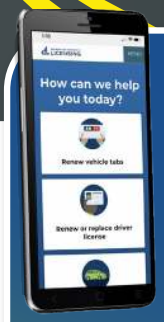
Helping every Washington resident live, work, drive, & thrive.

WASHINGTON DRIVER GUIDE





For all Services!

Scan me

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING

dol.wa.gov

Will your ID fly at the airport?

REAL ID







REAL ID is a law that requires driver licenses and IDs to meet certain security standards in order to be accepted for domestic air travel or to access some federal facilities. Standard driver licenses and IDs do not qualify.

Enhanced licenses and IDs are among several REAL ID-compliant options. Do you have what you need?

Scan the QR code or go to dol.wa.gov/real-id to find out.



Everyone gets home safe.

Move over 200 feet before and after the scene.

Slow down to 10 mph below the posted speed limit.

Car crashes are a leading cause of death and injury for young drivers in America.

KNOW THE CRASH RISKS for ages 16 to 25



Wet Roads

Inexperience

No Seatbelts

Night Driving

Speed | Fatigue

Drugs and Alcohol

Teen Passengers

Distracted Driving

- **How many people are killed on America's roads each year?**
- **What should Washington's Traffic death goal be?**

TARGET ZERO

520-400 (R/4/25)
English

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING | dol.wa.gov

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Disclaimer

We are Washington

This guide reflects shared Washingtonian values:

- We take care of ourselves and others by following the rules of the road.
- We look out for vulnerable road users.
- We are attentive, intentional, and level-headed behind the wheel.
- We want everyone to get where they're going safely.



CONTENTS

The Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) produces the official Washington State Driver Guide. This guide refers to many Washington laws and provides safety advice that might not be in the laws. All information is as accurate as possible at the time of publication. However, the guide might not reflect the most recent changes made by the Washington Legislature. You can find the most current version of this guide on the DOL website: dol.wa.gov.

EQUITY FOR ALL CUSTOMERS

The Department of Licensing (DOL) is committed to building a culture of belonging through our values: diversity, equity, inclusion, trust, and respect. Wherever possible, we provide equitable access and eliminate barriers for our customers. We provide reasonable accommodations upon request to those customers who need them to access our facilities and services. We offer language services to customers whose primary language is not English. DOL is dedicated to Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR). The agency has a robust and active PEAR team of community partners, employees, and leaders collaborating to create a service environment responsive to community input. For more information about accommodations and accessibility please see the final page of the guide.

CONTACT INFORMATION | DOL.WA.GOV



Driver licensing customer service:
360-902-3900

Vehicle licensing customer service:
360-902-3770

Facebook.com/WashingtonDOL

Instagram.com/wa_licensing

LinkedIn.com/company/Washington-state-department-of-licensing

Threads.net/@wa_licensing

X.com/WA_DOL

Youtube.com/WALicensing


1
CHAPTER 1
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25

1.0 | DECIDING TO DRIVE

Becoming a driver is both a privilege and a responsibility. It's something that will stay with you for most of your life. Take time to develop your driving knowledge and skills. They will help you form healthy habits and set a foundation for a lifetime of driving.

1.1 | ASSIGNED WA NUMBER (WDL NUMBER)

All Washington licenses, permits, and ID cards have an assigned Washington number. This number is specific to you. It often starts with the letters WDL.

1.2 | LICENSE EXPRESS

If you do not have a WDL number, you can get one at a driver licensing office or by creating a new customer account on License Express. License Express is the secure website where you can access many of DOL's services. The License Express link can be found on the dol.wa.gov homepage. Sign up with a username and password that is easy for you to remember. New drivers need to set up their own account. You can't get services for yourself by using someone else's account. The account must belong to you.

In License Express, you can:

- Make an appointment at a driver licensing office.
- Pre-apply for an instruction permit.
- Schedule your Driving Skills Exam.
- Renew your driver license.
- Manage your vehicle tabs.
- Update your address.

If you don't remember your WDL number or have questions about your License Express account, call DOL driver licensing customer service at 360-902-3900.

1.3 | LICENSING AND VEHICLE OFFICES

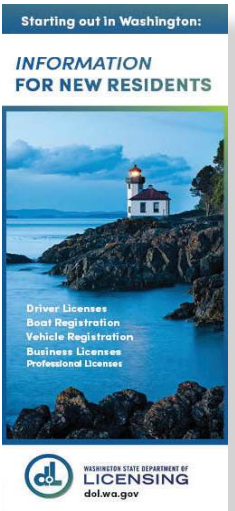
Staff at driver licensing offices can help you get your driver license or ID card. Visit a vehicle licensing office for help related to vehicle licensing and registration. Be sure to contact the appropriate office for the service you need.



1.4 | WASHINGTON STATE RESIDENTS

You are a Washington resident if any of the following are true:

- You maintain a residence in Washington for personal use.
- You are registered to vote in Washington.
- You use a Washington address for federal or state taxes.
- You receive benefits under one of Washington's public assistance programs.
- You are attending school in this state and paying tuition as a Washington resident or are a custodial parent with a child attending a public school in this state.
- You live in a motor home or vessel not permanently attached to any property, previously lived in Washington, and don't have a permanent residence in any other state.



NEW RESIDENTS 18+ YEARS OLD

New residents who are licensed in another state have 30 days to obtain a Washington State driver license. If your out-of-state license is expired, you'll need to pass both the Driving Knowledge Exam and Driving Skills Exam before getting a Washington license. Some licenses can transfer without you having to retake the exams. Search driver **training and testing** on dol.wa.gov for exam information that relates to your specific situation.

NEW RESIDENTS: 16 TO 17 YEARS OLD

If you're under 18 and have your license from another state, you'll need to apply for a Washington Intermediate Driver License. The DOL will need to approve your out-of-state driver education and verify you had your instruction permit for at least 6 months. If you have questions about transferring your driver training coursework to Washington, please email the driver training school program at tse@dol.wa.gov.

YOUR IDENTITY

To get an instruction permit, driver license, or identification card, you'll need to provide documentation that proves your identity.

- Search **identification requirements brochure** on dol.wa.gov to see what documents you need.
- Bring original copies of all necessary documents with you to the driver licensing office.

DOL2GO

SERVICES

- **First-time Washington driver license or ID card, including enhanced**
- **Out-of-state transfers**
- **Driver license, permit or ID card renewals**
- **Driver record**
- **Reinstatement letters**
- **Document review for proof of identity**

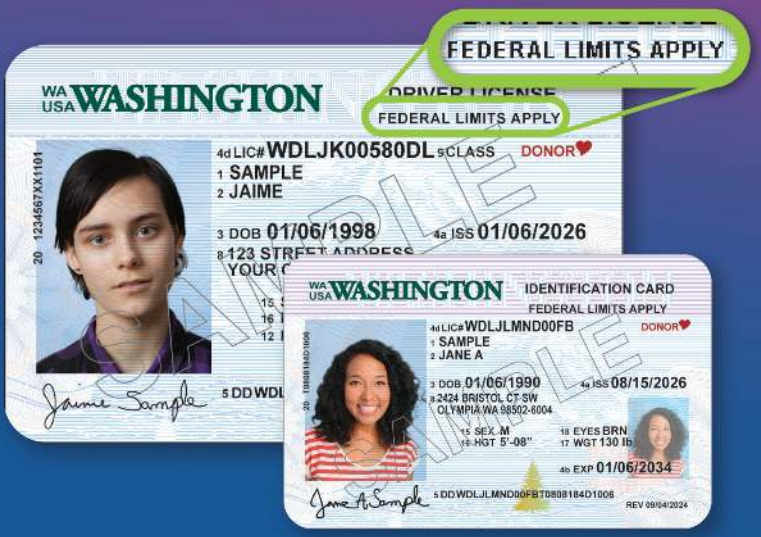


HELP FOR THE UNHOUSED

If you are experiencing homelessness, you're eligible for a no-cost ID or a reduced-fee ID. People receiving public assistance might also be eligible for an ID card at a reduced cost. To get help, contact your local Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) community services office. Go to dshs.wa.gov and use the office locator to find local services.

1.6 | IDENTIFICATION AND DRIVER LICENSES

Standard Driver License and ID



- ✓ **Identification**
- ✓ **Operating a motor vehicle (driver license only)**
- ✗ **Domestic air travel**
- ✗ **International air travel**
- ✗ **International border crossing by land or sea**
- ✗ **Access to federal facilities**
- ✗ **Meets REAL ID standards**

Enhanced Driver License and ID



- ✓ **Identification**
- ✓ **Operating a motor vehicle (driver license only)**
- ✓ **Domestic air travel**
- ✗ **International air travel**
- ✓ **International border crossing by land or sea (Canada, Mexico, Caribbean)**
- ✓ **Access to federal facilities**
- ✓ **Meets REAL ID standards**

1.7 | REAL ID

REAL ID is a law, not an actual piece of ID.

An enhanced driver license or ID is among several options that meet REAL ID requirements. Standard driver licenses will no longer be an acceptable form of identification for airport security checkpoints, U.S. border crossings, or accessing secure federal buildings.

Visit REALIDwa.com to view informational videos, take a quiz to determine which ID you need, and learn more about REAL ID.





1.8 | GETTING A PERSONAL DRIVER LICENSE

INSTRUCTION PERMIT

Before applying for an instruction permit, you need to have a WDL number.

If you are enrolling in a driver training course

You can apply for your permit as early as 15 years old. Apply at a driver licensing office or online 1 to 10 days before your course starts. Be prepared to give your WDL number to your driving school for record keeping.

If you are not enrolling in a driver training course

You can take the knowledge exam after you turn 15½. Once you pass, you'll get your permit. However, you need to wait until you're 18 to take the skills exam and get your license.

Your permit is valid for 1 year (can be renewed for a fee). Your knowledge exam score is valid for 2 years. If you wait too long to take your skills exam, you may have to take the knowledge exam again.

There are a variety of IDs, licenses, and endorsements for Washington residents.

GETTING YOUR PERSONAL DRIVER LICENSE: AGES 16 TO 17

To get your first driver license, you must:

- Have your instruction permit for at least 6 months.
- Be at least 16 years old and a Washington resident.
- Complete a traffic safety course at an approved driver training school.
- Ensure a traffic safety course completed in another state meets Washington's minimum requirement (30 hours of classroom and 6 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction).
- Pass both the Driving Knowledge Exam and Driving Skills Exam.
- Complete at least 40 hours of day driving and 10 hours of night driving with a licensed driver who has 3 or more years of experience. (Parents, guardians, or responsible adults must attest to this.)
- Be without any traffic violations or convictions for 6 months prior to applying for the license.
- Have no alcohol or drug offenses while driving with your instruction permit.
- Decide if you'd like to register as an organ, eye, and tissue donor.

To get your license in person you'll need to:

- Make an appointment at a driver licensing office. You can do this through License Express or by calling DOL licensing customer service at 360-902-3900.
- Bring your parent or guardian with you to the licensing office to sign the parental authorization form. This form gives you permission to apply, certifies you have at least 50 hours of driving experience, and confirms you haven't had any traffic infractions or violations in the last 6 months. Your parent or

guardian must show proof of identity and their relationship to you. If your last names are different, bring documents that show your relationship.

- Wait for your driver training school to enter your course completion and exam scores. Your driver training school has 24 hours to enter your scores in the system once you've passed each exam. If your driver training school has permanently closed and you need assistance, email the driver training school program at tse@dol.wa.gov.
- Provide your Social Security number or sign a declaration if you don't have one.
- Show proof of identity.
- Pass a vision screening.
- Have your photo taken.
- Pay any licensing fees.

Before leaving the office, you'll receive a temporary license that is good for 45 days. Your official license will be mailed to you.

To get your license online you'll need to:

- Have a Washington photo instruction permit.
- Get permission from your parent or guardian.
- Ensure your driver training school has entered your course completion and exam scores.
- Pay any licensing fees.
- Print the receipt. (This is your temporary license. It won't include your photo, so it's not valid for identification.)

Your official license will have the same photo as your instruction permit or Washington ID card.



GETTING YOUR PERSONAL DRIVER LICENSE: AGES 18+

If you are 18 or over, you have four options for getting your first Washington driver license. You can:

1. Transfer your license from another state.
2. Pass the knowledge and skills exams.
3. Pass the knowledge exam, get a permit, practice driving with a licensed driver who has 5 or more years of experience, and then pass the skills exam.
4. Get an exam waiver to get your permit, take a driver training course, then pass the knowledge and skills exams after you complete the course.

INTERMEDIATE DRIVER LICENSE

Washington teens ages 16 and 17 move through two restricted phases of licensing before being granted an unrestricted driver license: 1) the instruction permit and 2) the intermediate driver license. Driving with an intermediate driver license means you have to follow the laws below.

Restrictions	From Issue Date to 6 Months	From 6 months to age 18 or one year (whichever comes first)
Passengers	No passengers under age 20 except immediate family members	No more than 3 passengers under age 20 except immediate family members
Hours of driving	No driving between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. unless accompanied by a parent, guardian, or licensed driver at least age 25	Nighttime restrictions expire after one year of safe driving

Intermediate license laws also restrict the use of cell phones and wireless communication devices while you're driving, even with hands-free technology. You can only use your phone to report an emergency.

The penalties for traffic violations and at-fault collisions are listed below.

Violation	Penalty
1st	Current restrictions apply until you're 18.
2nd	License is suspended for 6 months or until you turn 18, whichever comes first.
3rd	License is suspended until you're 18.

Exceptions

- **Agricultural purposes.** Intermediate driver license holders may drive at any hour, with passengers, for agricultural purposes.
- **One year of safe driving.** Intermediate driver license holders may drive at any hour, with passengers, if they haven't been involved in a crash or committed a traffic offense.

You don't need to get a new license when you turn 18. Intermediate driver license restrictions are automatically lifted. You can wait until you renew your license to get an updated physical copy of your driver license.

AGRICULTURAL PERMITS

Agricultural permits allow drivers under 18 years old to drive within a specific area for farm work. There's no minimum age requirement for a juvenile agricultural permit.

An agricultural permit isn't a substitution for an instruction permit. You still have to get an instruction permit and meet all driving practice requirements before you can get your first driver license. An agricultural permit doesn't waive the requirements for getting your first Washington driver license.

EARLY WARNING LETTERS

The DOL sends letters to all drivers ages 18 to 21 who receive their first moving violation. A driver's chances of crashing doubles after receiving their first violation. Parents and guardians of intermediate driver license holders receive similar letters after violations or crashes. The goal of the letter is to help young drivers realize the risks associated with continued violations and reduce repeat offenses.

1.9 | HEALTH

VISION SCREENINGS

DOL will check your vision before issuing your license. If you use corrective glasses or contact lenses, this will be recorded on your license.

- Remember to always wear your glasses or contacts while driving.
- Have your eyes checked regularly by an eye doctor.

ORGAN DONOR

When you get your license, you'll be asked if you want to become an organ donor. If you choose to, the donor heart symbol ♥ will appear on your license, and your information will be given to the donor registry.

DONATE LIFE TODAY!

Contact LifeCenter Northwest at lcnw.org or visit the registry website, donatelifetoday.com, for more information.

MEDICAL DESIGNATIONS

You have the option to add or remove disability and medical designations on your driver license or ID card. In an emergency, these designations give first responders information about how you communicate or inform them you have conditions that could impact a health emergency.

You can add one or more of the designations below to your record.



Developmental disability



Deaf or hard of hearing



Medical alert



1.10 | ENDORSEMENTS

To drive motorcycles or commercial motor vehicles, you need to get an additional endorsement added to your personal driver license. More information can be found by searching **endorsement** at dol.wa.gov and scrolling to the type you want.

1.11 | OLDER DRIVERS

Decisions about your driving ability shouldn't be based on age alone. However, changes in vision, physical fitness, and reflexes could cause safety concerns. By accurately assessing age-related changes, you can change your driving habits to remain safe on the road or choose other kinds of transportation.

If you've noticed changes in your vision, physical fitness, attention, or ability to quickly react to sudden changes, it's important to understand how these changes might be affecting your ability to drive safely. Driving Safely While Aging Gracefully is a resource developed by the USAA Educational Foundation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and AARP. It can help you recognize warning signs and provide useful tips on what you can do to remain a safe driver. To download the guide, go to nhtsa.gov and search **driving safely** in the search bar at the top of the home page.

1.12 | PERSONAL DRIVER LICENSE EXAMS

TWO EXAMS

Before you can be a licensed driver, you have to pass two exams.

The Driving Knowledge Exam

- The Driving Knowledge Exam assesses your understanding of Washington's rules of the road.
- You must first pass the knowledge exam before you can take the Driving Skills Exam.
- After you pass the knowledge exam, you have two years to complete the skills exam.

The Driving Skills Exam

- The Driving Skills Exam assesses your ability to apply Washington's rules of the road.

- You and the examiner are the only people allowed in the vehicle during the exam. We make exceptions for service animals and sign language interpreters.
- A legally licensed and registered vehicle must be used for the driving exam. The vehicle needs to have proof of current liability insurance (showing the policy holder's name or the vehicle's description) and be in safe operating condition. Brake lights, signal lights, and seat belts must work. Your examiner will verify all requirements before the exam begins.



TAKING THE EXAMS

There are two ways you can take your driver license exams.

- Find a driver training school exam location by searching **approved driver training school** at dol.wa.gov.
- Schedule an appointment at a driver licensing office in License Express.



1.13 | DRIVER TRAINING EDUCATION

Driver training schools approved to offer courses for new drivers under 18 will have **classroom instruction** and **behind-the-wheel training** from a licensed instructor.

School options include private driver training schools and select school districts. A map of approved schools and their services can be found by searching **driver training school** at dol.wa.gov.

OVER 18

Drivers over 18 who haven't completed a driver training course face an increased crash risk. To address this, some driver training schools also offer adult traffic safety courses for new drivers over the age of 18. You can take these classes as a novice driver, as someone new to the United States, or as a refresher. Proper training and skill review is good for any age.

1.14 | FOR GUARDIANS OF NEW DRIVERS

Experienced driving mentors can be a great resource for new drivers. Modeling safe driving behaviors and clear communication are two ways mentors can get involved in a young driver's learning.

Driver training courses for students under age 18 are required to offer a parent orientation class. Attending these sessions will familiarize mentors with the program and further explain the 40 hours of daylight and 10 hours of night driving requirement.

Additional resources can be found by searching **teen safe driving agreement** at dol.wa.gov.

1.15 | MAINTAINING YOUR LICENSE

REPLACING YOUR DRIVER LICENSE

If your license is lost, stolen, destroyed, or illegible, you can apply for a replacement online at dol.wa.gov. You can also request a duplicate in person at any driver licensing office.

RENEWING YOUR DRIVER LICENSE

- Your expiration date can be found near the bottom of your license. You can renew your license up to one year before it expires.
- Renew online through License Express, or at a driver licensing office.

EXPIRED LICENSE

- If you renew your license after it has expired, you might need to pay an additional fee.
- If your license is 8 or more years expired, you'll need to retake the skills and knowledge exams.

LOSING YOUR DRIVING PRIVILEGES

Driving is a big responsibility. You should drive safely at all times. Drivers can lose driving privileges for several reasons, including the ones listed below.

- Violating intermediate license restrictions
- Being a minor in possession of alcohol, drugs, or firearms
- Having an accumulation of moving violations
- Driving with a suspended or revoked license
- Running from law enforcement
- Driving under the influence
- Racing or driving recklessly
- Putting a construction or emergency worker in danger
- Accumulating unresolved traffic citations
- Committing vehicular assault, vehicular homicide, or hit and run
- Committing a felony involving a motor vehicle
- Driving without insurance
- Failing a competency evaluation

For more information, search **license suspensions** at dol.wa.gov.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND FIREARMS VIOLATIONS

Minors who receive an alcohol, drug, or firearm offense run the risk of delaying their license until they are 17.

When you are eligible to get your driver license back, you must take the driving knowledge and skills exams (even if you've already taken them). You'll also need to pay a reissue fee in addition to the usual testing and licensing fees. If you're under 18 years old, you'll also need to have the consent of a parent or guardian.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE (DUI)



In Washington, it is illegal to drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs (RCW 46.61.502). Driving under the influence has life-threatening and legal consequences.

DUI also applies to being in control of a vehicle, even if it's parked (RCW 46.61.503). If you have the ability to take control of a vehicle's engine or operation, you are considered in physical control of the vehicle.
Under **The Implied Consent Law** (RCW 46.20.308), everyone who drives in Washington agrees to be tested if an officer suspects they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)
A BAC test measures how much alcohol is in your system. For drivers age 21 and older, having a BAC of .08% or higher is considered a DUI and can result in legal consequences. Drivers under age 21 have the same potential consequences for having a BAC of 0.02%.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) Cannabis Concentration
A THC test measures how much THC is in your system. For drivers age 21 and older, having more than 5 nanograms of active THC per milliliter of blood in their system is considered a DUI and can result in legal consequences. Drivers under age 21 have the same potential consequences for anything more than 0 nanograms of active THC per milliliter of blood in their system.

If you refuse to be tested, you could lose your driving privilege for 90 to 730 days, or until you reach age 21, whichever is longer. The length of time of your suspension depends on many factors, including how many violations you've committed.

Adults (21 and over)	Minors (under 21)
BAC of 0.08% or more THC of 5.00 ng or more	BAC of 0.02% or more THC above 0.00 ng

Even experienced drivers cannot drive safely after drinking alcohol and/or using drugs. Save lives by making the choice to never drive under the influence!

Alcohol- and drug-related offenses appear on your driving record for life. If you are arrested for driving under the influence, the penalties are severe: loss of license, heavy fines, criminal penalties, jail, and higher insurance rates.

Convictions can also include a combination of the following:

- Driving privileges suspended for 90 days to 4 years
- Probationary license
- Ignition interlock device to drive vehicle
- Required proof of financial responsibility
- Alcohol assessment and treatment report
- Reapply for license, retake knowledge and skills tests, and pay the reissue fee

OPEN CONTAINER LAW

Under the open container law, it is a traffic infraction if any person in a vehicle on the road:

- Drinks alcohol or consumes cannabis.
- Possesses alcohol containers or cannabis products that have been opened, have a broken seal, or are partially consumed.
- Hides alcohol or cannabis in unlabeled or mislabeled containers.

Open alcohol and cannabis products can only be transported in a trunk or truck bed. Alcohol or cannabis containers cannot be kept in storage compartments accessible to the driver.

