

Journey Planning Best Practice Guide

Planning your route

According to studies from the National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration, human error is a factor in 94% of traffic collisions. This includes mistakes related to situational awareness and decision-making — which directly encompass a lack of route awareness and preparation. To help reduce this risk, drivers, whether experienced or novice, need to consider multiple factors when planning their journeys: route selection, vehicle condition, traffic and weather hazards, and safe stopping locations. Having a plan reduces stress and allows flexibility for rest stops, breaks, and delays.

Planning Checklist

- Plan eco-friendly routes to save fuel or battery charge and reduce travel time.
- Avoid traffic congestion, roadworks, or high-risk roads when possible.
- Schedule rest stops every 2 hours to prevent fatigue and ensure breaks for food, water, and stretching.
- Check the weather forecast and road conditions for potential hazards or delays.
- If driving an EV, locate charging stations and bring an appropriate charging cable and adapter if needed.
- Keep loved ones or employers updated about your estimated time of arrival, especially if significant delays occur. Every trip, no matter the distance, can benefit from thorough preparation to ensure the driver and others on the road arrive safely.

The majority of collisions include the Triple Threat — Speeding, Distraction, and Fatigue. Proper planning can help reduce fatigue, distractions, and the temptation to speed.



Alternatives to Planned Trips

Journey planning is about avoiding unnecessary trips, considering the many forms of transport available, and planning the most appropriate route.

Before any journey, you should ask yourself whether the trip is really necessary, as cutting down on the number of journeys you make can reduce your chances of a collision, save you money, and help the environment.

Consider Remote Communications: Phone or video conferencing, email communications, or collaborative online documents can sometimes provide a substitute for face-to-face meetings. When planning a meeting for work purposes, ask yourself whether you really need to meet face-to-face and whether a phone call or online meeting could replace the need to travel.

Share the Journey: It is worth considering ridesharing when you are travelling in the same direction as friends, family members, or colleagues. Ridesharing means less driving for each person, less wear and tear on each vehicle, less fuel or energy consumption, less pollution, less cost for each person, and easier parking due to the reduced number of vehicles at each location.

Share the Convenience: If several coworkers travel from opposite directions, consider meeting at a central location. This helps make the meeting accessible for all attendees and lowers risks associated with long journeys, such as fatigued driving.

Consider Overnight Stays: If you have had a long day and are located over two hours away from your home, you should consider staying overnight to avoid having to drive a long distance while tired. It is much safer to put off driving until after a good night's sleep.



