

# Advantage of driving defensively The techniques

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# 10 Benefits of Defensive Driving You Probably Didn't Know

## **Defensive driving teaches safe driving techniques to drivers.**

At **defensive driving classes** students learn to overcome mistakes in driving techniques, learn to improve their driving skills; learn to make informed decisions and to anticipate situations while driving. **Defensive driving classes** have been set up by the government and police departments to make the world a safer place to live in. The need for speed can kill, it is important to teach driver discipline and safety rules. **Defensive driving** aims to reduce the risk of driving. Drivers must instinctively anticipate dangerous situations and avoid risks while driving vehicles in normal as well as adverse conditions.

Defensive driving courses cover aspects like: emergency care, principles of safety, control of fear and emotions, on the spot decision making, quick reactions, fear, and so on.

The **benefits of defensive driving** classes are many and vary with each province.

1. Most province offer as incentive a reduction of points on your driver's license following a driving violation ticket and offer the additional incentive of not increasing insurance rates.
2. In some provinces a defensive driving course would get at least 10% reduction in insurance rates for a period of 3-5 years. This being a considerable saving.
3. A defensive driving course will teach safe and accident free driving techniques.
4. The course will teach protection techniques and how to handle road rage and speeding.
5. The defensive driving course will teach safe driving techniques in bad weather and adverse conditions. The course will hone skills in highway driving, night driving, and extreme weather driving.
6. The course will inculcate critical safety issues and teach emergency action too.
7. By taking a defensive driving course you will not have to appear in court.
8. The driving violation charges will be dismissed and a fine will not be assessed.
9. Defensive driving classes create responsible citizens which mean children and families will remain protected.

10. Most important the defensive driving classes will improve driving skills, reiterate driving laws and rules and make better drivers of people.

A **defensive driving class** can even be taken virtually. **Defensive driving teaches people to be responsible drivers** and take all necessary precautions when seated behind the wheel of a car. It protects not just the driver but pedestrians, animals, and fellow commuters. It makes the roads safer **saves lives**.

## **Defensive Driving Techniques for All Drivers**

Defensive driving requires all drivers to think ahead. This is even more important for RV drivers than for drivers of passenger vehicles. An RV driver must be continually aware of the traffic around the vehicle because directional changes are slower and the RV needs more space in traffic. Try to avoid roads during rush hour traffic. If you are driving in unfamiliar areas, ask someone (possibly one of your passengers) to help you with directions and always have a map of the area. If you are driving by yourself, always pull off the road at a safe place and stop the vehicle before looking at a map.

### **Be Prepared**

Listen to the local radio stations where you are traveling. Be aware of traffic slowdowns, collisions, or road construction, etc. If you are prepared and have a map, you will be able to take alternative routes.

### **Starting and Shifting**

Always try to start and shift (for manual transmissions) smoothly to prevent wear and tear on the hitch and transmission systems.

### **Turning Patterns**

Longer wheel bases make it necessary to change your turning patterns. You must turn wider at intersections or the rear wheel may roll over the curb. Go further into the intersection before starting the turn and adjust your lane position to increase the turning radius.

Curves in the highway can also be tricky. Stay to the center of the lane for right turns so the rear wheels will not go off the pavement. For a left turn or curve, stay to the right of the lane to prevent the back of the trailer from tracking into the oncoming lane of traffic.

RVs and some trailers have a high center of gravity, so turning corners and taking curves must be done at slower speeds to prevent swaying. Slow down before you enter the curve.

If you transport livestock, be careful because they can move around in a trailer. This shifts the center of gravity and makes a rollover more likely. With less than a full load of livestock, use barriers to keep the livestock together. Even then, be very careful in curves. Livestock will also lean in the curve and this could cause a rollover if you are driving too fast.

## **Winds**

If you are driving in areas with strong winds, take special care. Crosswinds are the greatest threat because they can push a large motor home or a vehicle and trailer combination into another lane if you are not prepared. This is especially true for travel trailers. In most cases, going slower is the best defense against strong winds. If you are towing a trailer, you should gradually apply the trailer brakes to help control a swaying trailer. Headwinds require a heavier throttle to maintain usual speeds. You may be able to control an RV in strong winds, but the safest thing to do would be to pull over and wait it out. If you anticipate driving in very windy areas, call and obtain local weather and road conditions. Good sources of weather information are local airports, highway patrol, state police, or ranger stations. Often, you will see signs along the highway which show radio frequencies for weather information.

## **Snow**

Always carry drive wheel and trailer wheel chains when you travel in snow country. Know how to put them on. Chains are needed for both the tow vehicle and for one axle of the trailer. If you have a motor home with dual-rear wheels, you will need chains for one tire on each side.

## **Ice**

If you are towing a trailer on icy roads, go slowly, especially downhill. Use the lower gears. You may be able to gain additional traction for the tow vehicle by moderately releasing the tension of the load equalizing hitch. Always readjust the hitch after the icy road condition has passed because vehicle stability may be affected during normal driving conditions.