1.16 | ADDITIONAL SERVICES

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR NAME

If your address changes, update your information in License Express within 10 days of the change. Name changes must be made in a driver licensing office.

VOTER REGISTRATION

You can register to vote on the Secretary of State website, sos.wa.gov, or when you get your license at a driver licensing office. Residents who are 16 and 17 years old can opt to pre-register to vote when applying for a driver license or ID card.

SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION

You can register with the United States Selective Service System when applying for a license or ID card. There is more information available on the Washington State Office of the Attorney General website: atg.wa.gov.

TWIN REGISTRY

When you apply for your license, you'll be asked if you are a twin. The Washington State Twin Registry is for twins interested in participating in research studies. Universities might contact people who identify as a twin with the Department of Licensing. If you have questions, please visit wstwinregistry.org.

CHAPTER 2
VEHICLES



2.0 | VEHICLE SERVICES

As a licensed driver, you need to follow the rules of the road. You also need to understand the requirements of the vehicle you're driving. Many services needed to maintain your vehicle can be found in License Express. The link to License Express can be found in the top right corner of the dol.wa.gov home page. (The direct address is secure.dol.wa.gov/home.) You can also visit a vehicle licensing office to conduct business in person.

CERTIFICATE OF OWNERSHIP (TITLE)

The Department of Licensing will issue a Certificate of Ownership (also known as the title) for most vehicles. The title shows the registered and legal owner(s) of the vehicle, the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), and bank information (if there is a loan). This is an important document! Keep it in a safe place but not in the vehicle.

REGISTRATION

All vehicles must be registered with the Department of Licensing. Before you can register a vehicle in Washington, you need to have a driver license (unless you are exempt by law). Customers who claim an exemption can complete a Vehicle Registration Driver License Exemption form. New residents have 30 days to complete their vehicle registration. Vehicles purchased in another state should be registered in Washington immediately.

To register your vehicle, you'll need:

- Current Certificate of Ownership (title).
  (If you lose your vehicle's title, ask the state where it was issued for a replacement.)
- Washington driver license for all registered owners.

A new registration document will be given each year when you renew your tabs. Sign each new registration and keep it in your vehicle.

VEHICLE ADDRESS

Changing your address on your driver license does not change your vehicle address. You can change your address online through License Express or in person at a vehicle licensing office.

2.1 | REPORT OF SALE

INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL

If you sell, trade, gift, or dispose of your vehicle, file a Vehicle Report of Sale form within 5 days. Remove the license plates from the vehicle, pay the fee, and file your report of sale at a vehicle licensing office, or search **report of sale** at dol.wa.gov. A report of sale does not transfer ownership. When selling a vehicle, the title must be signed and dated by the owner(s) and given to the purchaser. The purchaser must bring the signed title to a licensing office to transfer ownership within 15 days to avoid penalty fees.

DEALERSHIP TO INDIVIDUAL

If the vehicle is sold by a dealer, the dealership might file a report of sale on your behalf, but it's not required to. It's in your best interest to file the report of sale yourself.



2.2 | VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES

License plates must be clearly displayed on the front and rear of motor vehicles registered in Washington. They must be clean and easy to read. You can have a license plate frame, but it's illegal to cover the letters, numbers, or tabs on the plate.

2.3 | INSURANCE REQUIRED

You must keep proof of insurance with you or in your vehicle. Washington State requires you to have and carry proof of liability insurance. It should provide the following:

- $25,000 or more, payable for the bodily injury or death of one person in a collision in which only one person was injured or killed
- $50,000 or more, payable for the bodily injury or death of two or more persons in any one collision
- $10,000 or more, payable for injury to or destruction of property of others in any one collision



Each vehicle has its own set of characteristics. They differ in size, engine, safety devices, accessories, technology, and handling characteristics. It's important to read the manual for every vehicle you drive. Take time to familiarize yourself with the basic vehicle components.

FUNCTIONS

From the moment you get in a vehicle, you can tell if it has an automatic or manual transmission. Operating each one requires familiarity and practice. Read the owner's manual to understand the systems, devices, gauges, and instruments unique to the vehicle. Familiarize yourself with your vehicle's mechanics before you drive, so your focus can be on the road.

ADJUSTMENTS

Every time you get into a vehicle, you'll need to make adjustments to meet your safety, control, and comfort needs. Adjust the steering wheel, seat, and mirrors so you have good visibility. You should be able to reach the pedals and instruments easily.

VEHICLE SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

Innovation and advancement in the vehicle industry has led to the development of safety systems that help reduce the negative outcomes of human error and unsafe behavior. Vehicle Safety Technology (VST) and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) reduce the impact of crashes by trying to prevent them from happening. They can give you advanced or additional warnings that improve your response time. They are meant to assist your already-healthy driving habits, not replace them. You are still fully responsible for the operation of your vehicle.

Even with VST and ADAS, you still need to use your hazard awareness skills and knowledge of the rules of the road because these systems do have limitations. For example, these systems can alert you if there is a vehicle in your blind spot; however, they can't detect if there is a vehicle two lanes over that is also preparing to merge. Also, your vehicle's detection technologies might not recognize the presence of people walking, rolling, or riding near your vehicle. It is your responsibility to yield according to state law. Additionally, sensors can get dirty or road markings can fade, making it difficult for the technology to function properly.

It's important you are familiar with the features and technologies of any vehicle you drive. Leave them on unless weather conditions are so severe that the notifications become a distraction. Ensure you can use these features effectively. To learn more about the safety technologies your vehicle has, read your vehicle manual, ask a car dealership, or visit mycardoeswhat.org.

Here are some key components and features of VST and ADAS:

1. **Collision avoidance systems.** Detects obstacles and provides warnings to prevent collisions. These include features like automatic emergency braking (AEB), forward collision warning, and lane departure warning.
2. **Adaptive cruise control (ACC).** Maintains a set speed but adjusts it based on the distance to the vehicle in front, ensuring a safe following distance. ACC enhances comfort during long drives by reducing the need for constant speed adjustments.
3. **Lane keeping assistance.** Monitors lane markings and provides steering input or alerts if the vehicle drifts out of its lane. This feature also enhances safety by preventing unintended lane departures.
4. **Blind spot detection.** Uses sensors to monitor the vehicle's blind spots and alerts the driver if there's a vehicle in the adjacent lane. This feature also aims to reduce the risk of collisions during lane changes.
5. **Parking assistance.** Utilizes sensors and cameras to help with parking by providing visual and/or auditory guidance. This can include features like automatic parallel parking.
6. **Traffic sign recognition.** Uses cameras to identify and interpret traffic signs, displaying relevant information to the driver. This feature assists in maintaining awareness of speed limits and other road regulations.
7. **Driver monitoring systems.** Monitors the driver's behavior and alerts them if signs of drowsiness or distraction are detected. This feature enhances safety by promoting driver attentiveness.
8. **Cross traffic alert.** Warns drivers of approaching traffic from the side, such as when backing out of parking spaces. This feature reduces the risk of collisions in situations with limited visibility.

9. **Automatic high beam control.** Adjusts headlight brightness based on oncoming traffic and surrounding conditions. This feature enhances visibility without causing discomfort to other drivers.
10. **Collision mitigation systems.** Minimizes the impact if a collision is unavoidable. This component goes beyond collision avoidance and can include features like pre-crash seatbelt tensioning and post-collision braking.

Technology can assist you, but it doesn't take the place of focused driving. You'll need to be familiar with the VST and ADAS features of any vehicle you drive but still be able to rely on your intentional driving habits.



2.5 | VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Making sure your vehicle is safe to drive is your responsibility. It doesn't take long for a small problem to turn into a bigger (more expensive, more dangerous) one, so pay attention to your vehicle's warnings. Consult your vehicle owner's manual for suggested routine maintenance, and take action if your indicator lights turn on.

TIRES

Tire tread	Worn tires can cause slipping and sliding, especially if the road is wet. Tire tread shouldn't be less than 2/32 of an inch.
Tire pressure	Low tire pressure can affect your car handling and speed. The proper inflation pressure for your tires can be found on the Tire and Loading Information label on the driver's side door edge or in your owner's manual.

GLASS SURFACES

- Keep the windshield and windows clean — inside and outside.
- Keep your window washer fluid full.
- Completely clear snow, ice, or frost from all windows before driving.
- Don't hang things from your mirror or clutter your windows with decals or items that block your view.
- Follow your vehicle manufacturer's recommendations for replacing your wipers.



HEADLIGHTS

Washington law says you need to have your headlights on a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise. However, it might be easier to remember to have your headlights on:

- All the time.
- When it's dark.
- When it's rainy, snowy, foggy, or smoky.

Headlights help you see, but they also help people see you!

Some vehicles have daytime running lights that come on when you start the car. However, daytime running lights aren't as bright as headlights, and they don't activate your taillights.

Make sure all lights are clean, bright, pointing the right direction, and operating properly. If your dashboard shows a "lamp out" symbol, it's time to replace the bulbs.

You can use your high beams on open roads without streetlights, but remember to switch back to regular headlights when you are:

- 500 feet in front of an oncoming vehicle.
- 300 feet when you're behind.

BRAKE LIGHTS

Brake lights tell the person behind you to slow down and prepare to stop. Your brake lights are red and must be clearly visible from 100 feet away.

If your brake lights aren't working, use hand signals. Put your left arm out the driver-side window, and point your fingers to the ground. This will tell the vehicle behind you to slow down and prepare to stop.

TURN SIGNALS

Create a habit of always signaling before you change direction, even when you don't see anyone else around.

- Signal 100 feet before you make your move.
- Make sure your signal stops blinking after you make the turn.



HAND SIGNALS

If one or both signals aren't working, use hand signals to let other drivers know what you're doing.

Stop
Put your left arm out the driver-side window. Point your fingers to the ground. This will tell the person behind you to slow down and prepare to stop.

Left turn
Put your left arm out the window. Point your fingers straight out to the left.

Right turn
Put your left arm out the window. Bend your arm so your fingers point to the sky.

HAZARD WARNING LIGHTS

If your car malfunctions or you need to make an emergency stop, turn on your flashing hazard lights. This alerts other drivers of your situation and allows them to safely go around you.

DRIVER'S SEAT

- Adjust your seat so you can see clearly out of the windshield and easily reach the pedals.
- Adjust the back of your seat so you are sitting comfortably straight. Your chest should be at least 10 inches from the steering wheel to leave space for the airbag.
- Adjust the steering wheel so you can grip the wheel with a gentle bend in your elbow.
- Protect yourself from whiplash by making sure the headrest is even with your ears.

Anytime you get behind the wheel after someone else has been driving, make adjustments that keep you comfortable and safe.

SEAT BELTS AND OCCUPANT PROTECTION

Buckling up correctly is the most effective thing you can do to protect yourself. Wearing your seat belt dramatically drops your risk of fatal injury in a crash. Always fasten your seat belt and make sure all passengers are using seat belts, child safety restraints, or booster seats correctly.





Your seat belt should go across the middle of your chest. Never put it behind your back or under your arm. The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest, and not cross the neck or face. The lap belt should securely and snugly restrain the hips, below the stomach.

Every person in a moving vehicle must wear a seat belt or be securely fastened into an approved child restraint device.

It is illegal to drive or ride in a vehicle without wearing a seat belt or using child safety restraints. RCW 46.61.687 and RCW 46.61.688

Be sure your seat belt is not twisted, the lap belt rests on your upper thigh, and the cross-body strap falls across your mid-shoulder. Your knees should bend at the edge of the seat, your feet should touch the floor, and your headrest should be in line with your ears.

CHILD SEATS



Protect child passengers by using the correct seat for their age and size every time you (or others) travel with a child.

Child restraint systems must comply with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and be secured in the vehicle according to vehicle and child restraint system manufacturer instructions.

You can have a certified child passenger safety technician check the installation of your child restraint system.

Find more information and safety check locations at wacarseats.com.

A child should remain in each stage of restraint as long as the seat allows for the best protection.



Rear-facing

Children up to age 2 must ride in a rear-facing car seat.

Age: Birth - 2 years



Forward-facing

Ages 2 to 4 years must ride in a car seat with a rear- or forward-facing harness.

Age: 2 to 4 years



Booster

Ages 4 and older must ride in a car or booster seat until the vehicle lap and shoulder seat belts fit properly—typically, between the ages of 8 and 12 years of age.

Age and size: 4 years to 4’9”



Seat belt

All occupants old and tall enough to wear a seat belt must have a properly fitting belt.

Size: Over 4’9”

AIRBAGS

Airbags and seat belts work together to keep you safe in the event of a crash. If you are not wearing your seat belt when an airbag deploys, you risk serious injury or death. Airbags are also why children under the age of 13 should never ride in the front seat. They could be seriously injured or killed if an airbag deploys.



Place your hands outside the wheel, on the top half of the steering wheel. This will give you the best control.



Imagine that the steering wheel is a clock. Each hour represents a location for you to hold the wheel. In the image above, the driver's hands are at 9:00 and 3:00.

There are three turning methods that can provide smooth, continuous steering control.

HAND-TO-HAND STEERING (PULL/PUSH)



When using this method, your hands should be at 9 and 3 or 10 and 2.



Keep your hands in this position when you turn.
In this image, the driver is pulling with their left hand, and pushing with their right.



Since your hands never cross over the steering wheel, there is less chance of an injury to the face, hands, or arms if the air bag deploys.



Your hands never leave the wheel and each hand stays on its own side. One hand grips the wheel and steers. The other hand slides and remains opposite of the steering hand.



Hand-to-hand technique keeps both hands on the wheel, allows you to instantly make necessary changes, and keeps your arms away from the airbag area.

HAND-OVER-HAND STEERING



Use this method of steering when turning at low speeds, with limited visibility, at an intersection, when parking the vehicle, or when recovering from a skid.

When using this method, your hands should start at 9 and 3 or 10 and 2.





When turning, reach one arm across the other to grasp the wheel, and pull the wheel as appropriate.



Release the hand underneath so that you can reposition it on the wheel.



Straighten the steering wheel as you smoothly complete the turn.



ONE-HAND STEERING

Use one-hand steering when backing or operating vehicle controls (wipers, flashers, lights, etc.) that require you to reach from the steering wheel.

The placement of one hand on the steering wheel is critical to vehicle balance and controlled steering when in reverse.

The 12 position is recommended only when backing a vehicle. In this situation, turn your body to see the path of travel behind you.

2.8 | BRAKING

Good vehicle handling depends on your ability to accurately and smoothly manage speed and space at all times.

BRAKING PRESSURE

Determining the amount of braking pressure you need is an important skill. It will develop as you practice and get more familiar with the vehicle you drive. There are four levels of braking:

1. Light
2. Medium
3. Firm
4. Emergency

Ideally, you'll only need to use light and medium braking, but you can always use firm or emergency braking if you need to. As a braking technique, imagine having a cup of water in your lap that you don't want to spill.

Keep the people behind you in mind, also. Unnecessary firm or emergency braking could surprise the people behind you who were anticipating a smooth stop.

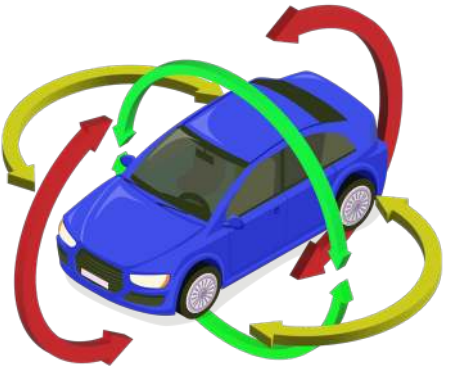
ANTILOCK BRAKING SYSTEMS

A vehicle's Antilock Brake System (ABS) offers an important safety advantage by allowing drivers to steer during an emergency braking situation. An ABS does not shorten your stopping distance, but it will allow you to keep better steering control. When engaged, you can feel your vehicle shake a bit.

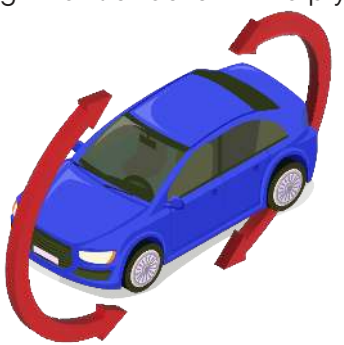
Practice firm or emergency braking in a large, open, and paved space. Hit the brakes hard, and feel the ABS keep the wheels from locking up.

2.9 | ACCELERATING

To drive smoothly, you'll want to be familiar and comfortable with different levels of acceleration. There could be times you're in stop-and-go traffic where the only acceleration you need is to release the brake pedal. There could be times you'll need to accelerate quickly to avoid a hazard. Your accelerating technique should be like braking — imagine there's a cup of water in your lap, and accelerate without spilling the water.



It's natural for your vehicle's balance to shift a bit when it starts to move. To maintain stability of your vehicle, keep the weight evenly balanced across the tires. Regular maintenance, correct tire pressure, and alignment checks will help you do this.



PITCH

Lay your hand flat on a table. Lift your fingers and feel the increased pressure on your wrist. Now put your fingers on the table and lift your wrist. This forward and backward motion is called pitch (shown here with arrows).

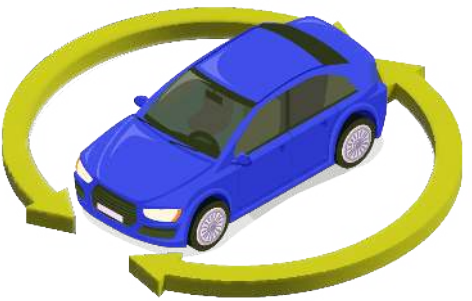
When you accelerate, the weight of the vehicle shifts to the back and increases pressure on the rear of the vehicle. If you stop abruptly, the weight shifts forward, increasing pressure on the front of the vehicle.



ROLL

Lay your hand flat on a table. Rotate your hand so your little finger is stuck to the table, but your thumbnail is pointed toward the sky. Now reverse so your thumb is on the table. This side-to-side motion of a vehicle is called roll (shown above with arrows).

When you make a left turn, centrifugal force transfers the weight down on the outside or right side of your vehicle. The body of the vehicle rolls to one side.



YAW

Keep your hand flat on a table. Move your fingers to the left and let your wrist move to the right. Now wiggle it back and forth like you're waving at the table. This is called yaw (shown above with arrows).

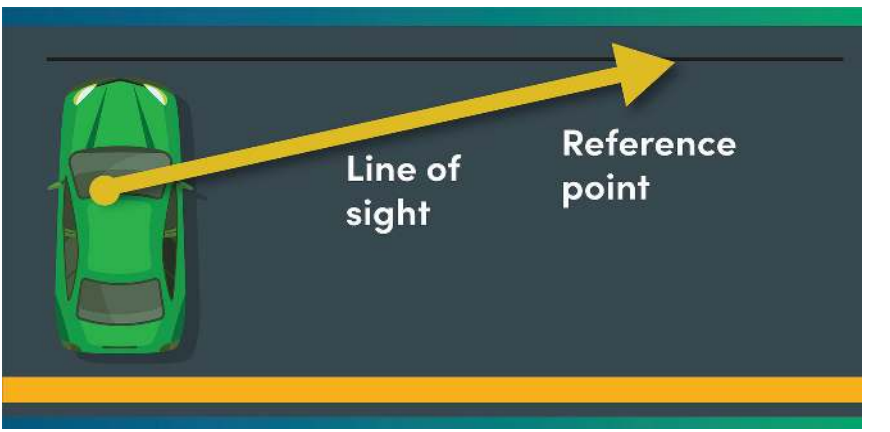
When you turn the steering wheel sharply from side to side, the front and back of your car don't stay perfectly lined up. The front wheels turn in the direction you're steering, while the back might slide a bit, creating a zig-zag motion.

2.11 | VEHICLE REFERENCE POINTS

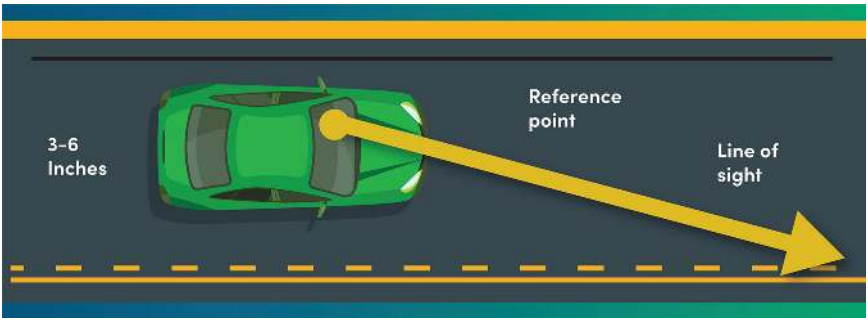
Reference points depend on the vehicle you're driving and the road you're traveling. Familiarity with your vehicle reference points will help you judge distance when you park, turn, back, and stop.

Examples of vehicle reference points:

- Left headlight
- Center of hood
- Side view mirrors
- Rear bumper



At an intersection, stopping when the stop line is under your side mirror means you are about 3 to 6 inches from the line. This reference point will help you determine the position of the front end of your vehicle.



To determine your lane position, check that the center of your hood is in line with lane markings. If they're in line, you're approximately 3 to 6 inches from the edge of the lane.

2.12 | YOUR BLIND ZONES

Blind zones are the areas around a vehicle you can't see from the driver's seat. These areas are dangerous because they can hide another vehicle, motorcyclist, or bicyclist completely. It's your responsibility to be aware of everything in your blind zones.

One way you can reduce your blind zone is by adjusting your mirrors.

1. Adjust your rearview mirror so you can see out the back window without having to stretch.
2. There are a couple methods to adjust your side mirrors to minimize your blind zones: traditional or enhanced. Either way, you need to do a full visual search of the space around your vehicle. Move your head, neck, and body so that both eyes can see if your blind zones are clear. Note: When turning your head to look, keep the steering wheel straight.
3. Some vehicle safety technology systems have features that alert you if there is someone in your blind zone. This assistance is helpful, but make a habit of using your eyes to check for yourself.

2.13 | OTHER VEHICLES' BLIND ZONES

To stay aware of your surroundings, regularly check:

1. The area in front of you

2. Your rearview mirror

3+4. Your side mirrors

5+6. Over your shoulder



OBSERVATIONAL SCANS

You also need to be aware of other vehicles' blind zones. Do your best to stay out of them. You can speed up or slow down so the driver can clearly see you.

Pay special attention to large vehicles like buses, motor homes, and commercial motor vehicles. They have bigger blind zones, sometimes called "no zones." This is because there should be no vehicles traveling in that zone.

