

Passing and Being Passed



One of the most common causes of deadly head-on collisions is improper passing. Before undertaking any pass, ask yourself, "Is this pass really necessary? Is it safe?" The majority of passes don't save enough time to be worth the risk. If you must pass another vehicle, follow these safety tips.

Before Passing

When getting ready to pass another car, maintain a safe following distance. Intending to pass is no excuse for tailgating. The other car could still stop at any time. And the closer you are to the vehicle you want to pass, the harder it is to see what's in front of it.

Before passing, signal left. Scan the road ahead and behind continually. Check your blind spots, those areas right behind or on either side of you that you can't see in your mirrors, by turning your head and looking over your shoulders. Make sure nobody is trying to pass you. If there is any doubt about oncoming traffic, wait.

Moving Into the Left Lane

On a two-lane road, moving into the oncoming traffic lane is the most dangerous part of passing. In 55-mile-per-hour traffic, you and oncoming vehicles are approaching each other at an effective speed of 110 miles per hour. It takes a full mile to complete a pass at this speed. After moving left, increase your speed to pass, giving the vehicle plenty of room. You should not pass if you have to exceed the legal speed limit to do so. Signal right to begin moving into the right lane in front of the passed car.

Completing the Pass

It's safe to return to your driving lane when you can see the pavement in front of the vehicle you've passed in the rearview mirror. Move to the right and turn off your turn signal. But first check your blind spot by turning your head. This is important in a multi-lane road where another car may be moving into the lane from the right, or in a situation where the car being passed is nearly stopped, and another car may be coming onto the road in front of it.

When Not to Pass

Remember that it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus with its signals on. Other areas where it is unsafe or illegal to pass include

- No-passing zones
- School zones
- Curves with passing restrictions
- Any road with a solid line in the middle
- Within 300 feet of the crest of a hill.

It is also illegal in most cases to pass where there are

- Railroad crossings
- Intersections
- Tunnels
- Bridges
- or within 300 feet of these areas.

Being Passed

If someone is passing you, maintain your speed or slow down if necessary to allow the vehicle to pass safely. Never speed up to prevent someone from passing you. If you are driving more slowly than the flow of traffic, find a safe place to pull off the road and let vehicles pass by. You will be safer and more relaxed without a string of cars behind you.

How many times have you passed a vehicle simply because it's in front of you? Passing on a two-lane road is a difficult and dangerous maneuver that usually cuts only a few seconds off your trip. You'll relax and enjoy your drive more if you decide to pass only when it's absolutely necessary and completely safe.

