

## Driving Large Vehicles

# Backing Up

The first rule of backing up a large vehicle is “don’t do it if you don’t have to.” The larger the vehicle is the more difficult it is to maneuver even going forward. Backing up is twice as hard. More important, it’s impossible to see what’s behind you in a large vehicle. But if you must back up, follow these suggestions.

- Whenever possible, position your vehicle to back up straight, not on a curve.
- If you must back on a curve, back toward the driver’s side if possible. It’s the side you can see best.
- Position your vehicle to back up out of traffic, not into it. This means it’s better to back into a driveway and drive forward out of it than the reverse.
- Never begin backing up until you know you are clear. The best way is to use a spotter using an agreed-upon hand signal for stop, who can then guide you into place. If you don’t have a spotter, get out and look. Check not only behind your vehicle, but on the sides as well. Don’t forget to check for overhead clearance. Many garages and loading areas were not designed for the increased height of larger vehicles. Get out again midway through the backing up process if you’re at all unsure about what’s behind you.
- Use your mirrors to help you back up safely.

### **Backing Up Trailers**

Backing up is more complicated if you’re towing a trailer. The towing vehicle has to follow an S curve. First you turn the front in the opposite direction from where you want the rear end to go. (If you place one hand on the bottom of your steering wheel, the trailer will move in the same direction as your hand.) Then you straighten out and follow in the same direction as your trailer. Don’t oversteer; you could jackknife. Better yet, position yourself so you can back up straight.

Mastering the techniques of backing up will eliminate one of the major headaches of driving large vehicles. But the best technique still remains: plan ahead and avoid backing up whenever possible.