Be thoughtful and alert traveling around large vehicles. Remember: if you can't see their mirrors, the driver can't see you.



Optimize
Adjust your mirrors to eliminate as much of your blind zones as possible. Recheck your mirrors every time you get behind the wheel.

Stay Alert
You need to be aware of everything going on around you. Constantly check your mirrors for any changes to your driving situation.

2.14 | BEFORE YOU GO

When you're getting ready to drive, a good routine is to:

1. **Check outside your vehicle.** Are there foreign objects in the tires, broken glass in the area, or fluid leaks under the vehicle? Are there other obstructions, children, pets, or weather-related obstacles?
2. **Check inside your vehicle.** Are there any warnings on the instrument panel? Are all windows clear of obstructions? Are loose items safely secured?
3. **Check all internal adjustments.** Are your mirrors set? Are the seat and steering wheel in the right place? Is your seat belt buckled? Is your phone silenced and put away?
4. **Check in with yourself.** Do you feel healthy and clearheaded? Are you ready to focus your attention on driving? Are your emotions under control so that you can make wise choices behind the wheel?


3
CHAPTER 3
DRIVERS
dol.wa.gov
WASHINGTON
WADRIVER
EVERGREEN STATE

3.0 | YOU BEHIND THE WHEEL

As a driver, you are part of a community that includes a variety of vehicles, roads, and people. The harmony of this community relies on drivers interacting with their environment and each other safely and responsibly. There are a lot of personal factors that influence your driving, but most people have the same goal: to get where they are going safely.

To be a good driver, you need to be:

1. Mindful of yourself, others, and your impact on the community.
2. Responsible for the rules of the road.
3. Familiar with how your vehicle works and takes up space.
4. Patient and levelheaded.

Your long-term success as a driver will depend on the habits you create as you learn. Be intentional when you practice. Develop smart and safe habits, like always looking over your shoulder to check your blind zones, that will become automatic. This will allow you to focus more on the ever-changing driving environment. It can feel overwhelming at first, but the more experience you have behind the wheel, the better driver you'll be.

HEALTH

Driving requires you to be physically and mentally fit.

Daily stressors can easily impact your health. A bad cold can slow your mental processes and cause body soreness. A headache or tension in your shoulders could reduce your ability to handle the vehicle. Stress can impact your ability to make wise decisions behind the wheel. Many health conditions can impact your driving. Talk to your doctor if you're concerned about conditions that might affect your driving ability.

Before starting the engine, take a moment to check in with yourself. Are you healthy in a way that supports wise decision-making, self-control, and situational awareness? Take a few deep breaths and concentrate on driving. If you're not feeling well but need to go somewhere, please let someone else drive.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Your physical health is a priority. It directly impacts your ability to be a safe and effective driver. Before getting behind the wheel, ensure you're in good health and **not impaired by alcohol or other drugs.**

VISION

Good vision is so important for safe driving that the law requires you to pass a vision test before you get your driver license. If you can't see clearly, you will have trouble identifying traffic hazards and responding to problems. Seeing well is important to safe driving.

If you are required to wear corrective lenses:

- Always wear them when driving.
- Avoid using dark or tinted corrective lenses at night.

Important aspects of vision are:

- **Peripheral vision.** You can spot vehicles and other potential trouble out of the corner of your eye while you're still looking ahead.
- **Judging distance and speed.** Being able to see well helps you determine how far away you are from other vehicles, pedestrians, and other hazards.

SEEING AT NIGHT

While driving in the dark, some drivers are bothered by the glare from oncoming headlights. If you have problems seeing at night, don't drive more than is necessary, and be very careful when you do.

- Make sure your headlights are on.
- Avoid the glare of oncoming lights by watching the right edge of the road and using it as a steering guide.
- Ensure headlights are properly aimed. Misaimed headlights could make it difficult for other drivers to see and will reduce your ability to see the road.
- Reduce your speed and increase your following distances. You should be able to stop inside the lit area created by your headlights.

HEARING

The sound of horns, sirens, or screeching tires can provide direction or warn you of danger. Like eyesight, hearing problems can progress slowly, so they're often difficult to detect. Drivers who are deaf or hard of hearing can often adjust by learning to rely more on vision and staying more alert.

It is against the law to drive a vehicle while wearing earbuds, earphones, headphones, or headsets that broadcast sound or cancel noise.

You can use a hands-free device in one ear if it complies with Washington Administrative Code statute 204-10-045.

Remember: If you have an instruction permit or intermediate license, you cannot use a cell phone or any mobile electronic device while driving, even if it is hands-free.

made it home!

me too! ❤❤❤

same. had a great night

Get home safe. Plan a sober ride before you go out.







3.1 | IMPAIRED DRIVING

Impaired driving happens when anything makes it hard for you to think straight, respond quickly, or control your car. This includes things like alcohol, drugs, or being tired. All of these can put you, your passengers, and others on the road at risk.

The penalties for impaired driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs are very tough: expensive fines, higher insurance rates, license suspension or withdrawal, and even jail sentences.

Even an experienced driver cannot drive safely after drinking alcohol or using drugs. Making the choice to never drive under the influence will save lives: yours and others'.

ALCOHOL AND DRIVING

Alcohol is the most common impairing substance involved in impaired driving crashes. Be alert for impaired driving behavior of others and give them lots of room.

Alcohol can affect drivers by causing:

- Feelings of relaxation and drowsiness.
- Blurry vision or limited eyesight.
- Reduced reaction times, concentration, and ability to scan the environment.
- Difficulty in understanding what's happening.
- Difficulty doing multiple tasks at once, like staying in a lane and avoiding other traffic.
- Inability to obey the rules of the road.
- Overconfidence, which can lead to risky driving behavior.

Please:

- Do not drive any vehicle if you have consumed impairing substances.
- Do not ride with a driver who has had any kind or amount of impairing substances.
- Do not let friends or family drive if they have been drinking alcohol or using drugs.
- Plan for a sober driver.

CANNABIS AND DRIVING

Recreational use of marijuana, THC, and other cannabis products (edibles, patches, vapes, tinctures, and topicals) is legal for those 21 years or over, but driving after consuming any cannabis is illegal for all ages.

There is no safe amount of cannabis for driving.

Research shows that cannabis can impair drivers in a variety of ways:

- Reduced attention, reaction time, and coordination
- Decreased car handling
- Slower reaction times
- Inability to judge distances
- Increased drowsiness
- Loss of motor coordination
- Impaired mental and physical functions

MEDICATIONS AND DRIVING

There's more than one way to be under the influence.

Impaired driving is generally associated with alcohol, cannabis, or illegal drug use. However, many legally obtained and commonly used over-the-counter and prescription drugs can impact a user's ability to drive safely.

- Just because a drug is legal does not mean it is safe to use while driving.
- Impaired driving is a criminal behavior. It doesn't matter if the drug is prescribed, obtained over-the-counter, bought in a retail setting, or considered an illicit substance.

Over-the-counter drugs taken for headaches, colds, or allergies can make a person drowsy, which could affect your driving. Like alcohol, prescription drugs can affect your reflexes, judgment, vision, and alertness.

Do not drive if you just started taking prescription drugs for the first time, started taking a new prescription medicine, or started taking a higher dose of a current drug. Wait until you know what effect it has on your judgment, coordination, and reaction time. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Read all warning labels before driving. Warnings against "operating heavy machinery" include driving a vehicle.

Some medications might not impact you on their own, but if taken with a second medication or alcohol, they could cause severe impairment. Many drugs multiply the effects of alcohol or have other side effects. Read the warnings on your medicine or talk to your pharmacist before you drink and use medicine at the same time.

POLYDRUG USE AND DRIVING

Polydrug use is the mixing or taking of more than one type of drug. Mixing alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs can produce effects greater than any drug on its own. It can include alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, and other substances such as nonregulated drugs and inhalants. Polydrug use is the most common impairment involved in fatal crashes.

Effects of polydrug use vary from person to person and depend on the drug's quantity, frequency of use, and how they're taken. Polydrug use can lead to increased probability of overdose, mental health troubles, risky behavior, serious injuries, and crashes.

FATIGUE AND DROWSY DRIVING

Fatigue is caused by physical or mental strain, repetitive tasks, illness, or lack of sleep. Like alcohol and drugs, fatigue impairs your vision and judgment.

Drowsy driving affects your alertness, attention, reaction time, judgment, and decision-making capabilities. When you drive fatigued, you risk falling asleep behind the wheel and causing a crash involving injuries or fatalities.

Here are some signs of fatigue. **Pull over and rest if you are:**

- Having difficulty focusing, or you can't remember driving the last few miles.
- Blinking frequently or have heavy eyelids.
- Having trouble keeping your head up.
- Missing exits or traffic signs.
- Feeling restless, irritable, or aggressive.
- Drifting from your lane, swerving, tailgating, and/or hitting rumble strips.



If you're traveling with another driver, take turns driving. If you're traveling alone and start to feel tired, pull off the road and take a 20-minute nap. It's better to stop and sleep than to risk causing an accident.

Before a trip:

- Get adequate sleep — most people need 7 to 9 hours to stay alert.
- Plan to stop about every 100 miles or 2 hours during long trips.
- Walk around, get some fresh air, and drink some water. Plan your trip with plenty of time for breaks.
- Arrange for a travel companion to help you stay alert, watch for trouble, and share the driving.

MENTAL HEALTH

Emotions can affect your driving. You make better decisions when you understand how your feelings affect your behavior.

For example, if you're feeling anxious when you're driving, you might be preoccupied and allow your foot to be too heavy on the accelerator. How you're feeling (anxious) is changing your behavior (driving faster).

Below are a few techniques to calm down and relieve stress before getting on the road. You can do them while sitting in a parked car.

1. Breathe in through your nose, and exhale like you're trying to cool hot soup.
2. Count slowly from 1 to 20, or backward from 100 by three (100, 97, 94, 91, 88...). Concentrate only on the numbers to quiet everything else in your head.
3. Allow plenty of time for your trip. Choose to be patient with yourself and others.

Emotional awareness encourages patience and respect for others on the road and cultivates safer driving behavior.

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

Aggressive driving is a traffic offense.

Aggressive driving is when a driver purposely does something that endangers people or property.

The following behaviors are considered aggressive driving:

- Actions taken while driving that risk harming other people or property.
- Intentional actions that require another person to protect themselves.

Behaviors associated with aggressive driving include:

- Speeding.
- Following too close.
- Making unsafe lane changes.
- Using improper signaling.
- Failing to obey traffic control devices.
- Driving too close to someone walking or cycling along the road.

Concentrate on what you're doing. Try not to take aggressive driving personally. Be patient and forgiving of other road users.

RACING AND STREET DEMONSTRATIONS

Because street racing and unauthorized street demonstrations are so dangerous, penalties are severe. They can apply to drivers and anyone else who instigates or assists with street racing activities. Guilty participants can face fines, jail time, and risk having their vehicle impounded.

ROAD RAGE

Road rage is a criminal offense.

Road rage is an angry response to something that happened on the road that leads to violent behavior with a vehicle or other weapon. Road rage can happen between the driver or passenger of one vehicle toward another driver, passenger, or person using the road.

Many things can contribute to road rage, including stress, tight schedules, traffic, or non-driving frustrations. Give yourself plenty of time to travel, create safe space margins around your vehicle, and try to show grace to other people.



IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ROAD RAGE

You might be having feelings of road rage if you are:

- Having thoughts of strong disapproval or violence toward other people on the road.
- Verbally disapproving of other people on the road to passengers in your vehicle.
- Not obeying traffic safety laws because you don't agree with them.
- Following too close.
- Speeding.
- Weaving in and out of traffic.
- Speeding up to beat a traffic light.
- Cutting between vehicles to change lanes.
- Using your vehicle horn excessively.
- Flashing headlights excessively at oncoming traffic.
- Braking to stop the driver behind you from following too closely.
- Passing traffic and then slowing down to teach the other driver a lesson.

IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF ROAD RAGE

When you see other drivers around you acting or reacting in anger, distance yourself from the situation physically and mentally.

- Take a deep breath and move out of the way.
- Avoid aggressive speeding, honking, or hand gestures.
- Keep your eyes on the road.
- Drive to an area where there are other people and open businesses if you feel you're being followed or harassed by another driver. Call the police if necessary.

REPORTING ROAD RAGE

Report in-progress road rage incidents immediately by calling 911.

Reducing incidents of road rage and aggressive driving is critical to the mission of the Washington State Patrol. While troopers and other law enforcement agencies are always on the lookout for aggressive driving, steps to improve traffic safety in Washington are made when residents act.

If you have witnessed or been a victim of an aggressive driving act, please call 911 and provide the following information:

- Location vehicles were last seen
- Plate number (if known)
- Direction of travel (toward where)
- Road or highway
- Colors of the vehicles
- Weapons involved (if applicable)
- Summary of what happened
- Role in incident (victim or witness)

3.2 | INFORMED DECISIONS ON THE ROAD

Being a safe and responsible driver requires more than knowing the rules of the road. It involves making informed decisions in every situation you encounter while driving. Whether you realize it or not, you make thousands of decisions every day. Some of the most important ones you make will be when you're behind the wheel.

WHY INFORMED DECISIONS MATTER

Every action you take behind the wheel is a decision, from changing lanes to merging onto a highway. Making informed decisions means considering all the factors involved before acting. This leads to smoother, safer driving for yourself and others. Informed decisions can:

1. **Increase awareness.** Making informed decisions requires constant analysis of your surroundings. This improves your overall situational awareness.

2. **Promote responsible driving.** Understanding the consequences of your choices encourages responsible behavior. It also shows respect for other road users.

3. **Reduce crashes**. Anticipating potential problems will help you reduce the risk of collisions.

Informed decisions are impacted by your:

- Knowledge of traffic laws.
- Experience with safe driving practices.
- Capabilities based on age and brain development.

Teen drivers need to remember the part of their brain responsible for judgment and decision making is still developing. This means teens can be more prone to taking risks or miscalculating situations. All drivers need to prioritize safety-focused decisions over speed and social pressures. This is especially true for teens.

Older drivers want to be aware that physical and mental capabilities change with age. Older drivers can be more susceptible to serious injuries in vehicle crashes, but many remain safe and competent drivers well into their later years. Regardless of age or experience, all drivers must commit to staying focused and engaged every time they are behind the wheel.

MAKE GOOD DECISIONS

Good decisions are informed decisions. To make good decisions, you must be aware of what's going on around you.

1. Inform yourself with mirror checks. Be aware of the whole situation, including people around you who might be affected by your decisions. Inform others of what you intend to do so they become aware of your intentions and can prepare for them.
2. Prepare the vehicle so you arrive at the hazard in the right road position and at the right speed.
3. Do a final check before maneuvering.

This approach can be applied to any situation that requires you to make a change. You should always aim to be aware, predictable, and smooth.

3.3 | PROBLEM SOLVING ON THE ROAD

Unexpected situations are inevitable and responding to these situations requires problem solving. It's likely that solving problems on the road will require you to make thoughtful changes like:

- Modifying your speed.
- Adjusting your lane position to reduce risk and avoid hazards.
- Changing your direction or path-of-travel to get to a safe place to reassess the situation.

Try not to surprise other people on the road. Communicate your intentions to other drivers to avoid creating any problems.

You can use a variety of tools to make proactive decisions while reacting to your environment. One tool is the OODA Loop. It's a loop because every situation leads to another.



1. **Observe.** Observe the situation. What changed? Is there a car swerving, a sudden obstacle, or a change in traffic flow?
2. **Orient.** Use your knowledge and experience to understand what that change means. How does it affect your safety and the safety of others? What are the potential risks if you don't change? What opportunities present themselves if you do?
3. **Decide.** Based on your observations and understanding, choose the safest course of action. Should you slow down, change lanes, or signal your intentions?
4. **Act.** Smoothly and decisively execute your chosen action. Remember, clear communication is crucial for others to understand your intentions.

As you build experience, you will be able to navigate the OODA loop with ease. However, there are many variables when you're driving. You will always need to stay alert and ready.

3.4 | AVOIDING DISTRACTED DRIVING



Distracted driving is a serious concern posing risks for everyone on or near the road. It disrupts the awareness, judgment, and skill needed to drive safely. Distractions inside and outside the vehicle can affect your ability to react and navigate appropriately.

Distractions come in all shapes and sizes:

- **Inside the vehicle.** Cell phones, eating, adjusting the radio, and interacting with passengers.
- **Outside the vehicle.** Billboards, crashes, and other people's behaviors.
- **Physical distractions.** Fatigue, discomfort, and physical impairments.
- **Mental distractions.** Daydreaming, worrying, and strong emotions.

Distracted drivers are more prone to:

- Swerving out of their lane.
- Speeding or driving too slowly.
- Failing to see traffic signals, stop signs, motorcyclists, bicyclists, or pedestrians.
- Following too closely to other vehicles or cyclists in the lane.

Strategies to avoid distractions:

- Plan ahead.
- Put your phone away.
- Be observant.

By keeping your full attention on the road, you can:

- React faster.
- Make better decisions.
- Improve situational awareness.
- Reduce stress and fatigue.

WASHINGTON'S DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS

Distracted driving is any activity that takes a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger the driver, passengers, and others who share the road, including pedestrians.

Washington State has strict laws against distracted driving. You cannot hold any electronic device while driving (like cell phones, tablets, or gaming devices). This applies to all drivers, regardless of age or experience. Using hands-free devices is permitted, but anything that takes your eyes and mind off the road can still be dangerous. The notifications, bright lights, and visual cues of your phone are all significant distractions. Take a moment to recognize how distractions impact your driving.

A law enforcement officer can issue you a ticket for violating the distracted driving law. This might result in heavy fines. Fines after your first violation can be doubled.

Driving is a huge responsibility. Please choose to focus on the road and become part of the solution to end distracted driving. It might seem like "everybody does it" but studies show that's not true. Your decision will keep you and others safe.

3.5 | SMART DRIVERS

Smart drivers are:

- **Aware** of what's happening inside and outside the vehicle.
- **Able** to control their vehicle gas, brake, steering, and position.
- **Predictable** to others with signaling and smooth movements.
- **Thoughtful** with their decision making.
- **Intentional** when learning and using driving skills.

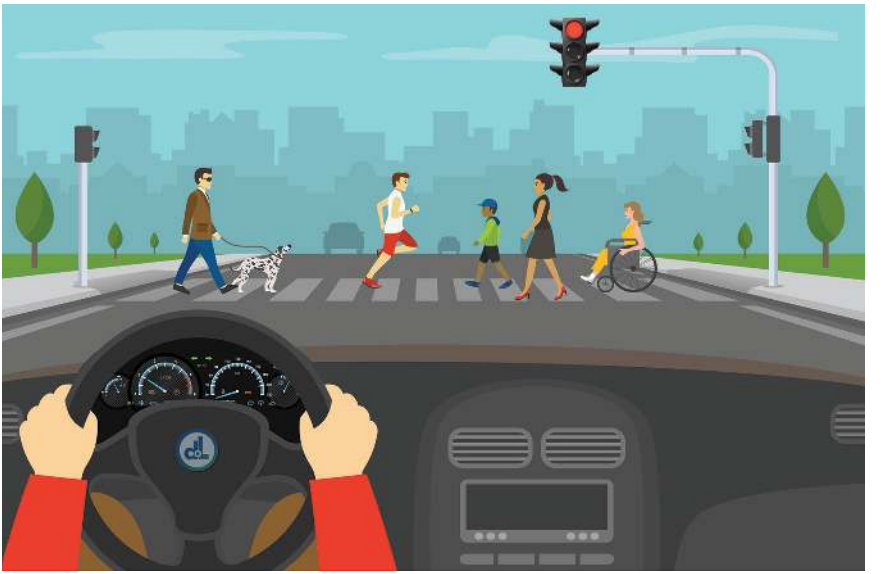
PAY ATTENTION

When you're a new driver, the number of things you must pay attention to feels overwhelming: your vehicle, rules of the road, hazards, other vehicles, signs, road markings, pedestrians, bicyclists... Smart drivers find a way to balance their attention.

- **Switching attention.** When you quickly switch your focus from one thing to another.
- **Divided attention.** When you're performing several things at the same time.
- **Focused attention.** When your whole brain concentrates on one task.
- **Sustained attention.** When you need to pay attention for a long time.

Things you can do to help you pay attention:

- Eliminate distractions inside your vehicle.
- Be well-rested.
- Put away and silence your electronics.
- Limit the number of passengers and pets in your vehicle.
- Resist multitasking behind the wheel.



VISUALLY SEARCH AND SCAN

Visual searching means using your eyes to actively check your surroundings. Scanning involves also moving your head, neck, and body so that you can see as much as possible around your vehicle. Searching and scanning help your attention skills be aware of the always-changing environment around you: in and outside your vehicle. It's how you gather information so you can make wise decisions.

Constant visual searching supports your ability to drive safely. Make sure you are traveling at a speed that supports your ability to search and scan effectively.

Scan to the front

To avoid last-minute braking or the need to turn or swerve suddenly, look ahead for:

- Traffic situations you'll need to steer around and blockages that might hide a pedestrian, bicyclist, or another vehicle.
- Feet, wheels, shadows, and movement in, under, and around parked vehicles.
- What's happening beyond the vehicle in front of you.

Looking ahead allows you to anticipate potential situations and prepares you to stop or change directions if needed.

Scan to the side

- When approaching intersections, pay close attention to vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists approaching from the left and right.
- Watch for pedestrians and cyclists who might be crossing the road.
- When foliage or other objects obscure your view to the sides, watch for movement to identify potential hazards and people who could be planning to cross the road.
- Before turning, check your side mirrors and do an over-shoulder check for bicyclists or pedestrians who might be alongside you or about to cross the street.

Scan behind

Besides watching traffic in front of and beside you, check traffic behind you. It is essential to look for vehicles and cyclists behind you when you change lanes, turn across a bicycle lane, slow down, back up, or are driving down a long or steep hill.

Check more often when traffic is heavy. If you know someone is following too closely or coming up too fast, you will have time to do something about it (change lanes, tap on the brakes, speed up, or slow down).

3.6 | RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Identify and commit yourself to safe, respectful, and responsible driver behavior.

- Ensure all people in the vehicle use safety restraints.
- Be fit to drive.
- Show empathy toward others.
- Respect other road users' space.
- Avoid conflict regardless of fault.
- Take care of the road environment.

