

Trip Planning Best Practice Guide

Introduction

A good way to reduce collision risk and decrease stress before a trip is to plan your trip. Although alternate forms of transportation, such as walking, cycling, and ridesharing, can decrease your carbon footprint and eliminate the stress caused by driving, sometimes driving is the most appropriate way to reach your destination, especially if you know how to best prepare for a trip.

Before your drive, adjust your mindset and remember your defensive driving best practices. Know that you will need to scan the road ahead and aim for slow, smooth, and steady maneuvers. Establish a following distance of at least two to three seconds, or more if traction or visibility is reduced, and never exceed the speed limit. Eliminate distractions and always expect the unexpected.



Tips for Planning Your Trip

Plan Your Route

- Choose eco-friendly routes that allow you to travel at energy-efficient speeds. Avoid peak travel times and roadworks, if possible. Set your GPS before you drive and secure your phone in a charging cradle.
- Schedule rest stops. To avoid fatigue, take a 15-minute break for every two hours of driving or sooner if you begin to feel tired. Locate places to stop for meals and pack plenty of snacks and water.
- Identify service stations along your route. If you are driving an electric vehicle (EV), familiarize yourself with your EV's charger and remember to bring a charging adapter if necessary.
- Reduce weight and wind drag to improve your vehicle's range. Remove unnecessary items, such as empty roof racks and unused items from your trunk, before you leave.
- Check weather and road conditions in advance of your trip.
- Keep in touch with loved ones and your employer (if you are driving for work), updating your estimated time of arrival when you take breaks, especially if you encounter additional hazards, such as inclement weather, traffic, or roadworks.



Check Your Vehicle

Before your trip, check your vehicle for any potential issues. Take care of maintenance and repairs in advance.

- **Tires** – Check pressure, wear, tread, alignment, and look for signs of damage or bulging on the sidewalls.
- **Lights** – Test headlights, indicators, hazard lights, brake lights, and fog lights.
- **Fluids** – Check your oil level and refill the wiper fluid if needed.
- **Battery** – Test the charge, especially as temperatures change during the year.
- **Windows and mirrors** – Clean and check for any chips or cracks that could impair your visibility or weaken the windshield.
- **Body** – Check for damaged and loose panels.



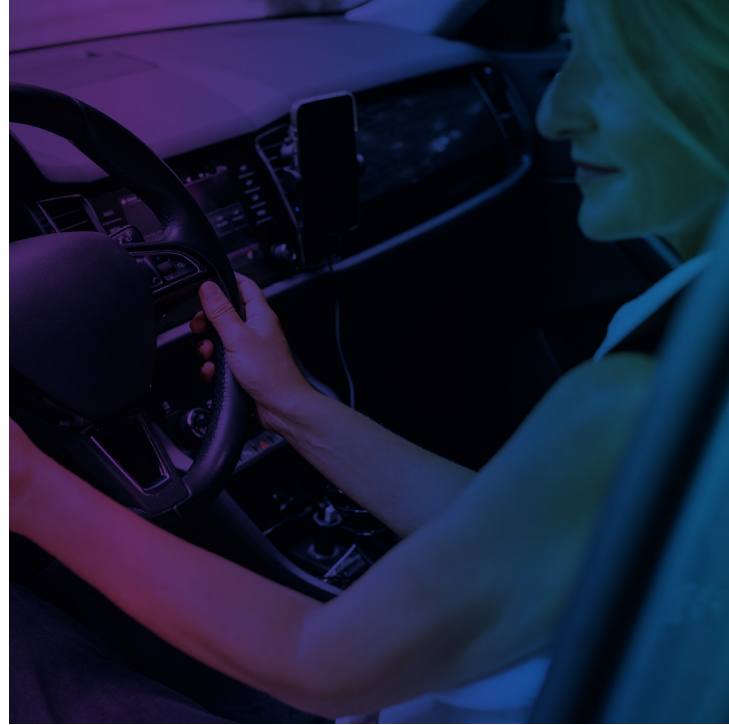
Also, update your emergency kit so it has the following:

- First aid kit
- Basic tool kit
- Jumper cables
- Flares or hazard triangles
- Emergency vest
- Flashlight
- Blankets
- Shovel
- Phone charger
- Nonperishable food and water

