

Best Practice Guide

Lane Changing



Before You Make A Move

Lane changes might appear to be quite simple manoeuvres, but can actually be one of the most dangerous if not done correctly.

Changing lanes usually means merging into other traffic travelling in the same direction. There are many factors to consider including blind spots, speed of other vehicles, detecting a safe gap and signalling correctly.

In fact there are so many factors to consider that it is not surprising that the main cause of lane change collisions is driver error.

Look In The Mirrors

When thinking about changing lanes the first thing you must do is check your mirrors. You need to know what is happening all around your vehicle and whether there is a safe space in the traffic for you to enter safely.

Don't Forget Your Blind Spots

Failing to check blind spots when changing lanes is a common cause of sideswiping incidents. Look over your shoulder in the direction of the lane you wish to enter to make sure there is nothing in your way.



Make Your Intentions Known

Use your indicator for at least eight seconds before changing lanes. This gives other road users plenty of warning about your intentions and will help you to carry out a safe lane change.

If there is a vehicle in the lane beside you, wait until it is alongside your vehicle and your signal is out of sight to them before you indicate. This will communicate your intentions to other vehicles behind and should give them plenty of warning.

Mind The Gap

Before changing lanes make sure there is a large enough gap for you to enter the lane safely without forcing any other drivers to slow down or move out of your way.

Double Check Your Blind Spots

Always re-check your blind spots as a final safety precaution before making your manoeuvre. Anything can happen on the road in a few seconds and an obstruction or hazard could have appeared since you last checked.

Watch Out For Speeders

Lane changes are generally made on dual carriageways, highways and motorways - all of which have the highest speed limits. Speed can be difficult to judge, especially when someone is approaching from behind so take extra care when pulling out into a new lane.

Even if a car appears to be quite far behind it might only take a couple of seconds for it to reach you - and pulling out in front of it could force the driver to slam on the brakes and potentially lose control.

Merge Carefully

Entrance lanes or slip roads to highways / motorways are designed to help you safely enter the main carriageway.

To use them safely:

- Scan the traffic for a safe gap as you are approaching the main carriageway.
- Signal your intention.
- Match your speed to the speed of traffic on the carriageway if possible.
- Find a safe gap and merge with the other traffic.

Avoid stopping or slowing right down if possible when trying to merge with other traffic as you risk being hit in the rear by other vehicles. However, never force your way in to traffic, so stop if necessary until you detect a safe gap.

Beware Of Intersections

Never change lanes when a junction or intersection is coming up as other vehicles could pull out in front of you without realising you have just moved position.



Pass With Care

Take care when changing lanes to pass another vehicle.

Remember:

- The longer you are beside a vehicle the more at risk you are of being sideswiped.
- Pass others as quickly as possible, but without speeding.
- The bigger the vehicle the longer it will take you to get past.
- In windy conditions vehicles can be affected by side winds which can force them to drift into another lane. Take extra care when changing lanes in these conditions.
- In wet weather surface spray from other vehicles can affect your vision as you are passing. Avoid passing others if visibility is poor.
- When re-entering a lane in front of another vehicle you should be able to see the whole of the front end of the vehicle before moving over.

- L** Look in mirrors.
 - A** Always signal.
 - N** Never forget blind spots.
 - E** Extra care should be taken in windy and wet weather.
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- C** Changing lanes is a main cause of sideswipe collisions.
 - H** Hazards can appear quickly so check blind spots twice.
 - A** Avoid sitting alongside other vehicles for too long.
 - N** Never force your way into traffic.
 - G** Gaps must be large enough for you to enter safely.
 - E** Entrance lanes can help make merging safer.
 - S** Speed can be difficult to judge.

WARNING

More than a third of motorway crashes are caused by lane changes or unintentional lane departures.