TRAFFIC ADVISORIES

Traffic advisories are notifications or alerts given to drivers about current or upcoming traffic conditions, incidents, or road closures. These advisories come from transportation officials, traffic management centers, or navigation apps.

Find traffic advisories that will help you make informed decisions about your travel routes. This can help you avoid potential delays or hazards. Traffic advisories are provided in many ways, including electronic road signs, social media, radio broadcasts, traffic websites, and mobile apps.

LITTER

Litter isn't just ugly. It also creates safety hazards for people using the roads. Litter on roads can cause accidents. Flammable or inflamed litter can spark wildfires, damaging the environment and potentially causing fatalities. This is why fines for littering in Washington are so severe. You and your passengers are responsible for securing items you're transporting and properly throwing away trash.

Washington State law sets minimum fines for littering and illegal dumping. Many cities and counties have local ordinances that differ from state law. Contact your local police department, sheriff's office, city, or county clerk for information on local litter enforcement and to find out what laws apply in your area.

THE ENVIRONMENT

How you drive impacts the environment

When you leave your car running while parked, especially in a garage, it can release harmful gases like carbon monoxide, which can be lethal. Idling your engine also adds pollution to the air.

By making these small changes, you can help lower vehicle emissions:

- Turn off your engine if you're parked for a while.
- Drive smoothly instead of speeding or braking hard, which uses more fuel.
- Keep your tires properly inflated for better gas mileage.
- Carpool or use public transport when possible to reduce the number of cars on the road.

What you drive impacts the environment

Most vehicle manufacturers have made efforts to reduce carbon footprints through lower emissions, fuel efficiency, and

safety features designed to improve traffic flow. Opting to plan efficient routes and carpool with other people supports these efforts (in addition to having economic benefits). Washington's Clean Car Law requires vehicles made in 2009 and later to meet strict clean air standards before they can be registered, licensed, or sold.

If you need to dispose of a vehicle or vehicle parts, contact a vehicle disposal recycling center to help you do this in an environmentally conscious way.

SELF-EVALUATION

Self-evaluation is a quick, easy, and important part of being a responsible driver. It can be done during or after the drive. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Did anything surprise me?
- Did I surprise anyone?
- Was my driving legal, proficient, and smooth?
- What changes do I need to make for next time?

Regularly reviewing your driving skills at the end of each drive not only helps you improve your abilities but also helps you maintain your skills once they are developed. Skills deteriorate over time, so regularly evaluating keeps you driving at your best.

To keep your skills fresh, identify:

- Factors that contribute to changes in your driving skills.
- Changes in driving practices.
- Changes in traffic laws.
- Changes and advancements in vehicle technology.
- Opportunities for lifelong learning related to driving.


4
CHAPTER 4
ROADS
Yakima 30
Walla Walla 160
Spokane 175
SPEED LIMIT
55

4.0 | AWARENESS AND COOPERATION

Think of all the reasons people use Washington roadways: to visit family, to take sick kids to the doctor, or to get home after a difficult day at work. Washington roads are used by people just like you, and the road system relies on the cooperation and shared understanding of the people who use it. You expect others to know and follow the rules of the road. They expect the same of you.

Sometimes roads can be confusing. For example, they could be under construction or crowded with vehicles, trucks, motorcycles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. There are moments that might require you to be more patient and thoughtful. You might find it easier to navigate the road if you remember life can be hard and most people are doing their best.

The key is courtesy, respect, and awareness of others. Your care and consideration could save someone or yourself from serious injury or death.

4.1 | SHARING WITH PEOPLE

Always yield to pedestrians.

Pedestrians and bicyclists have the right-of-way at crosswalks and intersections **whether the road is marked or not.**

- **Wait** until a pedestrian has cleared your lane and one additional lane before proceeding. If the pedestrian is using a wheelchair, cane, guide dog, or other service animal, wait until they have completely crossed the street before continuing.
- **Don't** drive into oncoming traffic to pass a pedestrian or bicyclist.

Look for people who:

- **Can't see you,** such as people behind buildings or cars, pedestrians with their back to you, and people wearing hats or using umbrellas.
- **Are distracted,** such as children, delivery persons, road workers, and pedestrians on their phone or wearing headphones.
- **Might be confused,** such as tourists and people following a map or looking for a new location.
- **Are using a wheelchair,** cane, or service animal. It's unlawful to interfere with a service animal. Don't honk. It could confuse or frighten the animal or pedestrian.

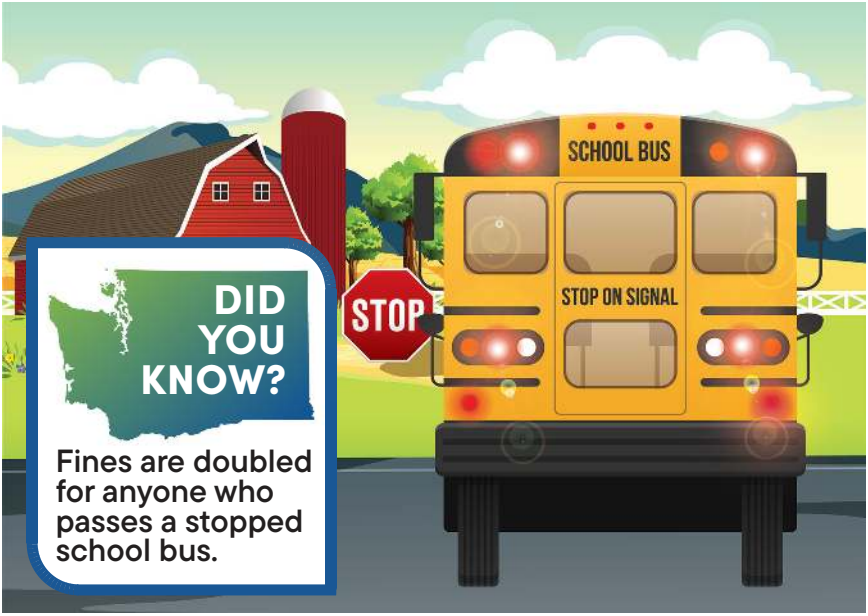
4.2 | SHARING WITH SCHOOL BUSES



The loading and unloading of a school bus is a potentially dangerous situation.

School-aged children are not always predictable or aware of danger. Make sure you're thoughtful and cautious of children as they get on and off the school bus. Be patient and follow the speed limit and the school bus signals.

School bus lights are like traffic signals: Red means stop, and yellow means caution or slow down.

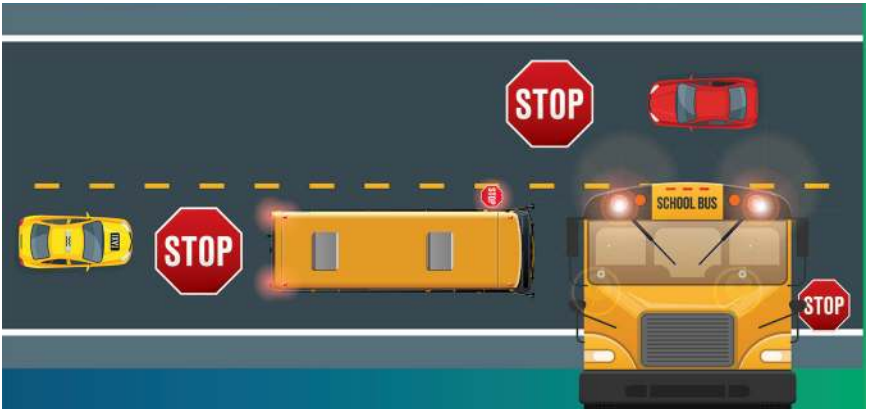


WHEN YOU ARE BEHIND THE BUS

It's unlawful to pass when red lights flash.

Never pass a school bus with flashing lights. The lights and sign tell you that children are near and getting on/off the bus.

- All drivers traveling in the same direction as the bus must stop when the red lights flash, and the stop sign is extended.
- Don't use a center turn lane to pass a school bus. Drivers in all turn lanes must stop.
- You may go after the lights stop flashing, the sign is retracted, and the metal arm returns to the front bumper of the bus.
- Continue to watch for children even after the red lights have stopped flashing.



WHEN YOU ARE IN FRONT OF THE BUS

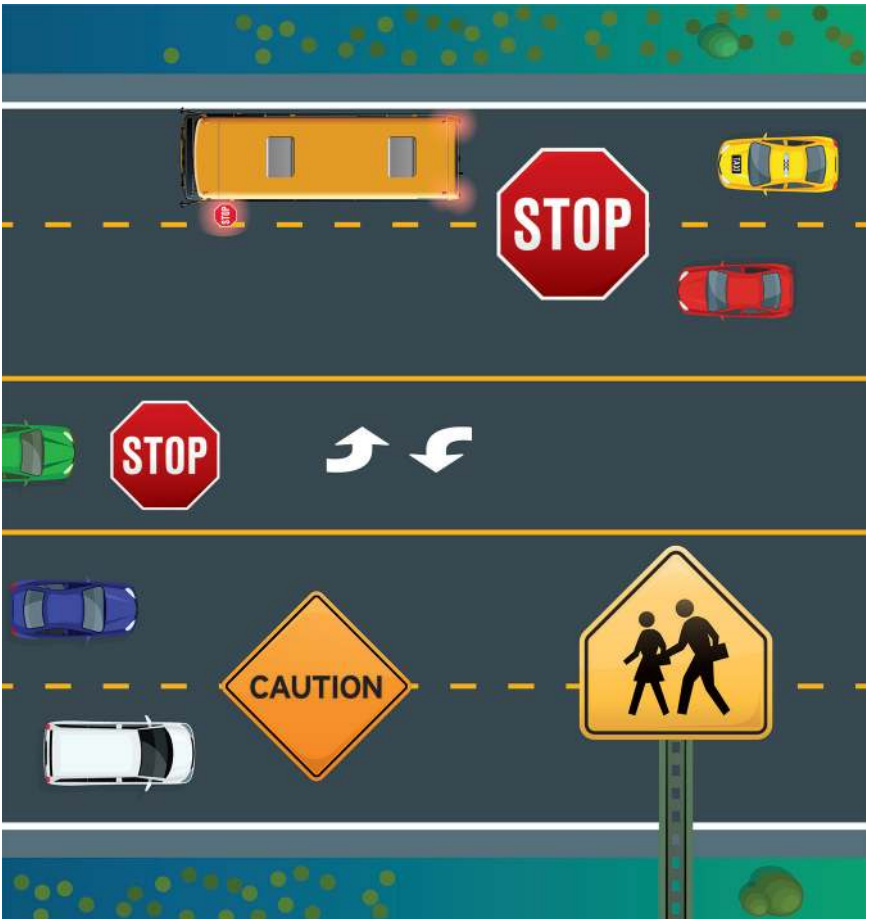
On a 2-lane road

All vehicles must stop when the red lights flash and the stop sign extends. You can resume traveling in the opposite direction when the lights stop flashing, the sign is retracted, and the metal arm returns to the front bumper of the bus.



On a multilane road

- Drivers traveling behind the bus must stop when the red lights flash and the stop sign extends.
- Drivers traveling in the opposite direction as the bus don't need to stop when the red lights flash or the stop sign extends **IF:**
    - **There are three or more lanes.**
    - **Lanes are separated by a median or barrier.**





4.3 | SHARING WITH TRANSIT BUSES

Yield to any transit vehicle traveling in the same direction as you that has signaled and is pulling back onto the roadway.

4.4 | SHARING WITH LARGE VEHICLES

Safely sharing the road with large trucks and buses requires knowledge of their special limitations. You need more time and space when driving around large vehicles. When you are near large vehicles on the road, pay special attention to the following:

Visibility. When following large vehicles, adjust your following distance so you have a wide view of the roadway ahead.

Blind zones. If you are near a large vehicle and can't see the driver's mirrors, the driver can't see you. There are blind zones on each side of large vehicles where the driver cannot see you. Avoid driving alongside large vehicles for too long.

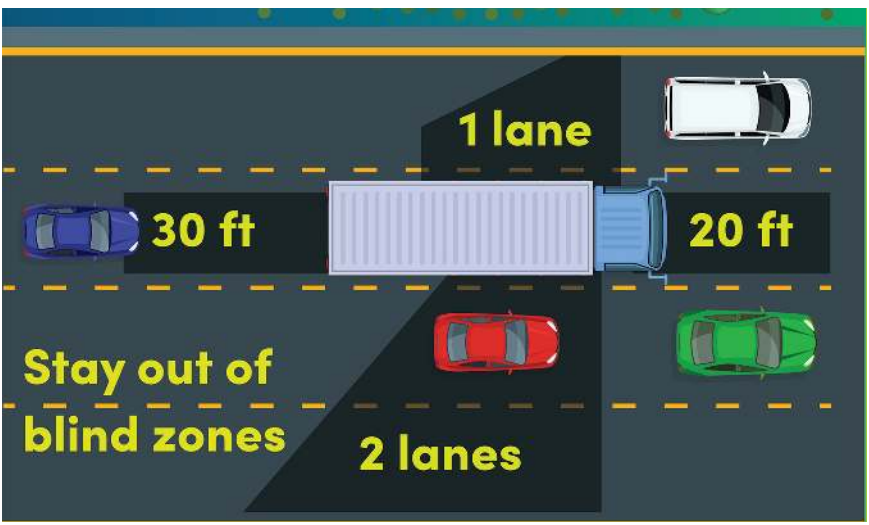
Stopping. Large vehicles can't stop as quickly as smaller vehicles. It takes a loaded truck with properly adjusted brakes, traveling at 55 mph, 450 feet to come to a complete stop. Cutting in front of them without enough space is dangerous for everyone.

Merging. When entering traffic ahead of a large vehicle, wait until you can clearly see both of their headlights in your rearview mirror before merging in front of them. After merging, maintain the flow of traffic to reduce impacts on other drivers.

Turning space. To avoid hitting something, large vehicles might require more than one lane to complete a turn. They also need 2 lanes of space in a roundabout. Don't pass a large vehicle when the driver is turning. This is a frequent cause of collisions involving large vehicles. Be patient and wait until their turn is complete before moving ahead.

Hazardous materials. As you're driving, be aware of vehicles with signs indicating they're carrying hazardous materials. Avoid driving near them when possible.

Long, steep grades. When traveling up or down steep roads, large vehicles travel slowly. Be prepared to encounter slow vehicles in the right lane.



SNOWPLOWS

Use caution when driving near snow removal equipment. Snowplows can force snow up and off the road, causing blizzard-like conditions. This can reduce visibility for drivers following too closely.

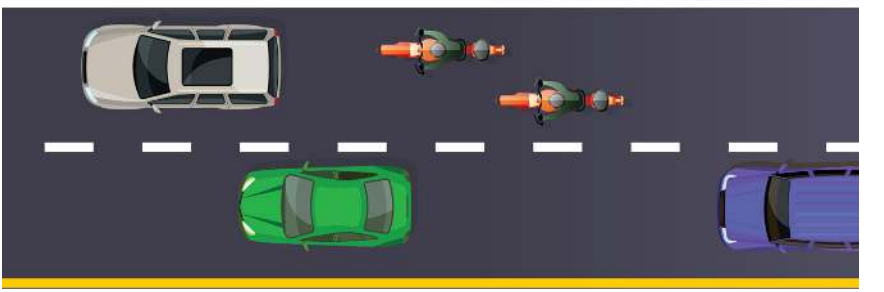
4.5 | SHARING WITH MOTORCYCLES

Motorcyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as other road users. They obey the same traffic laws. However, because motorcycles are small vehicles, they're more vulnerable and harder to see. Make it a habit to scan for motorcycles and be cautious around them.



FOLLOWING

Leave a lot of room to stop in front of you when you're following a motorcycle. You want to have enough time to safely stop in an emergency. Weather conditions and slippery surfaces can be serious problems for motorcyclists. Allow even more following room when it's raining or the road surface is slick.



LANES

Motorcyclists are constantly changing positions within their lane, so they can see and be seen, and to avoid objects in the road. They're entitled to the same lane width as all other vehicles. Never move into the same lane alongside a motorcyclist, even if the lane is wide and the motorcyclist is riding far to one side.



TURNING

Motorcyclists are often hidden or missed in blind zones. Do an over-the-shoulder check to make sure your blind zone is clear. For example, if you are turning right, look left, look right, then look left again. Looking twice can save a life. Drivers pulling into a lane in front of a motorcycle or turning in front of an oncoming motorcycle might not see the motorcycle. They could also misjudge the speed of the oncoming motorcycle.

ROAD SURFACE

Bumpy road surfaces and irregularities that don't affect other drivers, such as gravel, debris, pavement seams, small animals, potholes, and even manhole covers, can force a motorcyclist to change speed or lane position. Anticipate changes a motorcyclist might need to make.

LIGHTS

Your lights. Give motorcyclists plenty of time to notice your turn signals and brake lights.

Motorcyclists' lights. When slowing down, motorcyclists might use the throttle and not their brakes, so brake lights wouldn't be visible. Additionally, some motorcycles don't have turn signals that turn off automatically. Make sure you're alert and paying careful attention when driving alongside a motorcycle.
For more information about riding motorcycles, visit dol.wa.gov and search for **motorcycle operator manual**.

4.6 | SHARING WITH BICYCLISTS

Bicyclists have the same rights, duties, and responsibilities as a vehicle driver. Like motorcycles, bicycles are small and less visible, which increases riders' risk of being struck by a driver and seriously injured or killed.



GENERAL GUIDANCE

- When turning a corner or pulling into a driveway, watch for bicyclists who are in the crosswalk or on the sidewalk.
- At intersections, yield to bicyclists as you would to a vehicle.
- You cannot share a lane with a bicyclist. Legally, bicyclists may use the full lane and ride where they're most visible to you and other drivers. When you're driving behind a bicyclist, leave at least 3 feet of space..
- Bicyclists in crosswalks are considered pedestrians. You must yield to them in both marked and unmarked crosswalks and intersections.

PASSING A BICYCLIST

- Don't pass until it's safe for you and the bicyclist.
- Move over one full lane if there are two lanes in the same direction. If there's only 1 lane in each direction, move into the other lane when there isn't any oncoming traffic. Leave at least 3 feet between the bicyclist and the widest part of your vehicle. (Remember the bicyclist might need to change their position to avoid a hazard you can't see.)
- Never cross into oncoming traffic to pass a bicyclist.
- Pass slowly on the bicyclist's left side and never into oncoming traffic.
- Make sure you're clear of the bicyclist before returning to the lane. Moving over too soon could put the bicyclist in danger.
- Let the bicyclist clear the intersection before making a turn. If you're going to turn right, don't pass a bicyclist just before the turn.

BIKE LANES

- Watch for bicycle lanes, which are typically painted green, use solid white lines, and are marked with a bicycle symbol. Although bike lane markings vary in length, you should drive as though the markings continue.
- Drive in bicycle lanes only when turning or crossing the lane to park near the curb.
- Look carefully in all directions for a bicyclist after you park and before opening your door.

For more information about riding bicycles, visit wsdot.wa.gov and search for **bicycling and walking.**

4.7 | SHARING THE ROAD WITH TRAINS

Railroad tracks deserve careful attention.



Only drive across railroad tracks at designated crossings. Look for safety signage, flashing lights, and crossing gates. Flashing red lights at a railroad crossing means a train is approaching and you need to stay outside of the gates.

Trains ALWAYS have the right-of-way. They are heavy and cannot stop quickly even if they are traveling at low speeds. It can take up to a mile for a train to come to a full stop.

When lights are flashing and bells are ringing at a train crossing, you must stop — whether the gate is down or not. Never drive around the gate.

Stop between 15 and 50 feet away from the nearest rail of a crossing when:

- The signal is flashing.
- The crossing gate is lowering or already down.
- A flagger is giving a signal to stop.
- A train is approaching so closely as to create an immediate hazard.
- You hear a train's warning horn.
- A stop sign is posted.

You can go when the red lights stop flashing and all other warning signs deactivate.

IMPORTANT SAFETY REMINDERS

Do not try to beat a train across the tracks.
As soon as the warnings have been activated: stop.

Do not stop on the tracks.
If your vehicle gets stuck at a crossing, get everyone out immediately.

Do not disregard warning signals.
Even if you don't see a train, trust the signals. Trains might be closer, quieter, and moving faster than they appear. Trains can come from either direction and run on any track.

WHEN TO CALL FOR HELP



If there is anything on or close to the railroad tracks, call the number on the blue and white Emergency Notification System sign. Give the crossing ID number to the dispatcher. Let them know your location and the details of the situation. No sign? Dial 911.

LIGHT RAIL

Sound Transit's Link light rail line is a critical element of Washington's long-term transportation network. Here are some guidelines for driving near rail stations and lines:

- Pay attention to all signs and road markings.
- Be alert and watch for approaching light rail trains.
- Leave at least one car length (or more) between your vehicle and light rail trains.
- Do not stop, park, or leave your car on the tracks! Park with plenty of room for rail trains to get around you.

4.8 | SHARING WITH AGRICULTURAL VEHICLES

Agricultural and farm vehicles designed to go 25 mph or less will have a triangle sign or emblem on the back. When you see a slow moving vehicle, remember to:

- Be patient and slow down.
- Give plenty of space and use caution when passing.

If you need to pass an agricultural vehicle and there are two lanes in the same direction, move over one full lane. If there is only one lane in each direction, look for oncoming traffic and proceed carefully. As you pass, there should be at least 3 feet between the widest part of your vehicle and the agricultural vehicle.

4.9 | SHARING WITH EMERGENCY VEHICLES

Fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars using lights and/or sirens always have the right-of-way.

As soon as you see or hear the signals, immediately pull your vehicle to the right side of the road and stop. Wait until the emergency vehicle has passed before signaling and reentering traffic. You should reenter traffic in the order you were traveling before. Wait until the emergency vehicle has passed before signaling and reentering traffic. You should reenter traffic in the order you were traveling before. By moving to the right, you help emergency vehicle drivers do their job and could help save a life!

RULES OF THE ROAD

4.10 | TRAFFIC LAWS

The rules of the road are designed to keep people safe. They prevent traffic incidents by establishing the rules everyone agrees to follow when they use the road. The laws exist to keep road systems moving smoothly.

For the most part, the fundamental rules of the road stay the same. However, traffic laws can change. You can find the most current rules of the road by searching **RCW 46.61** online. For as long as you drive, it is your responsibility to stay informed about the most current rules of the road.

