

Surviving Rush Hour and Commute Traffic

Life would be so much more pleasant if it weren't for the daily commute—and the fact that everyone else is commuting at the same time you are. Rush hour traffic is not only frustrating; it can be downright dangerous.

Stay Alert

It's easy to become inattentive when we travel the same route day in and day out. But when traffic is moving close together at high speeds, things can change suddenly. Be alert to what other drivers are doing, and be ready to react quickly. Be prepared for sudden stops, cars moving into and out of lanes or passing from any side. Watch out for potholes, debris, construction or stalled cars. Such road conditions can cause abrupt traffic slowdowns, made worse by rubberneckers. Scan the road to the horizon, or 15–30 seconds ahead. Plan what to do if someone ahead makes a mistake. If the car in front of you stops suddenly, can you avoid hitting it?

Do Your Part

You can help make the rush hour better for everyone by avoiding the actions that slow traffic down—unnecessary lane changes, speed changes and rubbernecking.

Tailgating is the number one cause of rush hour collisions. Keep a safe distance behind the car in front of you by following the three-second rule. Maintain this distance even if cars cut in front of you to take advantage of the extra space.

If you're not sure where you're going, consult a map before you start, not while you're driving down the road at 60 mph. Memorize the exit you must take and the one before it.

Your Breakdown Is Everyone's Breakdown

To avoid rush hour breakdowns that can make hundreds of people late, do regular maintenance checks on your vehicle. Make sure you have plenty of fuel.

Keep It Simple: Just Drive

Resist the temptation to get more out of the daily commute by doing your morning routine on the road: shaving, answering telephone calls, eating and drinking, putting on makeup, writing or reading. If you need to do these things, take public transportation.

Rush Hour Is No Time to Rush

It's easy to get angry or stressed when we feel imprisoned in the daily gridlock. But anger is not a safe traveling companion. Perhaps you are not able to avoid the rush hour drive by using public transportation, ride sharing, or changing your work schedule. If driving in commute traffic is your only option, give yourself enough time so you don't get hot under the collar when there's a slowdown. Do some deep breathing or listen to your favorite music. Make this your goal: turning commute time into quality time.