## Mountain Roads

Will your vehicle make it up the grade? Almost all grades, regardless of severity, will cause you to slow down. Any grade steeper than six percent is considered extreme and requires special attention. The steeper the grade or the longer the grade and the heavier the load, the more you will have to use lower gears to climb hills or mountains.

When going down steep hills, gravity will tend to speed you up. You must select an appropriate safe speed, use a low gear, and apply enough braking power to hold you back without letting the brakes get too hot. Use the braking effect of the engine (lower gears) as the principal way of controlling your speed to save your brakes so you will be able to slow or stop as required by road and traffic conditions. Slow the vehicle and shift the transmission to a low gear before starting down a grade.

**REMEMBER:** The use of brakes on a long and/or steep downgrade is only a supplement to the braking effect of the engine. Once the vehicle is in the proper low gear, the following is a proper braking technique:

1. Apply the brakes just hard enough to feel a definite slowdown.
2. When your speed has been reduced to approximately five mph below your "safe" speed, release the brakes. This brake application should last for about three seconds.
3. When your speed has increased to your "safe" speed, repeat steps 1 and 2.

Do not drive in the fast lanes on a multiple-lane grade. Stay in the far right lane while climbing a steep grade if your RV or trailer will not maintain the legal speed limit. It would be better to drop to a lower gear and slow down rather than pass slow trucks and tie up the faster lanes because you don't have enough power.

## Narrow Roads

Some two-lane roads have special "turn-out" areas. You may pull into these areas and allow vehicles behind you to pass. Some two-lane roads have a passing lane. Stay in the right lane so faster vehicles may pass you in the passing lane. When you drive a slow-moving vehicle on a two-lane highway or road where passing is unsafe, and five or more vehicles are following you, pull to the side of the road wherever you can safely do so to let the vehicles pass.

Try to stay to the right of the lane so the vehicles behind you can see ahead. Remember to pull off the road when it is safe and allow the faster vehicles to pass.

## **Escape Ramps**

Escape ramps have been built on many steep mountain grades, and are used to stop runaway vehicles safely without injuring drivers and passengers. Escape ramps use a long bed of loose, soft material (pea gravel or sand) to slow a runaway vehicle, sometimes in combination with an upgrade. Know where escape ramps are located on your route. Signs show drivers where ramps are located.

## **Road Signs**

Pay attention to road signs that warn against travel by vehicles towing trailers. If you missed the sign that warned of a "Dead End" ahead, would you be able to turn your vehicle around? What was the weight limit for the bridge ahead? Did you notice the height clearance for the overpass? You may not notice these types of signs because you've never had to worry about them in your passenger vehicle. You will have to worry about them in your RV.

## **Freeway Driving**

You will have slower acceleration when you enter a freeway, so you will need more space. Remember that freeway traffic has the right-of-way, so you must look for gaps large enough to accommodate your vehicle(s). You also need more space when passing other vehicles. Judging how much space you will need takes practice. If you don't allow enough space and time to complete a pass, you may need to swerve quickly into another lane. This could result in a skidding, over steering, swaying, or tailing trailer.

Following distances must also be increased because you cannot slow down and stop your vehicle quickly. When you want to exit a freeway, slow down sooner than you would for a smaller vehicle. Be aware that many off ramps have curves which continually tighten. You will need to stay to the outside of the curve so the rear wheels will not rub the curb or drop off the pavement.

By law, vehicles towing trailers must stay in the right-hand traffic lane or as close as possible to the right edge or curb. If you drive on a divided highway with four or more traffic lanes in the same direction or where a specific lane or lanes have not been designated, you can drive in the lane just to the left of the right-hand traffic lane. When overtaking or passing another vehicle going in the same direction, you must use either: (1) the designated lane, (2) the lane just to the left of the right-hand lane, or (3) the right-hand traffic lane when use of that lane is permitted.

## **Dirt or unpaved Roads**

Many times the only road into the campground is a dirt or gravel road. Consult a campground directory to see if a certain road is suitable for your vehicle. Pay close attention to the signs posted and believe them. If a sign prohibits trailers, don't use that road. There may be a hazard such as rocks, low trees, or washed-out sections of the road ahead that only a four-wheel drive vehicle can handle safely.

## **Traveling on a Holiday**

Proper planning can help reduce much of the holiday traffic congestion. Many campsites accept reservations. Since roads leading to many popular attractions will be crowded, you may want to plan on a different route. If you haven't made reservations, it's a good idea to stop early in the day to ensure you get a campsite, because private and public campgrounds fill up quickly. Get a good rest before traveling.

## **Fatigue**

Driving is not as easy as it appears. Break up your driving time by taking a 15 to 30 minute rest every two-to-three hours. Get out of your vehicle and walk around. This will help to loosen tired muscles and rest tired eyes. Use this time to inspect your vehicle. It will also improve your alertness.

**REMEMBER:** Night driving can be especially hazardous since the body naturally wants to sleep at night. Most drivers are less alert at night, particularly after midnight. If you are sleepy, the only safe cure is to get off the road and get some sleep. If you don't, you are risking your life and the lives of others.

## **Bibliography**

<http://find-a-driving-school.ca/10-benefits-of-defensive-driving-you-probably-didnt-know/>

<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/dl648/dl648pt8.htm>