GENERAL DRIVING GUIDANCE

As a driver in Washington state, it's a good idea to keep this general driving guidance in mind:

- Drive on the right side of the road. The only time you might temporarily travel on the left is if you are safely and legally passing another vehicle on a two-lane road.
- **Keep right except to pass.** When there are multiple lanes traveling in the same direction, drive in the right lane. Use the left lane to pass slower traffic.
- Follow speed limit laws, even when using the left lane to pass.
- Remember, carpool lanes are not passing lanes.
- Don't use the shoulders of the road to pass. Unless directed by officials or signs, you shouldn't drive on the shoulder.
- Avoid blocking travel lanes. If you need to stop, keep moving until you can safely pull over.
- Keep moving forward. Don't drive in reverse on the road, even if you miss your turn or exit. It's illegal to back up on a shoulder or freeway.

- Do not hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers on Washington freeways. It's illegal and dangerous.

TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

Traffic control devices are signals, signs, and road markings that control the flow of traffic, making streets and highways safer for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. It is your responsibility to look for and comply with all signals, signs, and road markings.

In special circumstances, law enforcement, construction workers, maintenance personnel, and school crossing guards can direct traffic. These people can overrule traffic signals, and their orders or directions must be followed.

BROKEN LIGHTS OR SIGNALS

If a traffic signal isn't working, treat the intersection like a four-way stop. Come to a complete stop. Yield to traffic on your right. Proceed cautiously when it's safe.



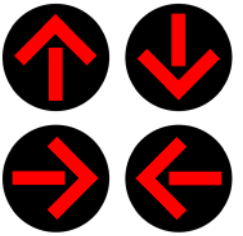
Solid Red
Stop. Wait until the traffic light turns green and there are no vehicles or pedestrians in the intersection before you move ahead.

After coming to a complete stop at a red light, you can turn *right* if you don't see a "no turn on red" sign and you have plenty of room to enter traffic.

After coming to a complete stop at a red light, you can turn *left* onto a one-way street if you don't see a "no turn on red" sign and you have plenty of room to enter traffic.



Flashing Red
Stop. A flashing red traffic light functions as a stop sign. Come to a full stop, and then go when it's your turn.



Red Arrow
Stop. A red arrow means you can't go in the direction of the arrow.

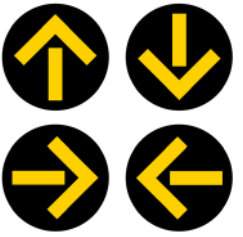


Solid Yellow
Slow down. This means the light is changing to red. When you see a yellow light, slow down and prepare to stop. If you're in the intersection when the yellow light comes on, continue through the intersection at the posted speed.

You are not allowed to accelerate beyond the posted speed limit to enter or clear an intersection when the light is yellow.



Flashing Yellow
Slow down. A flashing yellow light has the same meaning as a yield sign. Treat the intersection as an uncontrolled intersection. Proceed when you have the right-of-way.



Yellow Arrow
Slow down. A yellow arrow means the light is going to turn red soon. Prepare to stop and give the right-of-way to oncoming traffic.



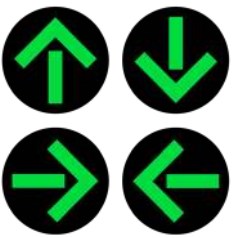
Solid Green
Go ahead, but make sure to:

- Wait for the intersection to clear.
- Yield to emergency vehicles as required by law.
- Yield to pedestrians.

When you're turning left at a green light, yield to approaching vehicles. Oncoming traffic has the right-of-way. Pause in a place that gives you a clear view of approaching traffic, and then safely complete the turn when there is a break in traffic.



Flashing Green
You won't see a flashing green light in Washington state. However, you might see them in British Columbia, Canada, as warning that pedestrians are waiting to cross.



Green Arrow
Go in the direction of the arrow. A green arrow gives you the right-of-way to travel in that direction. There should be no oncoming vehicles, crossing traffic, or pedestrians while the arrow is green.

FREEWAY RAMP METERS

Ramp meters work like regular traffic signals. When the light is red, stop at the white stop line. When the signal turns green, you can continue along the on-ramp.

4.12 | SIGNS

Traffic signs tell you about traffic rules, hazards, roadway directions, and the location of roadway services. The shape and color of these signs, and their symbols and words, give clues to the type of information they provide.

Red	Prohibitive or restricted action	
Orange	Construction and maintenance warning	
Yellow	General and unexpected road conditions warning	
Fluorescent Yellow Green	Warning of school, pedestrian, and bicycling activity	
White	Regulatory	
Green	Guide or directional information	
Blue	Motorist services guidance	
Brown	Public recreation, cultural and historical area identification	

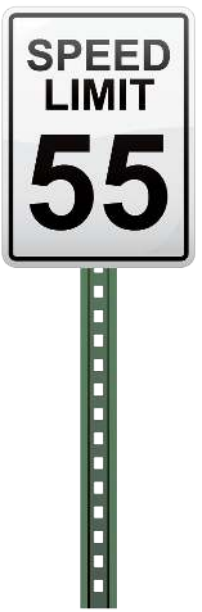
COMMON SIGNS



Stop
A stop sign means you must stop at the line, crosswalk, or corner. Look for crossing vehicles and pedestrians in all directions and yield the right-of-way.



Yield
A yield sign means you must slow down and allow traffic that has the right-of-way to cross first.



Speed Limit
These signs tell you the maximum safe speed allowed or the minimum safe speed required.

- The maximum speed limit is for ideal conditions. Reduce your speed when road conditions require it — like the roadway is slippery or it's foggy and difficult to see. Even if you're driving under the posted speed limit, you can get a ticket for traveling too fast for road conditions.
- Some roads have minimum speed limits. You're required to travel at least this fast so you are not a hazard to other drivers.



Keep Right
This sign reminds you to stay in the right lane unless you're passing another vehicle.



Automated traffic safety cameras
These cameras automatically record images if you:

- Fail to stop at a steady red light.
- Fail to stop at a railroad crossing signal.
- Exceed the speed limit in a school zone.

All locations with traffic cameras are clearly marked. Speeding tickets from these locations are mailed to the vehicle owner.



Speed warning
These signs indicate that a speed change is recommended for a potential hazard or road condition (often a curve or turn). Adjust your speed appropriately given all factors (road, weather, traffic, etc.) and follow the speed warning limit.



Variable speed limit and advanced notification
These digital signs attempt to distribute the flow of traffic by posting changing speed limits. Digital advanced notification signs can also quickly close entire lanes and provide warning information to drivers before they reach slower traffic.



One Way
These signs identify where traffic flows only in the direction of the arrow. Never drive the wrong way on a one-way street.



Not allowed
Some regulatory signs have a red circle with a red slash over a symbol. These signs indicate certain actions, such as left turns, right turns, or U-turns, are not allowed.



Do Not Enter
A square sign with a white horizontal line inside a circle means you can't enter the street from that direction.



Wrong Way
This alerts you that you're driving in the wrong direction and is meant to prevent head-on collisions. Stop and turn around immediately.





No passing and passing safely
These signs tell you where passing isn't allowed. You might see these signs where there are potential hazards, such as hills, curves, and intersections, and other places a vehicle could enter the roadway. There are also signs and lane markings that tell you when it is safe to pass.



Shared center lane left turn only
This sign indicates where a lane is reserved for left-turning vehicles from either direction and isn't to be used for through traffic or passing other vehicles. Arrows are often painted on the road.





Roundabout
These signs mark the entrance to a roundabout. Roundabouts can also have yield, pedestrian warning, and directional arrow signs.

WORK ZONE SIGNS













These construction, maintenance, or emergency operations signs warn you people are working near the roadway. Motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists must yield to any highway construction personnel, vehicles with flashing yellow lights, or equipment inside a highway construction or maintenance work zone. Fines double for offenses committed while driving in construction areas when workers are present.

SERVICE SIGNS



Service signs show the location of various services, such as hospitals, electric vehicle charging stations, and rest areas.

RECREATION SIGNS



Recreation signs show local attractions, such as hiking trails, picnic spaces, and skiing areas.

DESTINATION SIGNS

Destination signs show directions and distances to various locations, such as cities, airports, or state lines or special areas such as national parks, historical areas, or museums.

The shape and color of route number signs indicate the type of roadway — interstate, U.S., state, city, or county road.



City mileage



Optional exit and exit only



Highway signs

OTHER TRAFFIC SIGNS

Some, but not all, Washington State signs are shown below. You are responsible for knowing all signs, including city and county signs.



No turn on red



Lane use control



Mile marker



School zone speed limit



Reduced speed limit ahead



Railroad intersection



Cross road



Curve



Deer crossing



Hill



Low clearance



Merge



Merging traffic



No passing zone



Pedestrian crossing



Reversing curves



School crossing



Side road



Signal ahead



Slippery when wet



Soft shoulder



Stop ahead



Sharp turn



Two-way traffic



Added lane (from right, no merging required)



Advance warning bicyclist



Narrow road or bridge ahead



Circular intersection



Curve left 35 mph recommended



Divided highway (road) begins



Divided highway (road) ends



Slow moving vehicle



Winding road



Advisory speed



Chain advisory



Light rail



Sharp curve ahead



Railroad crossing



Traffic direction



Tsunami hazard zone



National forest



Volcano evacuation route

4.13 | COMMON INTERSECTIONS

An intersection is any place where two or more roads come together. There are many types of intersections: cross streets, roundabouts, calming circles, side streets, driveways, shopping centers, and parking lot entrances. Every intersection is legally a crosswalk, whether it's marked or unmarked. Each intersection type requires wise decision making, cautious behavior, and awareness of yourself and others.

Before you enter an intersection:

- Stop and yield to pedestrians and traffic in the intersection.
- Look in each direction multiple times.
- Check your side mirrors and over your shoulder to be sure there isn't a cyclist, motorcyclist, or pedestrian coming into your path.
- Look for road markings to follow as you proceed to a new lane or road.
- Make sure you can clearly see crossing traffic before entering an intersection. If you stop on the stop line, but your view of a cross street is blocked, edge forward slowly until you can see. This allows crossing drivers to see the front of your vehicle before you can see them. This gives them a chance to slow down and warn you if needed.

- Make sure there is enough space for you to cross or turn without blocking the intersection.

It's very important to scan the entire area around an intersection, especially when you are near shopping centers, parking lots, construction areas, busy sidewalks, playgrounds, parks, and schoolyards.

Right-of-way
Right-of-way rules determine the order vehicles move through an intersection. The law determines who must yield (give up) the right-of-way.

Four-way stop
When you approach an intersection controlled by stop signs, the following rules apply:

- The first vehicle to arrive is the first to go.
- The second vehicle to arrive is the second to go, etc.
- If two vehicles arrive at approximately the same time, yield to the one on the right.
- Any vehicle turning left must yield the right-of-way to vehicles going straight or turning right.

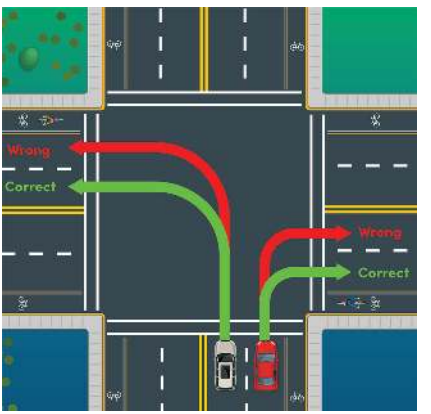
Two-way stop
Turning vehicles must yield to the vehicle going straight. The vehicle going straight has the right-of-way.

4.14 | TURNING

Whether turning left or right at an intersection, state law requires you to turn into the lane closest to the direction you are coming from.

If there is more than one turn lane, stay in your original lane as you turn. Make sure you plan your turns carefully so you don't veer into another lane while turning.

Once you complete your turn, you can change to another lane if you need to.





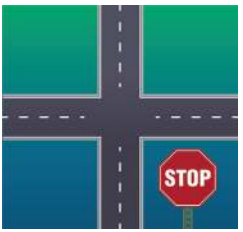
Put on your turn signal at least 100 feet before you turn left or right across oncoming traffic. Then, look for a safe gap in the traffic. Check the street you're turning onto to make sure no vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists are in or approaching your path.

Check behind you for bicyclists and yield to them before making your turn.

Bicyclists might be moving toward you faster than you realize. Be sure you have time to execute the turn safely.

U-turns

If you need to turn around, look for signs showing whether or not a U-turn is allowed. You must have clear visibility in all directions before making a U-turn. For that reason, do not make a U-turn on a curve or when approaching the crest of a hill. In Washington, U-turns are generally allowed unless a sign is posted telling you a U-turn is not allowed.



Cross Intersection

A cross-intersection is a four-way junction with one or more lanes traveling in each direction. It can be marked with traffic lights, street signs, and/or road markings. Know and apply the right-of-way laws at cross intersections.



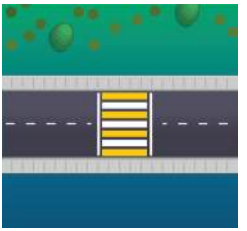
T-Intersection

A T-intersection is a three-way junction where a road ends and intersects with a through road. Some T-intersections will have a yield or stop sign to let you know that passing traffic has the right-of-way.



Y-Intersection

A Y-intersection is when a minor road connects with more major routes. There might be a stop sign where the minor road connects with the major road. The cars on major roads have the right-of-way.



Mid-block crossing
These are crosswalks in the middle of the roadway. Pedestrians **always** have the right-of-way in a marked crosswalk.

Drivers should stop to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross, regardless of whether the crosswalk has a stop sign or not.

4.15 | OTHER INTERSECTIONS



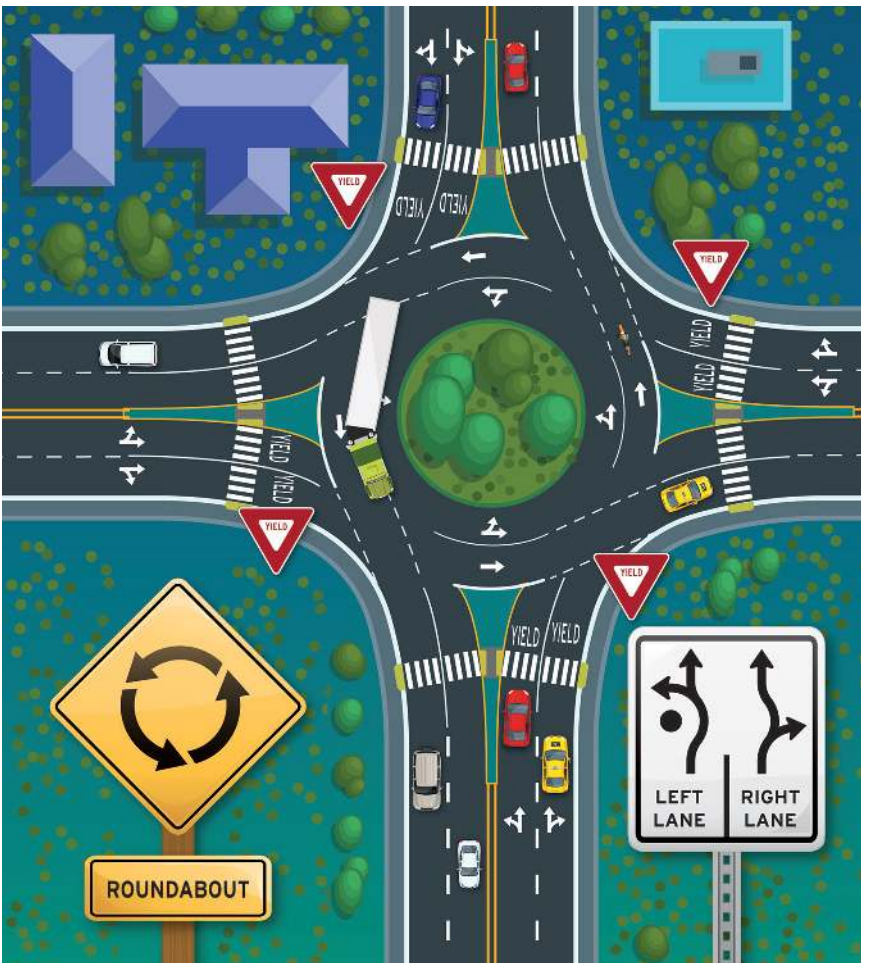
Traffic calming circles
A traffic calming circle is an intersection with a painted or raised center island that traffic flows counterclockwise around. This type of intersection can have stop or yield signs on all, some, or none of its approaches. They can be found at 4-way, 3-way, or 2-way intersections. Apply the same right-of-way rules as you would at any other intersection.

Traffic calming circles are intended for passenger vehicles and may not easily accommodate large vehicles like fire trucks, buses, or delivery trucks. Give larger vehicles plenty of space and be aware that they might have to go clockwise to get through the circle.

ROUNDABOUTS

A roundabout is a circular intersection where all approaching vehicles yield on entry and travel counterclockwise around a raised center island.

Roundabouts are designed for a wide variety of users, including cars, fire trucks, buses, delivery vehicles, freight trucks, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

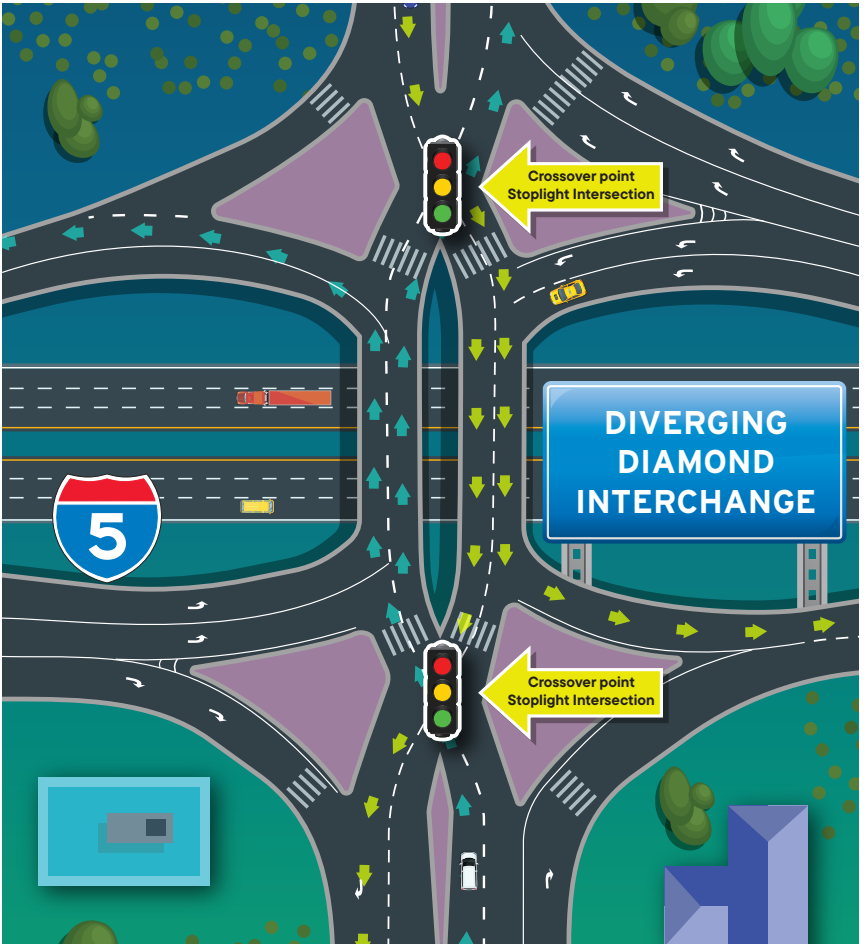


Roundabouts can have a truck apron around the central island. Truck aprons are designed for large vehicles. Give large vehicles plenty of space as they are allowed to cross truck aprons and both lanes as they approach and drive through the intersection.

Bicycles can choose to navigate the roundabout as a pedestrian or as a vehicle. When traveling as a vehicle, bicyclists should ride in the middle of the lane to increase their visibility to drivers.

How to drive a roundabout

1. Slow down when approaching the roundabout. Roundabouts are designed for speeds between 15 and 25 mph.
2. Pick a lane as you approach the roundabout. The lane choice sign shows you which lanes are used for right turns, straight through travel, and left turns. Once you pick a lane, stay in that lane until you exit the roundabout.
3. Stop for pedestrians and bicyclists in crosswalks when you enter and exit the roundabout.
4. Yield to all traffic in the roundabout. Look left and yield to all traffic already in the roundabout since they have the right-of-way. Once you see a gap in traffic, enter the circle and proceed to your exit. Remember to keep a safe distance behind trucks because they need a lot of space and are allowed to use both lanes.
5. Enter the roundabout to the right, traveling counterclockwise and staying in your lane.
6. Exit at the street you want.
7. Drive through the roundabout and pull over if an emergency vehicle approaches, just like you would at any other intersection.



DIVERGING DIAMONDS

A diverging diamond is a new type of intersection in Washington. It's designed so traffic can cross to the other side of the roadway. This might not seem logical because you cross lanes with traffic going in the opposite direction. The intersection allows for vehicles to turn left (on and off freeway ramps) more efficiently. These intersections reduce the number of points where vehicles cross paths, which in turn decreases the risk of collisions. By eliminating left turns against oncoming traffic, diverging diamond intersections improve traffic flow and reduce congestion.

What to expect

- Lane Shift. As you approach the interchange, you'll be guided to cross over to the left side of the roadway. This might feel strange initially, as you'll be driving on the opposite side of the road, but clear markings and signals will guide you.
- Free-Flow Left Turns. The main advantage is that it allows you to make left turns onto the freeway without stopping or yielding to oncoming traffic.
- Return to Normal. After crossing the overpass or underpass, you'll be directed to cross back over to the right side of the road.

What to do

- Pay close attention to signs and pavement markings. They will guide you through the lane shift and turns.
- Don't worry about oncoming traffic when turning left onto the freeway. The design eliminates conflicts with oncoming vehicles.
- Stay alert and drive at a safe speed. Even though traffic flow is improved, it's important to remain aware of your surroundings.

UNCONTROLLED INTERSECTION

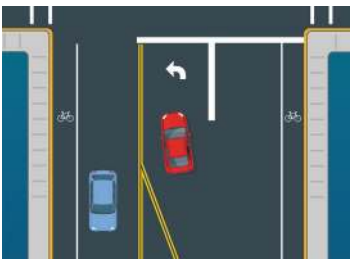
Uncontrolled intersections don't have signs, but the normal right-of-way rules apply. These intersections are typically found on local roads and streets. When you enter an uncontrolled intersection, you must yield the right-of-way if any of these apply:

- A vehicle is already in the intersection.
- You enter or cross a state highway from a secondary road.
- You enter a paved road from an unpaved road.
- You plan to make a left turn and a vehicle is approaching from the opposite direction.

