

Best Practice Guide

Highway Driving



Drive The Right Way For The Highway

Highways are very different to most other roads and require different skills from a driver.

Highways are generally much faster than inner city and country roads and because of this there is less time to react to hazards.

It is crucial to be on high alert when driving on highways as mistakes can have very serious consequences due to the fast speeds involved.

Watch Your Speed

Always drive at a safe speed. Never exceed the speed limit and always adapt your speed where necessary to suit the conditions. If possible, try to maintain a steady speed as slowing down and speeding up for no reason can be confusing to other drivers and can cause 'phantom traffic jams', where traffic comes to a halt for no reason.

Keep A Safe Distance

Rear-end collisions caused by drivers failing to keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front are the most common crashes on highways.

Always follow the two second rule:

- Watch for the vehicle in front passing a stationary roadside object.
- Begin saying, 'Only a fool breaks the two-second rule'.
- If you reach the object before you finish speaking, you are too close.

Look Up

Read the road ahead for clues. To do this, look for vehicles using their:

- Brake lights - which indicate they will be slowing down.
- Indicators - which indicate they will be changing lanes.
- Hazard lights - which warn they may be stopping suddenly or there may be an incident ahead.

Also look for warning signs which can alert you to hazards such as lane closures, collisions and debris in the road.

Don't Be A Lane Hog

Lane discipline is about using the correct lane to help traffic flow safely.

You should:

- Use the inside lane when the road ahead is clear.
- Only move into the middle or outside lane when overtaking slower moving vehicles.
- Return to the inside lane as soon as you are safely past.

Watch For Tiredness

Driving on highways can be monotonous and can cause some drivers to temporarily 'switch off'.

To help avoid sleepiness while driving:

- Never drive when you are feeling tired.
- Avoid driving when you feel unwell, especially if you are taking any medication which could cause drowsiness.
- Take a 15-minute break at least every two hours.
- If you begin to feel tired pull off the highway at the next opportunity. If it is safe to do so get out of your vehicle for some fresh air or take a nap if you feel that you need one.



Master The Art Of Merging

Sideswiping incidents are common when drivers make mistakes while merging.

When entering a highway from an acceleration lane:

- Identify a safe gap in traffic.
- Check mirrors and signal early so other drivers know your intentions.
- Increase your speed if possible to match that on the highway.
- Glance over your shoulder to check blind spots.
- Remain in the acceleration lane until it is safe to move onto the highway without causing other drivers to move or slow down.
- If you are struggling to locate a gap in traffic you must stop until it is safe to move over. Never force your way onto the highway as many crashes are caused in this way.

Be Cautious In A Breakdown

If your vehicle develops a problem you should move over to the hard shoulder at the earliest and safest opportunity:

- Try to position your vehicle as far away from the highway as possible.
- Exit through the passenger side to avoid stepping near to traffic.
- Keep passengers and pets away from the highway.
- Never attempt any repairs at the roadside. Many people are killed in this way.
- If you need to call for help either use a mobile phone or use an emergency telephone. If you need to walk to a telephone, always walk as far away from the road as possible.
- Never cross the carriageway.
- Wait for help well away from your vehicle.

Plan Your Exit

It is important to think ahead when planning to leave a highway.

Always:

- Look well ahead for signs marking your exit.
- Get in the right lane in plenty of time.
- Adjust your speed according to the conditions.

Pass With Care

You may only overtake other vehicles by using the central or outside lane. You must never undertake a vehicle.

When planning to pass another vehicle:

- Check your mirrors.
- Assess how fast any upcoming vehicles are approaching.
- Make sure there is plenty of space in the lane you intend to join.
- Check blind spots.
- Re-check mirrors.
- Signal your intentions in plenty of time and move out.
- Pass the vehicle(s) you intended to overtake.
- Check mirrors.
- Move back to the inside lane as soon as it is safe to do so.

- H** Hazard lights warn that vehicles may be stopping suddenly.
- I** It is vital to keep your distance.
- G** Give plenty of warning when merging or changing lanes.
- H** Help to avoid sleepiness by taking regular breaks.
- W** Watch your speed.
- A** Always plan your exit in advance.
- Y** You should look for clues up ahead.
- S** Stick to the inside lane unless overtaking.

WARNING

Avoid driving alongside other vehicles on the motorway for longer than necessary, especially large vehicles like trucks or coaches.

The larger a vehicle is the larger its blind spot and the longer you are in the blind spot the more chance there is of the vehicle changing lanes without seeing you.