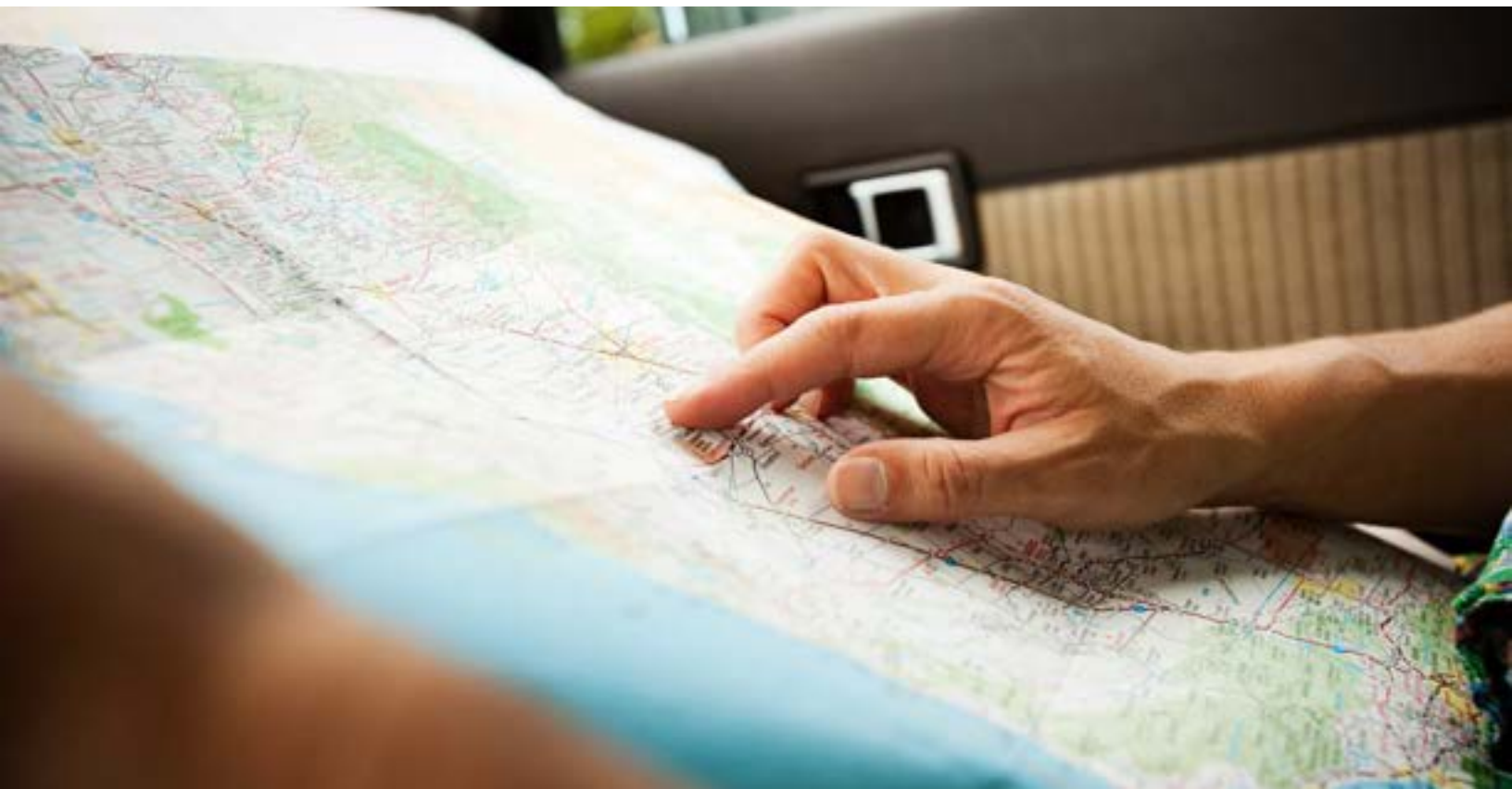
Planning Your Route

Taking time to plan a safe and efficient route can help reduce stress and allow flexibility for rest stops, breaks, and delays. Choose routes that allow you to maintain safe, fuel- and energy-efficient speeds while avoiding hazards. Knowing your route in advance reduces the chance of taking wrong turns and allows you to adjust your route to avoid roadworks or congested areas. This can help you save time and energy or fuel and helps to reduce the distraction of trying to navigate or adjust your route while on the road.

High-risk times for falling asleep while driving are 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Whenever possible, avoid driving at these times, and if you do have to drive, make sure you take regular breaks of at least 15 minutes every two hours.

As part of your preparations, set your GPS before your journey begins. Use a secure phone cradle or stow your phone in the console to prevent accessing your device while driving. Use the following tips to help prepare for your journey:

- Plan rest stops at least every two hours to prevent drowsiness and fatigue.
- Plot your route in advance for places that provide fuel or charging stations, food, and rest opportunities.
- Monitor road and weather reports and allow extra time when facing inclement weather or road closures.
- Update friends, loved ones, or your employer about changes to your expected arrival time.



Preparing your vehicle

Your vehicle should always be properly maintained and prepared before any trip. Unexpected mechanical failures or issues can lead to breakdowns, delays, or even collisions. Conducting a pre-trip inspection helps identify and resolve concerns before your drive:

Tyres: Check tyre pressure, tread depth, and sidewalls for damage or bulging. Do not forget to check the spare tyre.

Lights: Test headlights, brake lights, hazard lights, indicators, and fog lights to ensure they are functioning properly.

Fluids: Inspect engine oil, coolant, brake and transmission fluid, as appropriate, and remember to top off screen wash as needed.

Auxiliary Battery: Visually inspect the battery (if accessible) and look for signs of swelling, corrosion, or damage to the battery or cables. Seek advice on how to deal with any issues you find.

Windows and Mirrors: Inspect for cracks, chips, or dirt that could impair visibility. Clean all glass surfaces, including windscreen and mirrors.

Bodywork: Confirm there are no loose or damaged panels that could detach during travel. Remove unnecessary items from the boot or roof racks to improve fuel efficiency and range.

Brakes: Test brake function for responsiveness and ensure there is no unusual noise or grinding.

In-Vehicle Systems: Verify that all low-voltage systems (lights, infotainment, and windows) are functioning properly and that the vehicle starts normally. Look for any warning messages on the dash and address any issues immediately.

Emergency Kit: Restock or update your vehicle emergency kit with key items:

- First aid kit
- Basic tool kit
- Jump leads
- Warning devices (such as hazard triangles)
- Emergency vest
- Torch (with extra batteries)
- Blankets
- Shovel (in winter or if travelling off-road)
- Phone charger and backup battery
- Nonperishable food and water

Including these checks in your preparation routine ensures safer, more efficient travel and reduces the chances of vehicle failure during your journey. A few minutes spent on preparation can save you significant time, stress, and risk in the long run.



Get to Know Your Vehicle

Before starting your trip, take time to learn your vehicle's layout and controls. Familiarise yourself with the following important features:

- Cruise control
- Traction control
- Eco-mode
- Fuel or charging ports
- Light controls

Knowing how these work will prevent you from needing to adjust or search for them while driving. Take a few moments to ensure your mirrors are properly adjusted, your seat is comfortable, and your essential controls and safety equipment are functioning. This preparation reduces distractions and allows you to focus entirely on the road ahead.