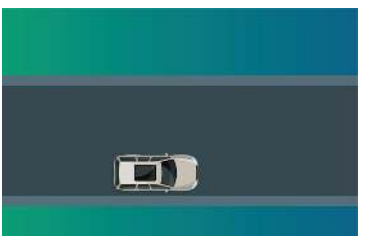
4.16 | ROAD MARKINGS

Road markings are lines, arrows, words, or symbols painted on the roadway to give you directions or warnings. They're used to divide lanes. Road markings show when you can pass other vehicles or change lanes. They show which lanes to use for turns, define pedestrian walkways, and show where you must stop for signs or traffic signals.

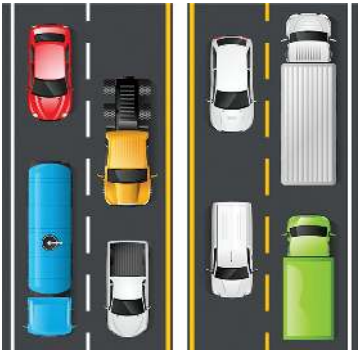
LANES



Solid white lines mark the edge of the road and separate bicycle lanes from other traffic.



If there are no markings on the road, stay as close to the right side as safely possible.

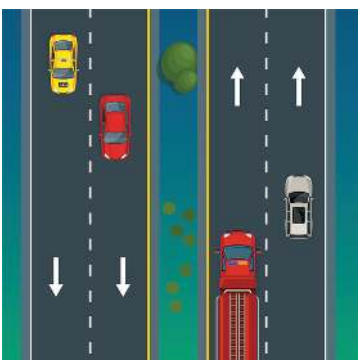


White and yellow lines separating travel lanes or marking the center of the road tell you if traffic is traveling in one or two directions.

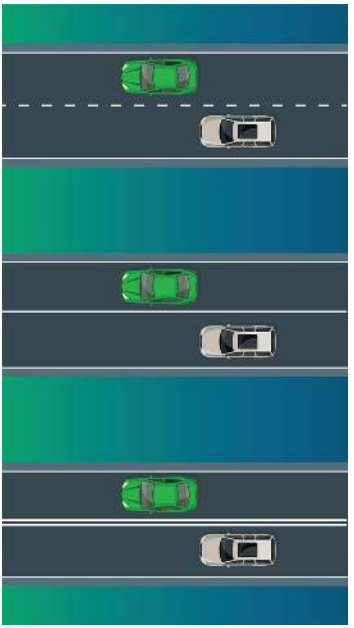
Yellow lines separate traffic in opposite directions. White lines separate traffic lanes moving in the same direction.



Shorter dashed white lines mean the lane is ending. You will either need to merge or exit. You can cross dashed lines if it is safe.



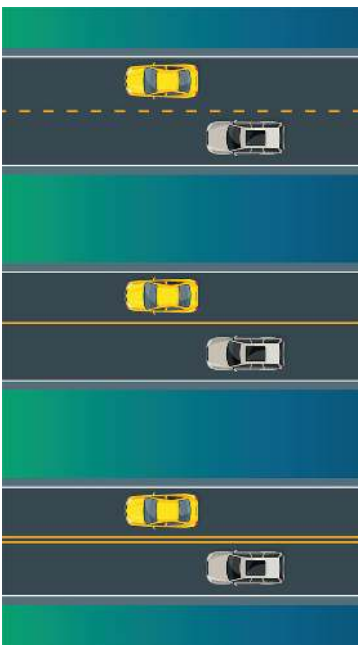
Medians divide two or more roadways. They can be open spaces, cement dividers, or 18-inch solid yellow pavement markings with stripes. It's illegal to drive within, over, or across medians.



A dashed white line between lanes of traffic means you can cross it to change lanes if it is safe.

A solid white line means you should stay in your lane unless a special situation requires you to change lanes.

Double solid white lines are a barrier between lanes. It's illegal to cross double white lines.



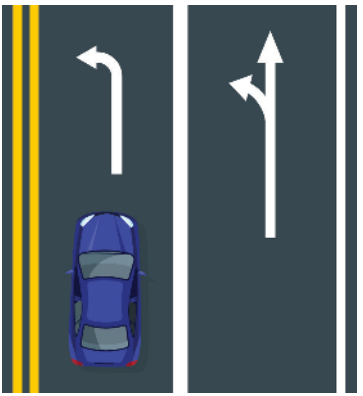
A dashed yellow line shows the center of a two-way, two-lane road. If it's safe, you may use the oncoming lane to pass another vehicle.

A solid yellow line can indicate the edge of the road or a no-passing zone. Do not cross a solid yellow line to pass another vehicle.

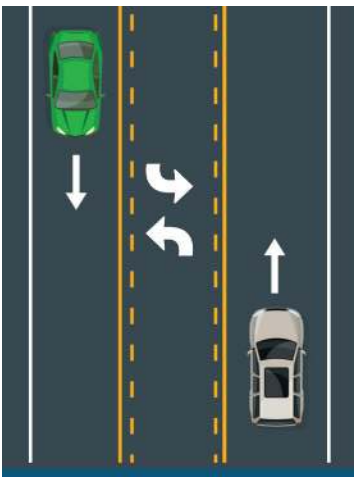
Double solid yellow centerlines show the middle of a two-way road. You are not allowed to pass, in either direction, on roads with double yellow lines.



A solid yellow and a dashed yellow line also show the center of a two-way roadway. You're not allowed to pass when the solid yellow line is on your side of the road. If the dashed line is on your side of the road, you may pass if it's safe to do so.



Turn lanes are usually at major intersections. There are signs and road markings indicating these lanes. Sometimes an arrow signal helps control these lanes. Once you're in a turn lane, you **must** follow through with the turn.



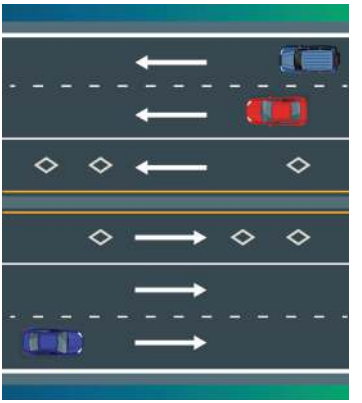
You can cross a solid yellow line on your side of the road to get into a center lane. This lane is marked with left turn arrows.

These shared center lanes are reserved for vehicles making left turns in either direction from or into the roadway (or U-turns when they are permitted).

Keep your eyes on traffic coming the other direction because those cars also have the right to use the same turn lane.

These lanes must not be used for passing. You shouldn't travel farther than 300 feet in a center lane.

HOV / CARPOOL





HOV lanes are reserved for carpools, vanpools, and buses. HOV lanes are identified by the diamond symbol on signs and on the pavement. These lanes are separated from the other lanes on the highway by a solid white line. To travel in an HOV lane, a vehicle must meet the occupancy requirements posted on the signs. Motorcycles are also allowed to use HOV lanes.



REVERSIBLE LANES

Reversible lanes, like express lanes, help address traffic congestion by switching the travel direction of one or more lanes when additional capacity is needed. Reversible lanes are typically operated on regular, fixed schedules that reflect daily commuting patterns. They can also be activated for major events or incidents.

These lanes are usually marked by double-dashed white lines. Check with the overhead signs before you start driving in a reversible lane. A green arrow means you can use the lane, and, a red X means you can't. A steady yellow X means the lane is changing direction, and you should move out of the lane as soon as it's safe.

RESERVED LANES

Reserved lanes are identified by signs and/or pavement markings indicating the lane is reserved for special uses. For example, transit lanes are for bus use only.

TOLL LANES

Express toll lanes and high occupancy toll lanes provide toll-free express trips for buses, vanpools, carpools, and motorcycles, but they also give individual drivers the option to pay the toll to use the lanes for a faster trip.

For more information, search **toll roads** on wsdot.wa.gov.

Using a Good To Go! account is the best way to pay tolls in Washington. Good To Go! accounts save you money on every toll road in the state and give you the convenience of automatic payments.

For more information regarding Good To Go! accounts, visit mygoodtogo.com.

OTHER ROAD MARKINGS



Crosswalks provide a safe way for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross the road. You must yield to people in or about to enter a crosswalk.

Get in the habit of being alert for pedestrians and bicyclists when you're crossing an intersection or turning.

Some crosswalks might also have in-pavement lights that are activated by crossing pedestrians. You must yield when these lights are flashing.

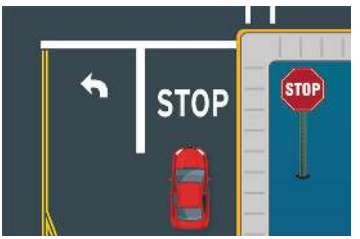
Not all crosswalks are marked! Every intersection is legally defined as a crosswalk regardless of whether a crosswalk marking is present.



Bike lanes are marked with solid white lines and bike symbols.

Some bike lanes are separated from the adjacent travel lane with a buffer consisting of two solid white lines with diagonal crosshatching in between. This buffer is considered part of the bike lane and should not be entered unless you're making a legal turn after checking that it's safe to do so.

Some bike lanes are physically separated from passing traffic by methods such as bollards, posts, or planters.



Stop lines appear at a stop sign or signal. You must stop before your vehicle reaches the stop line or crosswalk (if there is one).



Fire lanes are usually marked with red stripes or a red curb. Don't park or stop in fire lanes. In some communities, the road in front of a fire station is marked as a fire lane to keep the path clear for aid vehicles.



Yellow stripes show where you're not allowed to drive.



Sharrows are road markings used to indicate a vehicle lane is shared with bicycle traffic.

If you see sharrow markings, watch for people riding bikes. Drive slowly and provide at least 3 feet of space when passing.

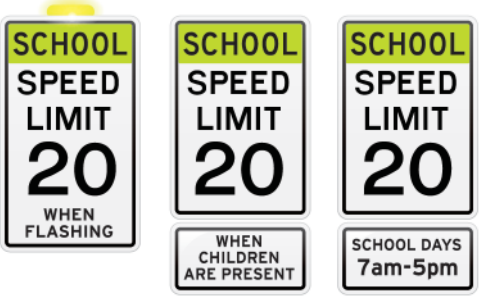
Bicycles should position themselves in line with the sharrow markings and ride in the direction the arrow is pointing.



Bicycle boxes
When the light turns green, bicyclists cross the intersection first and enter the bike lane on the other side of the intersection. You can't turn right on red near a bicycle box. Stay behind the white line until the bicycle box is clear.

Bicycles should position themselves in front of vehicles at the intersection.

4.17 | ZONES

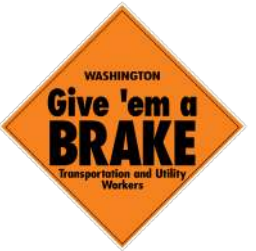


SCHOOL ZONE

A school zone refers to the roads around a school building or playground. These areas can be marked with signs, pavement markings, and flashing lights.

The school zone speed limit is 20 mph because higher speeds increase the risk of fatal crashes. You might see signs that clarify when the 20 mph speed limit applies.

Remember: Students might participate in after-school activities, sports teams, or access the playground after hours. Slow down and watch out when you're driving near a school. Any effort to reduce the risk for children is worth your time and attention.



WORK ZONE

A work zone is an area where roadwork or construction takes place. It could involve lane closures, detours, and moving equipment.



Be aware of crew members who work to keep travelers safe while vehicles speed past. Employees in work zones are parents, partners, siblings, and friends who need a safe work environment.

Please do your part to keep these workers safe.

- Watch for signs, cones, barrels, large vehicles, and workers when approaching a work zone.
- Eliminate distractions to enhance focus. Turn down music and pause conversations.
- Always reduce your speed in a work zone, even if there are no workers. The narrower lanes and rough pavement can create a hazardous condition.
- Increase your following distance, watch the traffic around you, and be prepared to stop.

- Use extreme caution when driving through a work zone at night, whether you see workers or not.
- Move over when possible to allow space for workers and construction vehicles.
- Observe the posted work zone signs until you see the End Road Work sign.
- Expect delays, plan for them, and leave early to reach your destination on time.
- Use a different route to avoid work zones when possible.



EMERGENCY ZONE

An emergency zone is created in response to a roadside situation that requires immediate attention. It could be a crash, broken vehicle, or individual in distress. These are situations nobody plans for, and they require care and patience from all road users.

Emergency zones might involve road flares or signs, but roadside response vehicles will use flashing lights. As soon as you see a roadside response vehicle with flashing lights, you must either:

1. **Move over** into a farther lane.
2. **Slow down** to at least 10 mph below the posted speed limit. Never drive faster than 50 mph in an emergency zone.

Roadside response vehicles could include tow trucks, solid waste trucks, incident response, highway maintenance, utility vehicles, law enforcement, fire trucks, and ambulances.

Create a safe space for roadside workers as soon as possible. You can help them while they are there helping others.

4.18 | PARKING

GENERAL PARKING RULES

You're responsible for making sure your parked vehicle isn't a hazard to others.

Make sure to park in designated areas only. Check for signs prohibiting or limiting parking. Colored curb markings can indicate parking restrictions. You're responsible for making sure your parked vehicle isn't a hazard to others.

Do not park:

- In an intersection.
- On a crosswalk, sidewalk, or bicycle lane.
- Within 30 feet of a traffic signal, stop sign, or yield sign.
- Within 5 feet of a driveway, alley, or private road.
- Within 75 feet of a fire station driveway on the opposite side of the street.

- Within 20 feet of pedestrian safety zones.
- On railroad tracks.
- Within 50 feet of a railroad crossing.
- In a construction zone.
- Next to an already parked vehicle (double parking).
- On the shoulder of the freeway (unless you have an emergency).
- On a bridge, overpass, or in a tunnel or an underpass.
- Facing oncoming traffic.
- More than 12 inches from the curb.
- Wherever there is a sign that says you cannot park.
- Within 15 feet of a fire hydrant.

Signs or painted curbs might indicate other parking restrictions:

- White means that only short stops are permitted.
- Yellow or red indicates a loading zone or some other restriction.

Set your parking brake

Always set your parking brake, especially on a hill.

Check traffic before you open your door

- Check your rear and side-view mirror.
- Open the door with your hand that's farthest from the door. This is called the "Dutch Reach" method. It forces your body to turn, which allows you to see approaching bicyclists. It also prevents the vehicle door from being opened too quickly. This can protect bicyclists and prevent your door from being damaged by an approaching vehicle.

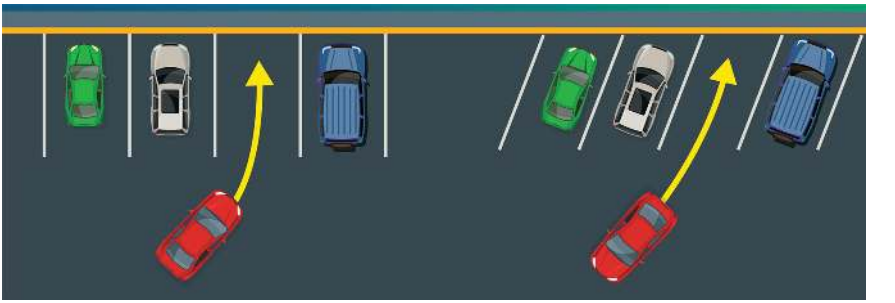
Never leave children or animals unattended in a parked vehicle.

Ensure adults, children, and animals properly exit the vehicle

- It's a crime to leave a child under the age of 16 unattended in a parked vehicle while the motor is running.
- It's a crime to leave a child under the age of 12 unattended in a parked vehicle.
- It's a crime to leave an animal unattended in a vehicle if the animal could be harmed or killed by exposure to excessive heat, cold, lack of ventilation, or lack of necessary water.
- If no one in the immediate area has access to the vehicle, law enforcement is authorized to immediately remove children or animals by any means reasonable to protect their health and safety. The officer, or the agency employing an officer, isn't responsible for damage to the vehicle if they need to remove children or animals for legal or safety reasons.

Take your keys and lock your door

Locking your door prevents theft and protects your vehicle against unwanted intruders.



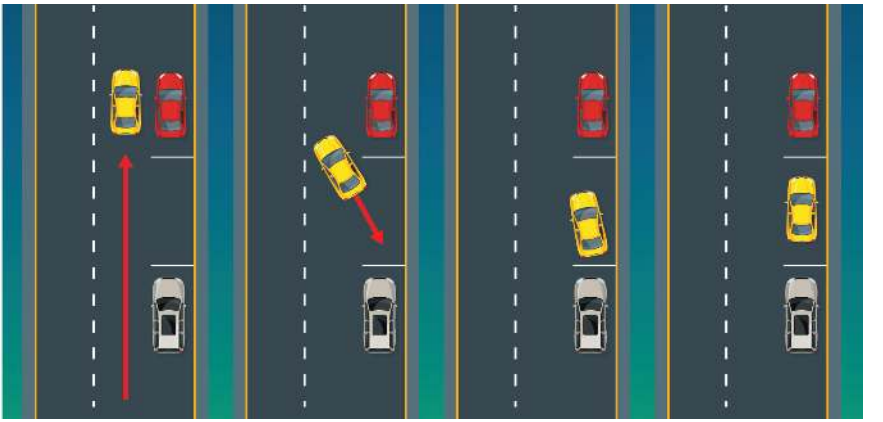
PERPENDICULAR AND ANGLED PARKING

Entering a perpendicular or angled parking space

1. Identify the space you want to park in, and check traffic.
2. Signal your intention to turn.
3. Move forward slowly, turning the steering wheel left or right as appropriate, until the vehicle reaches the middle of the space.
4. Center the vehicle between the painted lines.
5. Move to the front of the parking space, stop, and secure the vehicle.

Exiting a perpendicular or angled parking space

1. Check for traffic in all directions.
2. Continue to check traffic and move straight back until your bumper clears the vehicle parked beside you.
3. Turn the steering wheel sharply in the direction you want your vehicle to move.
4. Clear the parking space and stop. Move forward, accelerating smoothly and steering as needed to straighten the wheels.



PARALLEL PARKING

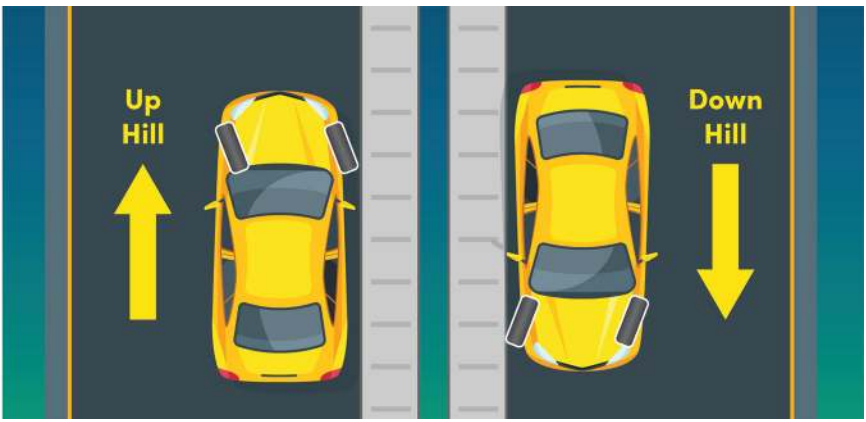
Entering a parallel parking space

1. Identify the space where you'll park, check traffic, and signal.
2. Reverse and look in the direction the vehicle will be moving.
3. Back slowly until your front bumper is in line with the rear bumper of the vehicle you're parking behind.
4. Turn your steering wheel sharply and back slowly into the space.
5. Turn the steering wheel rapidly to center the vehicle into the space.
6. Stop before touching the bumper of the vehicle behind you.
7. Move forward to adjust your vehicle in the parking space. Make sure your vehicle is no more than 12 inches from the curb.

Exiting a parallel parking space

1. Check traffic in all directions, place your foot on the brake, shift to reverse, and move backward as much as possible toward the vehicle behind you.

2. Check for traffic and signal.
3. Move forward slowly, steering into the lane.
4. Make sure the front bumper of your vehicle will clear the vehicle ahead; if not, reverse and adjust the steering wheel.
5. Move forward into the closest lane of traffic when your front door clears the rear bumper of the vehicle parked ahead of you.



PARKING ON A HILL

Always set your parking brake when you park on a hill
You need to make sure your vehicle doesn't roll into the road. Turning your wheels toward the edge of the road provides additional security in case your parking brake fails.

Facing up the hill
On hills with tall curbs, turn your steering wheel away from the curb until the back of your front tire touches the curb. If your vehicle starts to roll, it will roll backwards into the curb. On hills with lower or rounded curbs, turning your steering wheel toward the curb might be safer because your vehicle would roll away from the road if your parking brake failed.

Facing down the hill
Turn your steering wheel toward the curb until the front of your front tire touches the curb. If your vehicle starts to roll, it will roll forward into the curb.

If there is no curb
Turn your steering wheel and tires toward the edge of the road. This way, if your vehicle starts to roll, it will roll away from traffic.

RESERVED DISABLED PARKING



Some parking spots are reserved for vehicles with disabled parking plates or a disabled parking placard. The white stripes next to a reserved space, called an access aisle, must be kept clear. You can be fined for parking in stalls without displaying the required placard and/or for blocking the access aisle.

If you have a disability that limits or impairs your ability to walk, you may apply for temporary or permanent disabled parking privileges.

Do not hang the parking placard from your rearview mirror while you're driving because it will obstruct your view.

To apply, you and your physician must complete the **Disabled Parking Application for Individuals** form, available at dol.wa.gov.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION PARKING



It's illegal to park a vehicle in any electric vehicle charging station if the vehicle is not connected to the charging equipment.

4.19 | TRANSPORTING

TOWING

If you're towing anything, like a boat, trailer, or camper, you're responsible for following all manufacturers' agreements, state laws, and federal standards. You need to know and follow all guidelines regarding:

- Weight limits.
- Vehicle restrictions.
- Tow cables and taillight hookups.
- Service brakes.
- Licensing and documentation.

SECURE YOUR LOAD

Driving with an unsecured load is both against the law and extremely dangerous. Secure your load so loose items don't release into the air or slide, shift, or fall onto the road and cause a crash.

To secure the load in your vehicle or trailer:

- Tie everything down with rope, netting, or straps.
- Tie large objects directly to your vehicle or trailer.
- Pack your vehicle or trailer only with items you can safely and securely carry.