Tips for Your Drive

Defensive Driving Principles

- Always drive at a safe speed for conditions. Remember, the speed limit is the maximum speed in ideal conditions, so reduce your speed if you encounter weather or road conditions that increase collision risk, and never use the excuse of running late to justify speeding, tailgating, or driving aggressively.
- Adjust your mindset so that you prioritize safe driving. Remember to establish a following distance of two to three seconds in ideal conditions and increase that distance if visibility or traction is reduced. Focus on smooth maneuvers, check your mirrors and blind spots often, and signal your intentions before you act.
- Familiarize yourself with your vehicle and its controls before your trip. Locate the fuel door or charging flap release, the light controls, and cruise control. Test the brakes before you leave and know how features such as traction control and eco-mode affect performance.
- Always avoid distractions while driving. Use a phone charging cradle or place your phone in a secure location, and wait until you are stopped in a safe place before responding to calls or messages. You can also use your phone's Do Not Disturb function or set a voicemail message to let callers know that you will respond after you have reached your destination.
- Eliminate fatigue by making sure you are well rested before your trip. Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night and avoid driving at times when you would ordinarily be asleep, such as between midnight (00:00) and six in the morning (06:00), if possible.
- If you are traveling with others, divide driving duties to reduce fatigue. Switch drivers every two hours or more often if you feel tired. If you both feel tired, pull over and rest. Also, check with your insurance company to make sure each driver is covered in case a collision or other emergency occurs.
- Build in alternative rest stops if you encounter traffic, hazards, or extreme weather. Remain flexible so you are better able to respond to the unexpected. For safety reasons, it might be best to vary your stops instead of always stopping at the same location.
- If traction, visibility, distractions, or fatigue make it dangerous to drive, pull over to a safe place and wait until conditions improve or until you can focus again.



Weather and Road Conditions

- If you expect inclement weather, adjust your departure time or reschedule your trip, if possible. If you must drive, plan extra rest stops or alternate routes to reduce your collision risk.
- Rain, snow, ice, and fog can make driving dangerous by reducing traction and visibility. Reduce your speed and increase your following distance. Use slow, smooth, and steady maneuvers to reduce your skidding risk. Never drive over flooded roads and expect bridges and exposed areas to freeze first in cold weather.
- Extreme temperature can affect your vehicle's performance. Stress from hot or cold weather can make it harder for batteries to work properly. Cold weather slows down chemical reactions in the vehicle's battery, which can result in longer charging times for EVs. Park in enclosed or covered spaces, if possible, to shield the vehicle from the elements.
- Night driving can be dangerous due to low visibility and fatigue. If possible, avoid traveling overnight between midnight (00:00) and six in the morning (06:00). Keep a pair of sunglasses in your vehicle to reduce glare when the sun is low on the horizon.
- Avoid routes with traffic congestion and roadworks. Additional hazards on your route can increase stress and your collision risk. If possible, avoid peak travel times and choose routes that allow you to maintain a consistent speed to maximize range.

Check the weather forecast and road conditions along your route before you depart.



Other Safe Trip Tips

Safe Stops

- Always drive with your windows closed and doors locked, and travel with a passenger, if possible.
- Plan your route to avoid getting lost and having to stop in an unfamiliar area.
- Make sure you have enough fuel or battery charge for your trip — it is good practice to refill your tank when it reaches the halfway point. For EVs, plan stops to recharge on longer trips.
- Plan where you will park when you reach your destination or if you need to stop to rest, refuel, or recharge. Choose populated well-lit areas, preferably in secure lots that are monitored by an attendant or security cameras. Identify parking before your drive to eliminate the need to search for parking in busy areas. To reduce theft, avoid alleys and dark or isolated areas and do not park near large vehicles where someone could be hiding.
- When leaving your vehicle unattended, stow valuables, such as laptops and chargers, in the trunk or a locked compartment that is not visible from the exterior. Do not keep a spare key inside the vehicle and always lock the vehicle's doors.
- If you do not feel safe returning to your vehicle alone, ask someone (such as security or a trusted friend) to walk you to your vehicle.



Emergencies

- If an emergency occurs on a regular road, wait inside your vehicle with the windows closed and the doors locked. Keep the vehicle running and your seat belt on in case you are rear-ended by another vehicle. Turn on your hazard lights and call for help.
- If an emergency occurs on a busy highway, wait AWAY from your vehicle so you are not close to traffic. Exit the vehicle on the side away from traffic and wait for assistance behind a barrier or up an embankment, if possible.

Other Tips

- Consider alternate forms of transportation. Cycling and walking are ideal for short trips, while trains or buses might be better for longer trips.
- Carpool or rideshare when possible.
- Opt for virtual meetings rather than in-person meetings and consolidate trips to decrease the need to drive and to reduce your carbon footprint.