Handling Weather and Road Conditions

Weather and road hazards can introduce unexpected challenges. Before travelling, check the weather and road reports along your route. Adjust your departure timing and routes based on expected conditions. Rain, snow, fog, or ice require slower speeds, smooth manoeuvres, increased following distances, and heightened focus. Avoid driving through standing or moving water, even if it appears shallow, as it can cause damage to bodywork, loss of power leaving you stranded, loss of traction, or being swept away entirely.

Extreme temperatures can affect internal combustion and electric vehicles alike. Heat can cause vehicles to overheat and break down, especially after long periods of idling in stationary or slow-moving traffic. Cold weather can make starting the engine more difficult and oils to be more viscous, increasing component wear and the risk of early failure. In electric vehicles, extreme temperatures can place additional stress on a vehicle's battery, significantly reduce range, and extend charging times. Whenever possible, park in covered or enclosed spaces to protect your vehicle from thermal strain.

Road congestion, particularly due to traffic or roadworks, not only increases delays but can also raise the risk of collisions. Avoid known problem areas whenever feasible and choose routes that allow for consistent speeds.

Over 75% of weather-related crashes occur in rainy or misty conditions. Allow additional time so you can slow down and use caution when conditions are not ideal.



Safe Stops and Parking

Where and how you park impacts personal safety and vehicle security. Always prioritise well-lit, monitored, or populated areas for parking, if possible. Consider security cameras or staffed car parks to add an extra layer of protection against theft or vandalism. Secure valuable items out of sight or inside a locked compartment if you cannot take them with you. Spare keys should never remain in the vehicle. Make sure all doors and windows are locked before leaving the vehicle unattended.

While travelling, avoid letting your fuel tank drop too low to prevent running out of fuel unexpectedly. Drivers of EVs should plan designated stops to recharge during longer trips.

Use the following tips to help you stay safe at stops:

- Choose secure, well-lit, and populated parking areas, ideally monitored by attendants or security cameras.
- Avoid parking near large vehicles or in confined spaces to reduce personal safety risks.
- Plan stops before your drive to identify safe places to refuel, recharge, eat, and rest.
- Always lock your vehicle's doors and keep windows closed while parked or driving.
- Remove valuables from your vehicle before your trip, if possible. Store valuable items (laptops, chargers, etc.) out of sight in your boot or a secure compartment if you cannot take them with you.
- Avoid leaving spare keys or important belongings inside the vehicle.
- If you return to your vehicle and feel unsafe, ask security personnel or someone you trust to escort you.



Planning for Emergencies

Emergencies can occur without warning, so it is vital to know how to stay as safe as possible in such situations. If your vehicle breaks down, follow emergency legal requirements for your particular state or country. Also, follow your company's protocols for emergency situations. Keep a copy of useful contact numbers in your glove box, which may include roadside assistance, your insurance company, and / or your manager.

In case of emergency, use the following best practices to help you stay safe:

- Move to a safe, legal place away from traffic and activate your hazard lights. Avoid stopping on bends, hills, or bridges, if possible. Set the parking brake and / or chock your wheels if on a grade.
- Exit the vehicle on the non-traffic side and wear high-visibility clothing, if it is available. Never stand between vehicles or in the road.
- Familiarise yourself with legal requirements related to a roadside emergency, such as when to activate hazard lights or set out warning devices.
- Carry a fully charged phone with a charging cable or a backup battery to ensure you can call for help if required and have the phone numbers of emergency assistance, your insurance carrier, and your manager readily available.
- In extreme weather conditions, ensure you have blankets, food, water, and proper clothing to stay safe while waiting for assistance.



Tips for a Safe Journey

A well-planned journey includes route research, vehicle checks, and personal preparation. Maintaining a defensive driving mindset and remaining calm in stressful situations helps reduce risks and contributes to a smoother, more enjoyable experience. Take steps to eliminate distractions, manage fatigue, and avoid hazards by maintaining focus and expecting the unexpected. Safe and responsible preparation is the foundation of successful journey planning.

Safe Journey Tips

- Regularly inspect and maintain your vehicle to avoid mechanical breakdowns or delays on the road.
- Practice defensive driving techniques such as maintaining a safe speed, increasing following distance, and adjusting to current road conditions.
- Double-check all elements of your journey, such as securing valuables, adjusting your GPS, and sharing your itinerary with loved ones or employers.
- Stay flexible and allow for minor route or schedule changes in response to hazards such as extreme weather, traffic, or detours.
- Eliminate distractions such as mobile devices and ensure equipment such as a phone cradle or Do Not Disturb settings are used effectively.
- Build time cushions into your schedule to handle unexpected delays without resorting to speeding or other aggressive driving behaviours.
- Consider alternative transportation options – ridesharing, carpooling, or public transit – as part of long-term sustainability efforts and stress reduction.

Final preparation, ongoing mindfulness, and adherence to best practices help ensure a successful and safe journey. Taking the time to plan and remain alert on the road can protect your well-being and safeguard others sharing the road with you.