ANIMALS

- It's illegal for anyone to transport an animal outside a vehicle (such as the bed of a truck) without a protective harness or enclosure, so the animal can't jump or fall out.
- It's a misdemeanor to transport animals in a way that would pose a risk to the animal or public safety, according to Washington's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals laws. If you're taken into custody for any reason, an officer can take charge of any animal(s) in the vehicle. If your animal is in police custody, you'll need to pay a fee before you can collect the animal.
- It's illegal to engage in any activity that takes your focus off safely driving your vehicle. Animals that are loose in a vehicle or riding on the driver's lap are a potential distraction.

FERRIES

Washington State Ferries, sometimes referred to as the state's marine highway system, are part of Washington's highway network. As part of that network, all rules of the road apply.

As you approach the ferry terminal, you might see signs directing you into a designated ferry lane. Pull up behind other vehicles already in line. Ferry line-cutting is a traffic offense that can lead to a fine. If you're in a ferry holding lane in a residential area, please don't block residential driveways or intersections.

Bicyclists receive priority loading on most ferries and have a bicycle waiting area in front of motor vehicles. Bicyclists can proceed past vehicles waiting in the ferry holding lane. For more information about the Washington State Ferries system, or for fares and schedules, please visit wsdot.wa.gov and search for **ferries**.

BEACHES

Driving is allowed on ocean beaches only in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. The beach is considered a state highway, so all driving laws apply. The speed limit is 25 mph, and pedestrians and bicyclists have the right-of-way at all times.

You may enter the beach with your vehicle only through marked beach approaches and drive only on hard-packed sand. Watch for signs prohibiting beach driving in some areas and circumstances.


5
CHAPTER 5
RISKS
dol.wa.gov
WASHINGTON
HAZARDS
EVERGREEN STATE

5.0 | DANGERS OF DRIVING

You know there are serious risks and consequences to driving. You will make mistakes, and those around you will make mistakes. Even though risk is always present, driving safely can reduce crash potential.

Navigating risk involves being aware, predictable, smooth, and proficient behind the wheel. To drive well and without incidents, you need to intentionally develop and use safe driving habits as your default driving style.

Fatal crash common factors

- Speed
- Impairment
- Distractions
- Unrestrained occupants
- Inexperience*

*In Washington, vehicle crashes are a leading causes of death for people ages 16 to 25. This age group is more susceptible to fatal and serious injury crashes.

RISK AWARENESS

Risk awareness is your ability to identify present and potential hazards on the road. It helps you be aware of things that might require you to change your behavior to avoid a crash. Risk awareness includes being mindful of other road users, weather conditions, and potential distractions.

Risk awareness relies on understanding what is happening around you and what may happen next.

- Keep your head scanning continually. Stay aware of what's happening in front of you, beside you, and behind you. You can do this by using your peripheral vision and mirrors.

- Leave enough space in front of your vehicle to see what's happening on the road ahead.
- Check behind you after spotting a hazard that requires you to make a change. What's happening behind you can affect your decision-making

It's impossible to remove risk completely. However, you can learn how to avoid or minimize risks by identifying them and then adjusting your driving appropriately.

HAZARD PERCEPTION

Hazard perception is your ability to scan for potential risks on the road and to identify them before they become a problem. This skill is important for safe driving and helps prevent crashes. Hazard perception requires:

- Attentiveness.
- Quick decision-making.
- Ability to react appropriately to changing situations.

A hazard is anything that requires you to make a change. When you're behind the wheel, you should always be looking for hazards or responding to them.

A hazard might require you to change your speed or direction.

- A hazard can be an immediate danger, such as a child running out onto the road, or something less serious, such as a trash can in the road, coming up to a speed limit sign, or approaching the turn to your driveway.
- A hazard can be stationary or moving.
- There could be more than one hazard at the same time. It's your responsibility as a driver to determine which hazard requires the most urgent response.

Drive slower when approaching hazards to give yourself more space time to make safe decisions.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Situational awareness is observing what is happening all around you and predicting what you should prepare for next. You should do this constantly.

You need to know who might be affected by your actions and who needs to know your intentions. The drivers behind you could be the most affected by your decisions.

HAZARD MANAGEMENT

You will encounter an unlimited number of situations on the road. It would be difficult to predict or have a plan for each one. Instead, you should develop a reliable routine for responding to hazards that requires you to:

- **Plan.** Scan your environment to know what's happening around you. Be sure you also look in your rearview mirror to see what's happening behind you. Decide if the change you want to make is safe.
- **Communicate.** Let others know what you plan to do. Use your signals and make sure everyone is well aware of your intentions.
- **Check.** Prepare your vehicle position and speed so you have adequate space to make your change with no more than medium braking. Recheck your mirrors and look over your shoulder for pedestrians and bicyclists. Make sure no other drivers are trying to move into the same space.
- **Execute.** Make the change smoothly. Try not to surprise anyone. Be ready to change your plan if needed.
- **Evaluate.** Think about how it went. See if you need to adjust your routine for next time.

5.1 | SPEED

Even if you're in a hurry, the risks of speeding are not worth it. Speeding puts everyone on the road in danger. Follow the posted speed limit to protect yourself, the people who care about you, and the other individuals and families sharing the road with you.

Following the posted speed limit is about more than following the law. Even if you're in a hurry, the risks of speeding are not worth it. Speeding puts everyone on the road in danger. Prioritize safety and drive at a speed that allows you to maintain control and react to hazards.

EXCESSIVE SPEEDS

Driving over the speed limit could harm your car, other people, and you. Excessive speeds can:

- **Reduce the effectiveness of seat belts.** Seat belts are designed to protect you in a crash, but their effectiveness decreases at higher speeds.
- **Limit your ability to visually scan for hazards.** The faster you drive, the less time you have to scan the road ahead for potential dangers, like pedestrians, cyclists, or other vehicles.
- **Reduce vehicle and traction control.** High speeds can make it harder to control your vehicle, especially in adverse conditions like rain or snow. This can lead to skidding or losing control entirely.
- **Create longer stopping distances.** It takes longer to stop a vehicle at higher speeds. This increases the risk of a collision if you need to brake suddenly.
- **Give you less time to assess your path of travel and make necessary changes.** Speeding gives you less time to react to changes in the road, such as curves, intersections, or obstacles.

- **Increase the severity of injuries in the event of a crash.** The force of impact in a crash increases with speed, leading to more severe injuries or fatalities.

SPEED LIMITS

Speed limits indicate the maximum speed legal under ideal conditions. Washington law also requires you to drive at speeds that are safe for current road conditions. This means reducing your speed when conditions are poor. You can drive below the speed limit, but exceeding it is illegal.

You're responsible for always driving at a safe speed, regardless of the posted limit.

ADJUSTING SPEED FOR CONDITIONS

Speeding is a dangerous and unnecessary risk. Arriving late is better than not arriving at all. Reduce your speed in conditions like the following:

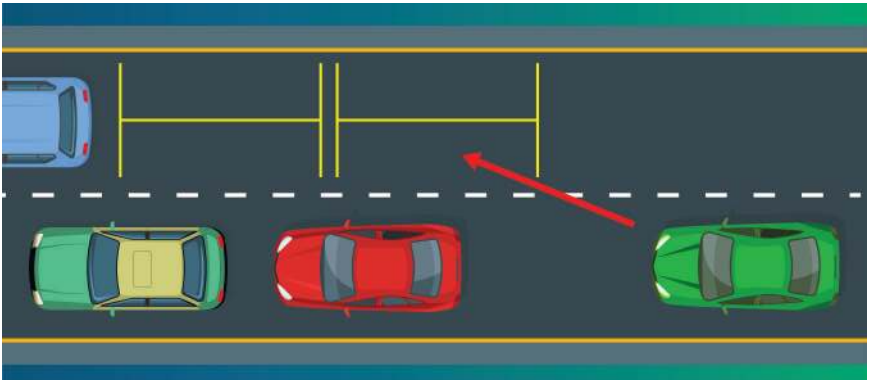
- Sharp curves or hills where visibility is limited
- Slippery roads due to rain, snow, or ice
- Areas with pedestrians, children, cyclists, or animals
- Shopping centers, parking lots, and areas with heavy foot traffic
- Heavy traffic congestion
- Narrow bridges and tunnels
- Residential areas

5.2 | SPACE

Judging space when you're driving is a valuable skill. It can take time and practice before you're proficient, which is why novice drivers are at a greater risk. You can judge space by distance or time, but you need to constantly evaluate your position on the road. Try to keep plenty of space around you as you drive.

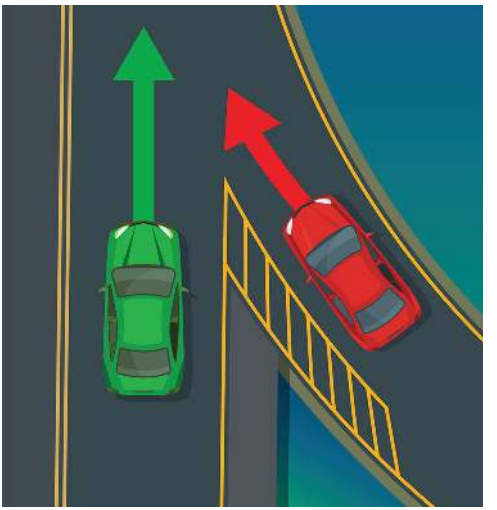
You can reduce your risk and give yourself time to determine an alternative path, if needed, by leaving enough space around your vehicle. It will provide additional room to take action should there be a problem in your path of travel.

When you're driving near other vehicles, it's important to leave a distance that's at least twice the length of your vehicle between you and the vehicle ahead. When merging, give yourself enough space so you safely apply your hazard management routine to **plan**, **communicate**, **check**, **execute**, and **evaluate**.



5.3 | MERGING

When you're merging, enter traffic with enough space so you don't cause the people around you to swerve, slow, or stop. Trying to merge into a space that is too small can be dangerous, especially if the driver in front needs to stop or slow down.



Drivers already on the interstate have the right-of-way, so creating space to merge might require you to adjust your speed, faster or slower. Use the entire on-ramp, your turn signal, and your mirrors to merge into a safe space on the interstate.

ZIPPER MERGING

When traffic is moving slowly or is stopped due to a lane closure, it's important to merge smoothly and efficiently. Zipper merging is a technique that:

- Improves traffic flow by 60 percent.
- Creates a predictable merging pattern, reducing the risk of collisions caused by sudden lane changes.
- Helps avoid the frustration of long lines and the temptation to cut in line.

How to zipper merge:

- **Stay in your lane.** Continue using both lanes until you reach the designated merge area.

- **Take turns.** Alternate merging with vehicles from the other lane, like the teeth of a zipper coming together.
- **Be courteous.** Allow one vehicle from the ending lane to merge in front of you, then merge into the open lane.
- **Maintain speed.** Continue merging at a steady pace, matching the speed of traffic in the open lane.

5.4 | TIME

To reduce risk, give yourself plenty of time to evaluate and move through traffic. You can use a technique, like eye-lead time, which allows you to scan the road ahead for potential hazards. Eye-lead time is an important part of defensive driving. It gives you time to see, analyze, and respond to hazards. Scan as far as you can see ahead and to the sides. Use your mirrors to scan behind. The earlier you identify a hazard, the more time you have to prepare for it and the more time those around you have to adjust to your changes. This is a proactive approach to driving. It's less risky than relying on your reactions to avoid danger.

COUNT SECONDS

Practice judging the space your vehicle will travel in a short amount of time using this simple exercise:

1. Pick out a marker, such as a road sign or utility pole, that you think is 15 seconds ahead of your vehicle.
2. Count until you reach the marker.

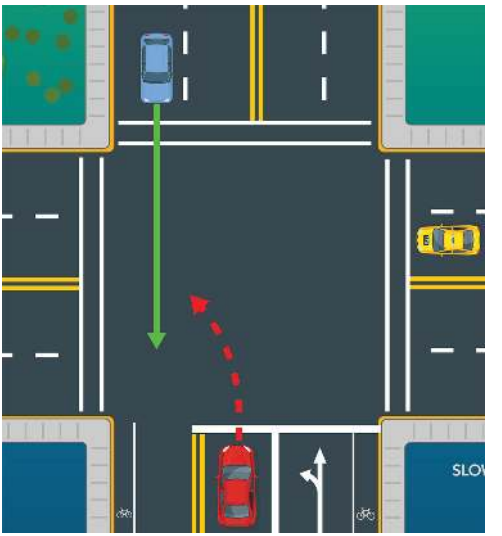
Guessing before you count helps you develop the ability to correctly estimate the distance your vehicle will travel in seconds. Your accuracy will improve as you continue to practice this method.

It is crucial to give yourself time to stop or maneuver around obstacles and in unpredictable traffic situations. With enough

time, you can evaluate and prioritize your decisions in traffic. This can help reduce panic and impulsive reactions.

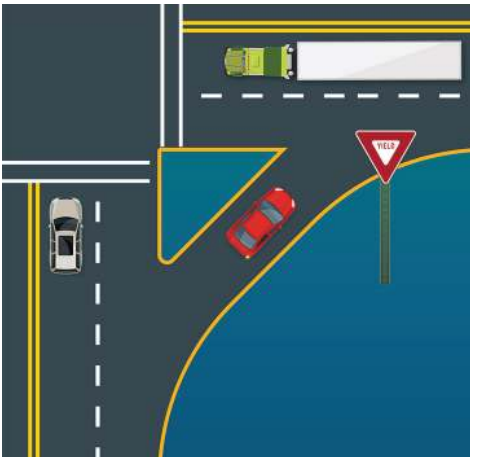
TURNING IN FRONT OF APPROACHING VEHICLES

You'll get better with experience, but it can be challenging to judge how much time you have to turn when facing oncoming traffic. It's better to give yourself too much time than not enough.



Remember approaching traffic has the right-of-way. You can watch oncoming vehicles pass a marker on the side of the road, like a tree, and count how many seconds it takes until they clear the road you want to turn onto.

You can use that time frame to estimate how long it will take the next vehicle to travel the same distance. Then you know when you have enough time to turn safely.



Turning into the flow of traffic requires something similar. You need time to complete your turn without impacting the flow of traffic you're entering. You need enough time to make the turn and reach the speed of oncoming traffic.

5.5 | FOCUS

Being mindful will help you prioritize safety and awareness on the road.

- **Be mentally present.** Commit to being fully engaged and focused on driving. Turn off distractions like your phone and in-car entertainment systems.
- **Be prepared.** Anticipate hazards by scanning the road ahead. Maintain awareness of your surroundings.
- **Be proactive.** Adjust your speed and driving behavior based on road conditions, weather, and traffic.

ATTENTION

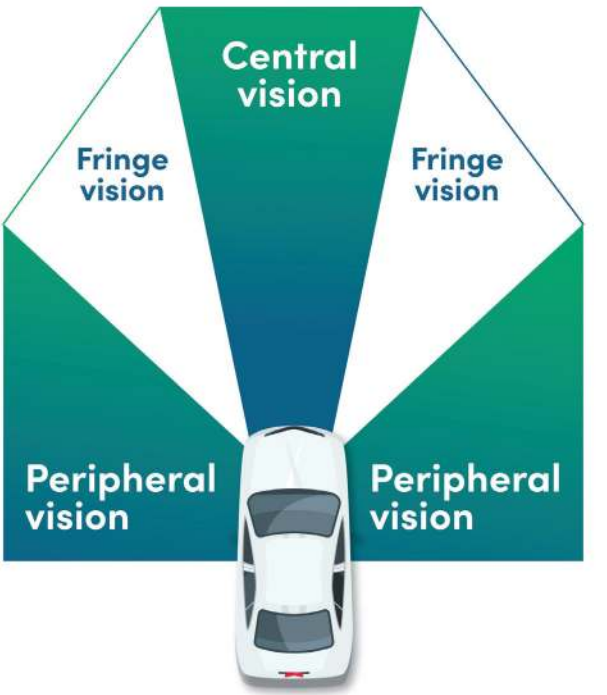
Your full attention is essential for safe driving. Your brain can only focus on one thing at a time. Choose to actively pay attention when you're behind the wheel. Align your mental attention and visual focus. Your attention is the most valuable asset on the road.

Eliminate internal and external distractions. Distractions, even for a few seconds, can have devastating consequences. By staying focused and avoiding distractions, you can significantly reduce your risk of being involved in a crash.

FIELD OF VISION

You'll use three types of vision while you're driving. Higher speeds reduce the quality of each type of vision.

1. **Central vision** allows you to see detail straight in front of you. It's the vision you're using to read these words.
2. **Fringe vision** is what you use to see the edges of the driver guide pages. You can see it, but it may not be very focused.
3. **Peripheral vision** is what you can see to the side of you without losing focus on the words. It could be the walls of the room you're in or someone walking past you.

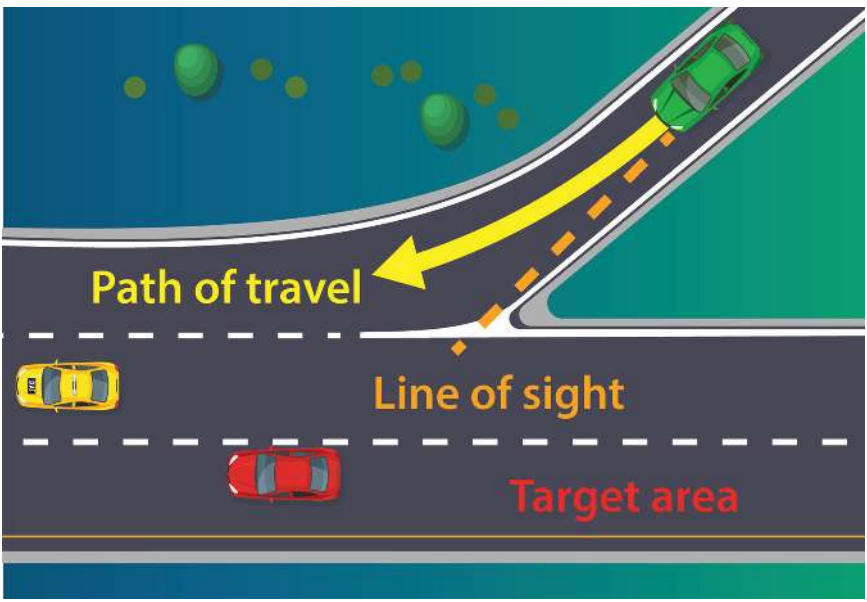


PATH OF TRAVEL

Your path of travel is the route or course you drive to get from one place to another.

You'll likely need to change your path at some point. You might need to adjust because of a hazard, weather conditions, or because you need to travel in a new direction. You'll need to visualize your new target area and intended path of travel.

A big part of driving is constantly shifting your visual focus and mental attention between where you are and where you want to be.



LINE OF SIGHT

Once you pick the area where you want to be, your line of sight is what's between you and that target. You will switch your visual and mental attention between your path of travel and line of sight quickly and repeatedly. Recognize you will to divide visual focus and mental attention among:

- Your path of travel
- Your line of sight
- Your intended target area
- Present and potential hazards
- Your vehicle (interior and exterior)
- Other road users
- Yourself

INFORMATION GATHERING

Intentional focus and active attention help you gather the information you need to make wise decisions behind the wheel. Scanning your path of travel and line of sight is a continuous process that can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when you're first learning to drive. Set yourself up for success by forming habits and routines involving constant vigilance and minimal distractions.

5.6 | ROAD AND DRIVING CONDITIONS

Part of driving means following speed limits and adjusting for road conditions. For example, you slow down before a sharp curve, when the roadway is slippery, or when there is water on the road to help you maintain control of your vehicle. Your hazard awareness, decision-making, and wise choices have a huge impact on how safely you travel in different conditions.

NIGHT DRIVING

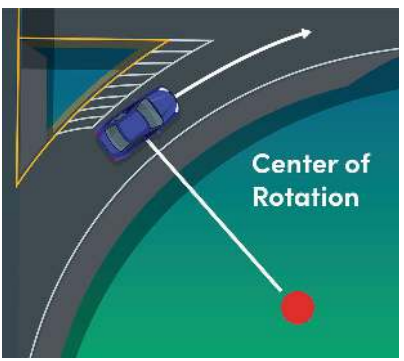
It's harder to see at night, and you should:

- Drive at a speed that will allow you to stop within the glow of your headlights (usually 400 feet).
- Use your high beams whenever there are no oncoming vehicles. Switch back to your regular headlights when there is approaching traffic.

- Use your regular headlights when following another vehicle.
- Avoid looking directly into oncoming headlights. Keep your eyes searching the road in front of your vehicle.
- Try to search beyond your headlight beams. Look for dark shapes or shadows on the roadway.
- Glance occasionally to the sides to find the edge of the pavement and to spot hazards that might come from the sides.
- Do not wear sunglasses or colored lenses when driving at night or on overcast days. Tinted or colored lenses reduce your vision.
- Increase your following distance for night driving conditions and driving on unfamiliar roadways at night.

If a vehicle comes toward you with its high beams on, look toward the right side of the road to keep from being distracted by the headlights.

CURVES



Driving around curves requires awareness of the road and control of your vehicle. Smooth steering and smart driving habits give you some control over your road position and balance. The laws of motion, which are out of your control, also impact road position and balance.

Approaching a curve

- **Watch your speed.** Reduce your speed before entering the curve. This helps maintain traction and prevents your vehicle from skidding or veering off the road. Uphill curves could require more acceleration, while downhill curves might require more braking.
- **Look ahead.** Scan the road ahead to anticipate the sharpness and length of the curve. This will help you determine the appropriate speed and steering adjustments.
- **Choose the best lane position.** Position your vehicle slightly to the outside of the lane as you approach the curve. This will give you more room to maneuver and improve your visibility around the curve.

In the curve

- **Maintain a steady speed.** Avoid braking or accelerating suddenly while in the curve. This can disrupt your vehicle's balance and lead to a loss of control.
- **Gentle steering.** Steer smoothly and gradually through the curve. Avoid oversteering or jerky movements, which can cause your vehicle to skid.
- **Be prepared to adjust.** Be ready to adjust your speed or steering based on road conditions, visibility, and the behavior of other drivers.

Exiting the curve

- **Accelerate gradually.** As you exit the curve, gently accelerate back to your desired speed. This will help you maintain stability and transition smoothly back into traveling straight.
- **Check your mirrors.** Scan your mirrors to ensure you have adequate space to merge or change lanes if needed.

