
 - * If you are struck from behind, it is less likely that you will be knocked into the vehicle ahead of you.
 - * When starting off on a steep hill, it becomes less likely that the vehicle ahead will roll back into you.

5. CHECK REARVIEW MIRROR BEFORE STOPPING, TURNING, OR CHANGING LANES.
 - * Rear end collisions account for over 20% of all traffic crashes.
 - * If a car is close behind...
 - Brake earlier!
 - Signal earlier!
 - Slow more gradually!
 - * When waiting to make a left turn, KEEP YOUR WHEELS STRAIGHT! This will insure you will remain in your lane if you are struck from behind.

6. GAIN CONTROL OVER TAILGATERS

- * Maintain 4 seconds of space ahead of you. (This allows for more gradual stops)
- * Signal earlier.
- * Brake earlier.
- * Ride to the right of your lane to allow tailgater to see beyond you.
- * If it gets ridiculous, pull off the road and allow the tailgater to pass.

7. CHECK “BLIND SPOT” BEFORE LEAVING CURB OR BEFORE CHANGING LANES.

- * Mirrors are great but do not show you everything.
- * You must make a quick glance to the side (head check) before any lateral movement with your car.

8. AVOID “BLIND SPOT” DRIVING

- * Stay out of other driver’s “blind spots”.
- * If you find yourself in a blind spot...
 - Accelerate
 - Decelerate
 - Change lanes

9. TIME ARRIVALS WHEN APPROACHING STOPPING SITUATIONS. THE COLOR RED MEANS STOP, YIELD, OR PROHIBITED.

- * STEP 1 – Take your foot off the gas!
- * Look ahead to see brake lights, signal lights, stop lights, and stop signs well in advance.

10. PLAN FOR LIGHT CHANGE AS YOU APPROACH “STALE GREEN LIGHTS”

- * Yellow light means stop, unless doing so will bring you into intersection
- * When approaching a STALE GREEN LIGHT...
 - Cover the brake pedal.
 - Pay attention to cars behind you.
 - Think about your “Point of no return”

11. CHECK LEFT, RIGHT, AND STRAIGHT AHEAD BEFORE MOVING AT GREEN LIGHTS.

- * You only have the right of way when others give it to you!
 - People run red lights
 - Vehicles take time to clear intersections
 - Pedestrians Jay-Walk

12. DRIVE WITH LOW BEAM HEADLIGHTS ON DURING THE DAY

- * A car with headlights off is visible from a distance of about 2200-2500 feet.
- * A car with headlights on is visible at about 4700 feet.
- * Make yourself as visible as possible so others will see you.
- * Headlights are required *by law* anytime your windshield wipers are on!

13. DO NOT ASSUME THE ROAD AHEAD IS CLEAR

- * You never know what will be around the next curve!
- * PAY ATTENTION...even on the roads you drive all the time.

14. SLOW DOWN - FOLLOW SPEED LIMITS

- * Driving slower is easier!
- * When compared to a car traveling 25mph, a car traveling 50mph will...
 - Take 4x the distance to stop!
 - Require 4x the traction to negotiate a curve!
 - Strike an object with 4x the force!
- * DMV Agents allow 3mph +/- the speed limit.

15. LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO GO!

- * Your eyes guide your hands... Your hands guide the car.
- * You go where you look, so LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO GO!

16. STAY FOCUSED ON TASK

- * A car is just like a weapon. When used incorrectly it can hurt you and others.
 - If you were holding a loaded handgun, would you also be texting?
- * Distraction is *the* leading cause of collision.
 - #1 DISTRACTION – Other people in the car.
 - #2 DISTRACTION – Cell phones.
- * What is checking your phone or giving a ride to friends worth? Your live? Their life?