

# Defensive driving—Highway traffic

## Explain dangers

Not everyone drives well. Some people speed aggressively. Others wander into another lane because they are not paying attention or they are multi-tasking (e.g., talking on the phone, texting, checking messages, or eating).

Aggressive drivers can cause road hazards to themselves and others who are sharing the roads. Drivers may follow too closely, make sudden turns without signalling, or weave in and out of traffic.

The length, width, and weight of large trucks can create hazards for drivers of both small and large vehicles. But many fatal collisions between cars and trucks are caused by the car driver's error.

## Identify controls

Follow these tips to make your next drive safer.

- **Consider stopping distances.** Trucks need a much longer braking distance than cars. Do not cut in front of a truck. If you do that, it reduces the truck's braking distance and limits the evasive action a truck driver can take.
- **Pass carefully.** When passing a truck, do not drive alongside it for too long. Pass as quickly and safely as possible, and do not cut too closely in front of a truck when re-entering the lane.
- **Drive defensively.** Do not assume another driver is going to move out of the way or allow you to merge. Expect that drivers may run through red lights or stop signs and be prepared to react. Be considerate of others, but look out for yourself. Have an escape route planned by keeping the front area open and driving beside a space.
- **Maintain an optimal position.** In all driving situations, the best way to avoid potential danger is to position your vehicle where you have the best chance of seeing and being seen.
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** Check your mirrors frequently and scan conditions 20 to 30 seconds ahead of you before you take action. Keep an eye on pedestrians, bicyclists, and pets along the road.

- **Follow the two-second rule.** Since the greatest chance of a collision is in front of you, establish and maintain a safe following distance that provides enough time for you to brake to a stop if necessary. The recommended time-interval following distance is one second for every three metres of vehicle length. For a typical six-metre car, that would be two seconds.
- **Keep your speed down.** Posted speed limits are meant for ideal driving conditions. It is your responsibility to match your speed to the actual conditions. Higher speeds also reduce the amount of time you have to gather information about conditions and hazards that can help you to make safe driving decisions.
- **Eliminate distractions.** A distraction is any activity that takes your attention away from the task of driving—preventing you from seeing hazards early enough to make safe driving decisions. Driving deserves your full attention. Stay focused on the driving task.

## Demonstrate

Ask the crew to describe ways of keeping a two-second distance between two vehicles (e.g., pick a marker like a road sign or stationary object and count the seconds after the vehicle in front of you passes it—two seconds should elapse by the time you pass the same marker).

If you have access to a vehicle that workers are expected to drive, show the blind spots and demonstrate how to adjust the position of mirrors to maximize viewing.

Demonstrate typical stopping distances for small and large vehicles at various speeds (see table below).

Vehicle	Speed	Stopping distance
Car	30 km/h	19.5 m (64 ft.)
	60 km/h	53 m (174 ft.)
	90 km/h	100.5 m (330 ft.)
Transport truck	30 km/h	27.5 m (90 ft.)
	60 km/h	85 m (279 ft.)
	90 km/h	172.5 m (566 ft.)