Laws of motion

When driving on curved roads, it's important to understand the forces affecting your vehicle and adjust your driving to stay in control.

- **Roll and yaw.** Roll affects how much your vehicle tilts during a turn, yaw affects side-to-side movement, and both are important for maintaining control. Adjusting your speed and steering can help balance your roll and yaw while driving through curves.
- **Momentum.** When you're driving in a straight line, your vehicle has momentum in that direction. However, when you enter a curve, you need to change the direction and momentum of your vehicle.
- **Inertia.** In a curve, your vehicle will want to pull a little to keep you moving in a straight line. If you suddenly turn the steering wheel, inertia will try to keep the car moving straight. This is why you must carefully steer to smoothly make the turn.
- **Kinetic energy.** Higher speeds create more energy, requiring more time and space to stop or change direction. Slowing down for curves lowers your vehicle's kinetic energy and helps you make the turn without losing traction or control.
- **Friction.** Friction is the force between the tires and the road. It allows your vehicle to grip the surface. The more friction there is, the better your tires can grip the road. This helps you slow down, speed up, or turn safely. Slippery roads due to rain, snow, or ice can significantly reduce friction in curves. Slow down even more and avoid sudden movements in these conditions.

SLIPPERY ROADS



Washington weather can cause slippery roads. Rain, snow, and sleet create dangers on the roadway. When the road is slippery, you must adjust your driving for the conditions, which might require you to drive below the posted speed limit.

If it starts to rain on a hot day, the pavement can be very slippery for the first few minutes. Heat causes the oil in the asphalt to come to the surface. The road is slippery until the oil washes away.



Snowy roads will require a larger following distance and dramatically reduced speed.

- Use snow tires or chains when it's required.
- During winter months, you can improve traction by adding chains to your tires or changing to studded tires.

Avoid icy roads as much as possible. If you must drive on icy roads, slow down and leave extra space around your vehicle.

- On cold, wet days, shady spots can be icy.
- Overpasses and other types of bridges can have icy spots even when the rest of the road doesn't.
- When below-freezing temperatures warm up to near-freezing, ice can melt and become wet. This makes the road more slippery.
- *Black ice* refers to a thin coating of ice that is hard for drivers to see. Even if you don't see ice, pay attention when driving in temperatures near or below freezing. Many drivers crash when they lose control of their vehicles on black ice.

SKIDDING

Skids are caused when the tires can no longer grip the road. High speeds and slippery roads increase the possibility of skidding if you turn or stop suddenly. Because you cannot control a vehicle when it's skidding, it's best to avoid skidding in the first place.

If you're skidding, do the following:

1. **Take your foot off the accelerator.**
2. **Press or pump your brakes.** Antilock brakes will help control the rotation of the wheels to slow down faster. They will also allow you to continue steering the vehicle. If you don't have antilock brakes, quickly pressing the brake pedal down could cause you to skid more.

3. **Steer in the same direction your vehicle is moving.**
4. **Continue to correct your steering.** Adjust the wheel until your tires have regained traction and are going in the direction you're steering.
5. **Assess the situation.** After getting control, consider the road conditions and adjust your driving behavior as needed.

HYDROPLANING

Hydroplaning happens when water builds up between your tires and the road surface. This causes the tires to lose traction and skid. The vehicle can feel like it's floating or sliding, making it hard for you to keep control. The best way to keep from hydroplaning is to slow down when the road is wet.

If you hydroplane, it is important to do the following:

1. **Take your foot off the accelerator.**
2. **Gently press the brakes.** Antilock brakes will help the vehicle regain contact with the road. If you don't have antilock brakes, forcefully pressing the brake pedal could cause you to hydroplane more.
3. **Keep the steering wheel steady.** Avoid overcorrecting or jerking the steering wheel.
4. **Look where you want to go.** Maintain your focus on the road while you calmly wait for your tires to regain traction.
5. **Assess the situation.** After getting control, consider the road conditions and adjust your driving behavior as needed.

5.7 | VEHICLE FAILURES

If you have vehicle troubles on the road, remember these tips:

- Get your vehicle off the road and away from traffic, if possible.
- Stop where other drivers have a clear view of your vehicle, especially if you can't get your vehicle off the road. Avoid stopping just over a hill or around a curve.
- Turn on your emergency flashers and headlights.
- Warn other road users by placing emergency flares 200 to 300 feet behind the vehicle.
- Stand somewhere safe, and wave traffic around your vehicle if you don't have emergency flares or another warning device.
- Lift the hood or tie a white cloth to the antenna, side mirror, or door handle to signal an emergency.

TIRES

If a tire blows out or suddenly goes flat:

- Grip the steering wheel firmly and keep the vehicle going straight.
- Slow down gradually. Take your foot off the accelerator.
- Do not brake. Allow the vehicle to slow by itself, or brake gently if necessary.
- Pull off the road in a safe place, if possible, and turn on emergency flashers. If you can't get to a safe place to change your tire, turn on your hazard warning lights, stay in your vehicle, and call for help.
- Have the tire repaired or replaced.

POWER

If the engine shuts off while you are driving:

- Keep a strong grip on the steering wheel. Be aware that the steering wheel might be difficult to turn, but you can turn it.
- Look for an escape path. Don't brake hard. Instead, brake with steady pressure on the pedal, slow down, and then pull off the roadway.
- Stop and try to restart the engine. If unsuccessful, raise the hood and turn on your hazard warning lights. Call for help.

HEADLIGHT

If your headlights suddenly go out:

- Put on your hazard warning lights, turn signals, or fog lights, if you have them.
- Pull off the road as soon as possible.

ACCELERATOR

If the vehicle keeps going faster and faster:

- Keep your eyes on the road.
- Quickly shift to neutral.
- Pull off the road when safe to do so.
- Turn off the engine.

5.8 | COMMUNICATING RISKS

Risk is everywhere: in city and country communities, on highways, back roads, in parking lots and driveways. Keep yourself informed of all present and potential risks. There might be times when you'll need to communicate to others that a risk is present. Thoughtful use of your lights, horn, and hand signals can vary depending on the situation —but can be effective ways to communicate with other road users.



5.9 | COLLISIONS

All drivers eventually will find themselves in an emergency situation. As careful as you are, there are situations that could cause problems for you. All drivers have the responsibility to prevent crashes. Sometimes this will require you to use evasive maneuvers, but a basic understanding of the laws of physics can also help you avoid crashing. No matter how well you drive, you can still become involved in a collision.

Collisions typically have three causes:

1. Too much speed
2. Too little space
3. Insufficient situational awareness.

CRASHING A VEHICLE

- Do not drive away. If anyone is injured or killed, call 911. Law enforcement must be notified.
- Move the vehicle to the side of the road, but near the collision site, as soon as possible.
- Don't stand or walk in traffic lanes. You could be struck by another vehicle.

- Use flares or other warning devices to alert other drivers of the collision.
- Turn off wrecked vehicles.
- Don't smoke around wrecked vehicles. Fuel could have spilled, and fire is a real danger.
- If the collision involves a parked vehicle, you must try to locate the owner. If you cannot, leave a note in a place where they can easily see it. Include the date and time of collision and your contact information.

REPORTING A CRASH

After a collision, gather information that will help you report the incident.

- Collect information from others involved. You should also share your information. You'll need to exchange:
  - Name, contact information, and driver license number
  - Insurance company and policy number
- Take photos or videos of any damage to the vehicles.
- Provide information to the police or other emergency officials if requested.
- File a collision report form, within 4 days of a crash, if a law enforcement officer doesn't do this for you. The form is required by state law. Go to dol.wa.gov and search **collision report form**.

REPORTING AN INJURY

Injuries can add more stress after a crash. Do your best to stay calm, assess yourself, and then help others.

- Call 911.
- Do not move injured people unless they're in a burning vehicle or otherwise in immediate danger.

- Help anyone who isn't already walking and talking. Check for breathing, then check for bleeding.
- Follow these steps if you see bleeding:
  - Apply pressure with hands.
  - Apply bandage/dressing.
  - Apply a tourniquet.
- Do not give injured people anything to drink — not even water.
- Cover injured people with a blanket or coat to keep them warm and to help prevent them from going into shock.

CALLING 911

It's important to call 911 in the event of a car crash to get emergency help. Remember to:

1. **Stay calm.** Try to remain calm and composed. This will help you give clear and accurate information to the dispatcher.
2. **Assess the situation.** Quickly assess how serious the crash is and any injuries to you or others.

When talking to a 911 dispatcher, you should:

1. **Provide location.** Clearly state your location to the dispatcher, including any close landmarks or mile markers. If you aren't sure about your location, try to provide as much detail as possible to help emergency responders find you.
2. **Describe the situation.** Give a brief description of the crash, including the number of vehicles involved, the damage, and any injuries.
3. **Follow dispatcher instructions.** The dispatcher might ask questions to assess the situation and provide instructions.

4. **Provide details.** Be prepared to give more details if needed. These details could include the vehicle types, license plate numbers, and any hazards.
5. **Stay on the phone.** Stay on the phone with the dispatcher until help arrives.

ENCOUNTERING POWER LINES

If a power line comes in contact with your vehicle, do not get out of the vehicle.

If a collision involves power lines, you need to take special precautions. Turn off your engine, call 911, and stay inside your vehicle until emergency responders arrive. You never know how, when, or if a power line is charged, but assume they're all energized.

If you accidentally drive over a power line, stop immediately. Moving forward or reversing puts you at risk of being electrocuted. Call 911 and stay inside your vehicle until you are told it's safe to exit.

If power lines fall on your vehicle, or if you hit a transformer box, stay in your vehicle and call 911. The ground around your vehicle could also be energized. When possible, encourage people to stay at least 35 feet away.

If your vehicle comes in contact with power lines and a fire starts, you want to evacuate the vehicle. It's very important that you jump clear of the vehicle. Open your door, and perch on the ledge of the doorway. Jump away from your vehicle, with your arms at your sides. Be careful not to touch the vehicle. Make sure both feet land together. To avoid electric shock, shuffle 35 feet away to safety. Do not go back inside the vehicle for any belongings until advised that it's safe to do so.

WITNESSING A CRASH

- Do not block emergency responders.
- Follow directions given by police, firefighters, and other persons authorized to direct traffic at the scene.
- Keep emergency responders and people involved at the collision scene safe by focusing on your driving as you pass. Slowing down to stare at the scene creates traffic congestion.

EMERGENCY KIT

It's a good idea to keep an emergency kit in your vehicle. Here are some items you might want to have in an emergency:

- ☐ **First aid kit**
- ☐ **Flashlight**
- ☐ **Blanket**
- ☐ **Water**
- ☐ **Jumper cables**
- ☐ **Tool kit or multipurpose utility tool**
- ☐ **Backup phone charger or power source**
- ☐ **Spare tire, wheel wrench, jack**
- ☐ **Reflective triangles or flares**

It's a good idea to keep a paper copy of important numbers (family members, insurance providers). The paper copy will be helpful if your phone battery dies and you need to call from a different phone.

5.10 | LAW ENFORCEMENT

Washington roads are managed by police and state agencies. Throughout your travels, you might encounter state, county, or local law enforcement, as well as emergency responders.



GETTING PULLED OVER

Police vehicles attempting to stop drivers will do so by turning on flashing lights and/or a siren. If a law enforcement officer pulls you over, remember to:



1. Use your turn signal and pull to the right side of the road as soon as it's safe.
2. Turn off the engine and any audio devices, like radios.
3. Stay in your vehicle unless directed by the officer to get out.



4. Turn on your interior lights if you're pulled over at night. Officers might use a spotlight for additional visibility.



5. Keep your hands on the steering wheel.



6. Follow all instructions the officer gives you or your passengers.

The officer could approach either side of the vehicle. When the officer approaches the vehicle, remember to:

1. Lower the corresponding window so you and the officer can communicate.
2. Let the officer know right away if you have a weapon in the vehicle.
3. Wait for the officer's instructions before reaching for your driver license or vehicle documents.

If you're pulled over, an officer will typically:

- Explain why you were stopped.
- Ask for your:
  - Driver license
  - Proof of insurance
  - Vehicle registration

Tell the officer where these documents are located before reaching for them.

- Explain what action they're taking (issuing a warning or ticket, or making an arrest). If the officer doesn't explain the action they're taking, you can ask them to do so.

You are allowed to respectfully ask the officer questions. If you disagree with the officer's decision or course of action, do not prolong the contact by arguing with the officer. You may seek to contest the decision in court.

If you believe the officer acted inappropriately or have questions regarding their conduct, you can call or contact the officer's agency and request a supervisor. This is best done as soon as possible after getting pulled over.

GETTING A TICKET

If you get a ticket, you are required to sign for it. Your acceptance and signature isn't an admission of guilt. However, refusing to sign a traffic ticket could result in your arrest.

You need to follow the instructions on the back of the ticket within 15 days to avoid having your driving privileges suspended. Driving with a suspended license could result in losing your vehicle and/or getting arrested.

CONCLUSION

Washington roads connect every community throughout our state. We use them to commute to work, deliver goods, and explore the beauty of the Pacific Northwest.

Remember smart driving habits are the foundation of a safe and enjoyable driving experience.

Good drivers are:

- **Alert.** Always aware of their surroundings and potential hazards.
- **Buckled.** Properly restrained with seat belts for every trip.
- **Calm.** Avoiding aggressive behavior and managing emotions behind the wheel.
- **Focused.** Eliminating distractions and concentrating on driving.
- **Sober.** Never driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Experience will build confidence; however, be careful to avoid complacency. Driving requires continuous learning and adaptation as laws, vehicles, and driving conditions change.

Welcome to Washington's shared driving community. Let's work together to keep the roads safe for everyone.

GLOSSARY

Anti-lock Braking System (ABS): Vehicle safety feature that helps you maintain control and stop safely.

Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS): Vehicle safety technology that intervenes, warns, or assists drivers.

Aggressive driving: Driving behavior that is angry, risky, or impatient, like speeding or tailgating.

Agricultural permit: Permission for a person under the age of 18 to drive tractors and other vehicles used in farming.

Angle parking: Parking a car diagonally to the curb instead of parallel.

At-fault collision: When a crash happens, and it's determined that one driver is mostly responsible for causing it.

Backing: Driving a vehicle in reverse.

Balanced weight: Even distribution of weight in a vehicle to maintain stability.

Blind area, spot, or zone: Areas around a vehicle where the driver's view is obstructed, and they cannot see other vehicles.

Booster seat: A special seat designed for children who have outgrown their car seats but are still too small to properly fit in a regular seatbelt.

Brake failure: When the brakes of a vehicle stop working properly.

Brake lights: The red lights on the back of a vehicle that turn on when the driver presses the brake pedal, signaling to other drivers that the vehicle is slowing down or stopping.

Carpool: When 2 or more people are in a vehicle while it's moving.

Certificate of ownership: A document showing who owns the vehicle or vessel.

Child safety seat or child restraint: A special seat for children in a vehicle to keep them safe in case of a crash.

Collision or crash: When two or more vehicles or objects collide with each other.

Complex intersections: Intersections with multiple lanes or unusual traffic patterns.

Crash involvement: Being part of a collision or crash.

Cruise or speed control: A system in a car that maintains a set speed without the driver needing to press the accelerator pedal.

Distracted driving: Anything that takes your focus away from driving, like your phone or multitasking behind the wheel.

Driver licensing office: Location that provides customer services related to licensing.

Department of Licensing (DOL): State agency issuing driver licenses, ID cards, license plates, and vehicle and boat registrations.

Driving record: A record of a person's driving history, including any violations or collisions.

Driving under the influence (DUI): Operating a vehicle while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Fatigue: Feeling very tired.

Financial responsibility: Being held responsible for paying for something if damage occurs.

Forward-facing seat: A type of car seat that is positioned to face the front of the vehicle, suitable for children who have outgrown rear-facing seats.

Hand-to-hand steering: Technique of moving hands around the steering wheel without crossing them.

Hazard lights: Indicator lights on the front and back of a car showing other drivers and pedestrians to use caution when near the vehicle.

Hazard perception: The ability to recognize and respond to potential dangers while driving.

High occupancy vehicle (HOV): Lane reserved for carpooling vehicles with 2 or more people inside.

Headlights: The lights on the front of a vehicle that illuminate the road ahead, allowing the driver to see and be seen in low-light conditions or at night.

Hydroplaning: When a vehicle loses traction on a wet road and skids.

Identification (ID): Document with personal information such as your name, date of birth, or photograph.

Identity: Who a person is, including their name, date of birth, and other personal information.

Impaired driving: Operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances that affect judgment and coordination.

Implied consent law: Laws that require drivers to submit to certain tests, like breathalyzer tests, if suspected of driving under the influence.

Interchange: Place where 2 or more roads connect.

Joining traffic: Merging into moving traffic.

Juvenile: A person who is not yet considered an adult by law, typically under the age of 18.

Knowledge exam: An assessment that evaluates a person's understanding of driving rules, signs, and other important information needed to drive safely.

Lane change: Moving from one lane to another.

License Express: An online service where you can renew your driver's license, vehicle tabs, business license, or report when you sell a vehicle. You can find License Express here at secure.dol.wa.gov.

License plate: A metal or plastic plate with numbers and letters on it, attached to the front and back of a vehicle, used to identify the vehicle to law enforcement and others.

Moving violation: a ticket issued if a law is broken while the vehicle is moving.

Non-resident: Someone who doesn't permanently live in a particular place, like a city or state.

Occupant protection systems: Safety features in vehicles, like airbags and seat belts.

One-hand steering: Steering with one hand.

Open container law: A law that prohibits drivers and passengers from having open containers of alcoholic beverages in a vehicle, to prevent drinking and driving.

Organ donor: Someone who has agreed to donate their organs after they die to help save the lives of others in need of transplants.

Parallel parking: Parking between two vehicles along the curb.

Parent or guardian: A legal adult in charge of caring for a minor.

Pass or passing: Going past another vehicle.

Pedestrian: A person walking on or near the road.

Peripheral vision: Seeing objects to the side while looking straight ahead.

Perpendicular parking: Parking at a right angle to the curb.

Pedestrian safety zone: An area where drivers can't go to ensure people have a safe space away from traffic.

Pitch of vehicle: The angle of a vehicle's front or back.

Polydrug use: Consuming or using more than 1 kind of drug at the same time.

Proactive: Responding to a situation you anticipate.

Reactive: Responding to a situation you see.

Reference points: Lines on the road or objects near your vehicle that help you know your location on the road.

Right-of-way: The legal right to proceed first in traffic; for example, the first vehicle to stop at an intersection has the right-of-way.

Risk: Chance of something bad happening.

Roll of vehicle: Side-to-side movement of a vehicle.

Roundabout: A circular barrier that controls traffic at an intersection, also known as a traffic circle.

Selective Service registration: signing up for this makes a person assigned male at birth between ages 18 and 25 eligible to be drafted in the military in case of a national emergency.

Signaling: Using turn signals to indicate intentions to other drivers.

Situational awareness: Your ability to be fully aware of your surroundings while you're driving that helps you make safe driving decisions.

Skid: Loss of traction causing a vehicle to slide out of control.

Skills exam: An assessment that determines a person's ability to perform practical driving tasks, such as parking and maneuvering.

Speed limits: Maximum legal speeds allowed on roads.

Standard sign colors: Colors used for traffic signs to convey specific meanings.

Stop sign: A sign indicating drivers must come to a complete stop.

Stopping distance: The distance traveled from the moment a driver applies the brakes until the vehicle comes to a stop.

Stopping position: The place where a vehicle comes to a stop.

Studded Tires: Winter tires with metal pieces, called studs, that can be used for driving in frozen conditions.

Tailgating: Following the vehicle in front of you too closely.

Tire blowout: Sudden loss of air pressure in a tire while driving.

Tourniquet: Tight wrapping that helps control bleeding.

Traction loss: Reduced grip between tires and the road.

Traction: The grip between tires and the road surface.

Traditional intersection: A standard intersection where roads meet at right angles.

Traffic control devices: Signs, signals, and markings used to regulate traffic.

Traffic flow: How vehicles move on roads.

Traffic laws: Rules that govern how vehicles must operate on roads.

Traffic sign shapes: Different shapes of signs that have specific meanings.

Traffic signal: A light that controls traffic flow at intersections.

Traffic volume: The amount of traffic on a road.

Traffic: Vehicles moving on roads.

Trip or route planning: Planning the route for a journey.

Turn signals: The blinking lights on the front and back of a vehicle that indicate the driver's intention to turn left or right, or to change lanes.

Turn: Changing direction while driving.

Twin registry: A list of twins' names and some information about them, often used for research.

Uncontrolled intersection: An intersection without traffic signals or signs.

Understeer: When a vehicle doesn't turn as much as the driver intends.

Vehicle insurance: Coverage that helps pay for damage or injuries from crashes.

Vehicle maneuvers: Actions performed while driving, like turning or stopping.

Vehicle registration: Official documentation proving ownership of a vehicle.

Visibility: How well you can see surrounding objects.

Vision screening: A test to check how well you can see and if your eyes are healthy.

Visual search: Deliberately looking for current or potential hazards.

Visitor: Someone who is in a place for a brief or limited amount of time.

Voter registration: document showing when a resident has signed up to be able to vote in local and national elections.

Vehicle licensing office: Where you go for vehicle certificates, tabs, and registration help.

Vehicle Safety Technology (VST): Vehicle features that use sensors or cameras to intervene, warn, or assist you in driving safely.

Weather conditions: What the weather is like.

Yaw: The side-to-side movement of a vehicle.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

DOL will provide reasonable accommodations upon request to those customers who need them to access our facilities and services.

- If you require an accommodation to access our programs, facilities, or services, call 360-902-3900 or staff in our community-based licensing offices can assist you. If you are unable to get an accommodation or have an ADA complaint, contact our ADA Compliance Manager at ada@dol.wa.gov.
- If you need assistance in a language other than English, contact our Language Access team at languageaccess@dol.wa.gov.
- If you believe you've been discriminated against in receiving services from DOL, based on your protected group as indicated in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, please reach out to our Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator at CivilRtsCoord@dol.wa.gov.

DISCLAIMER

The Washington State Driver Guide is not a legal authority and is not intended for use in court. The guide cannot be used as a basis for legal claims or actions. Traffic regulations in cities, towns, and countries may go beyond state laws, but cannot conflict with them. If you are interested in specific laws relating to motor vehicle operation and driver licensing, refer to Title 46 RCW, Motor Vehicles.

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