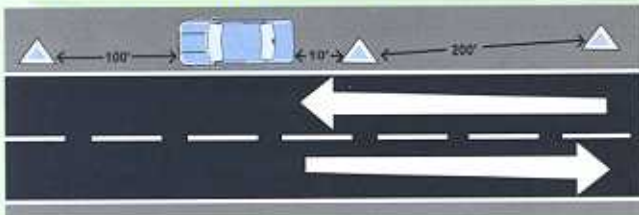


ON UNDIVIDED HIGHWAYS



Recommended placement for emergency warning devices.

FREEWAY DRIVING DEMANDS SPECIAL SKILLS

Provided as a public service by your AAA club.

For more information about AAA Traffic Safety Programs, contact your local AAA club's Traffic Safety Department or visit www.aaa.com.



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Freeway Driving Demands Special Skills.

Freeways are among the nation's safest roads. Their special design separates traffic, eliminates intersections and prohibits pedestrians and slower vehicles. These factors make freeway driving relatively collision-free.

Even though statistics show fewer crashes occur on modern freeways, the collisions that do occur are more severe due to higher speeds and increased traffic volume. Freeway driving requires drivers to make complex, quick decisions at critical moments. This requires special driving techniques.

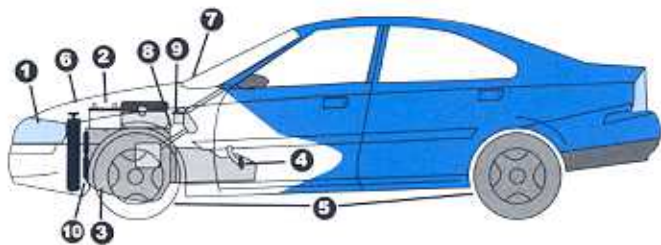
Refining Your Freeway Driving Skills.

After reading this brochure, you should be able to:

- List vehicle maintenance needed prior to freeway driving.
- Identify the correct procedures for entering and exiting a freeway.
- Understand the need for advance route planning.
- Describe factors that influence speed and lane selection.
- Recognize challenges associated with entering and exiting freeways and lane-changing maneuvers.
- Use space-management techniques such as looking ahead and maintaining time gaps between vehicles.

Is Your Vehicle Ready for Freeway Speed?

Driving at consistently high freeway speeds generates heat and puts stress on the mechanical parts of the car. Preventative maintenance will help avoid dangerous breakdowns and costly repairs. Pay particular attention to tire pressure. Always carry an accurate gauge. Tire pressure should be tested when the tire is cold, before the vehicle has been driven. While it may result in a harsher ride, inflating tires to the pressures recommended for long-distance high-speed travel will provide greater tread life and better control. Also check drive belts, coolant hoses and coolant level weekly or at each fuel fill-up.



Check:

1. All lights for burned-out bulbs.
2. Battery water levels.
3. Oil level in crankcase and transmission.
4. Brake pedal for firmness and high pedal.
5. Tire pressure and uneven wear.
6. Water level in radiator.
7. Windshield washer and wipers.
8. Brake fluid level.
9. Fluid level in power steering.
10. Hoses and belts

Entering the Freeway.

Negotiating the entrance ramp.

When entering a freeway, make sure you choose an entrance ramp. Look for signs directing you to the freeway.

The entrance ramps leads into an acceleration lane. This is an extra lane next to the through lanes that permits you to reach freeway speeds before joining traffic.



Merge Sign

A merge sign warns both drivers on the freeway and those merging from the ramp to adjust speed and/or position to maintain a safe, smooth flow of traffic.

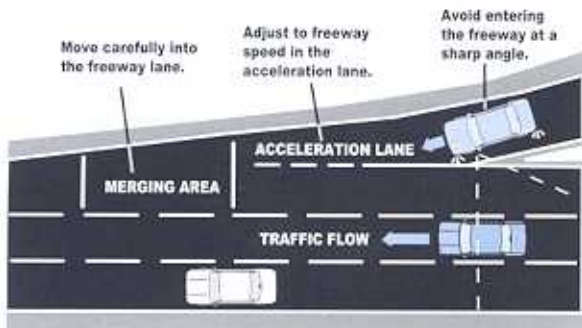


Added Lane Sign

An added lane sign tells drivers that two roadways will converge ahead but a merge will not be necessary at that point. Entering traffic will generally have their own lane.



Do Not Enter and Wrong Way signs indicate oncoming traffic - such as exit ramp.



Look to the side and rear for a safe gap to enter. Frequently check the vehicle ahead in case it stops or slows suddenly.

Merging with through traffic.

The two most frequent merging mistakes are slowing or stopping suddenly and merging at speeds too slow for freeway traffic.

For a smooth transition into through lanes, follow these steps:

- As you approach the entrance ramp, check freeway traffic with quick glances in your rearview mirror or over your shoulder.
- At the top of the ramp, look for an appropriate gap in the through lane. Selecting a gap as you enter the ramp provides ample opportunity to time your arrival on the freeway. Adjust speed and merge into the gap at freeway speeds.

- Check traffic in all directions and lanes. The vehicle ahead may slow or stop unexpectedly; allow extra space between your car and the vehicle ahead. Vehicles in other lanes may move suddenly into the merge lane; watch traffic carefully for unexpected lane changes.
- To alert other drivers of your intended move, signal in advance of your lane change and continue to signal until you have entered the through lane.
- Steer gradually into the through lane. Avoid sudden or unexpected moves that could startle drivers near you.
- Small adjustments in speed may be necessary while merging in order to blend smoothly with other traffic.

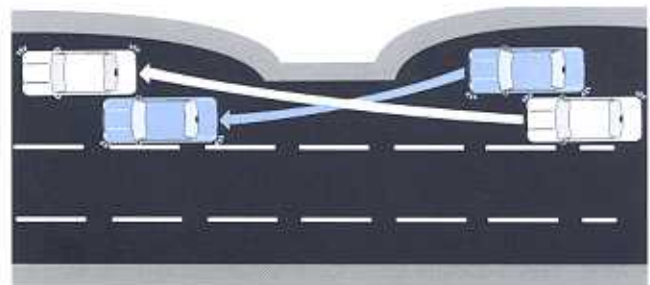
Special merging problems.

Some freeway acceleration lanes are short and lead directly onto the freeway. Signs may require you to yield before entering. In this situation, you may have to wait for a larger gap in traffic before attempting to enter the freeway. Faster acceleration is necessary to blend smoothly with other traffic.

Faster acceleration also may be needed in an acceleration lane that merges with the left lane of the freeway. Traffic using this lane usually moves faster than traffic in other lanes.

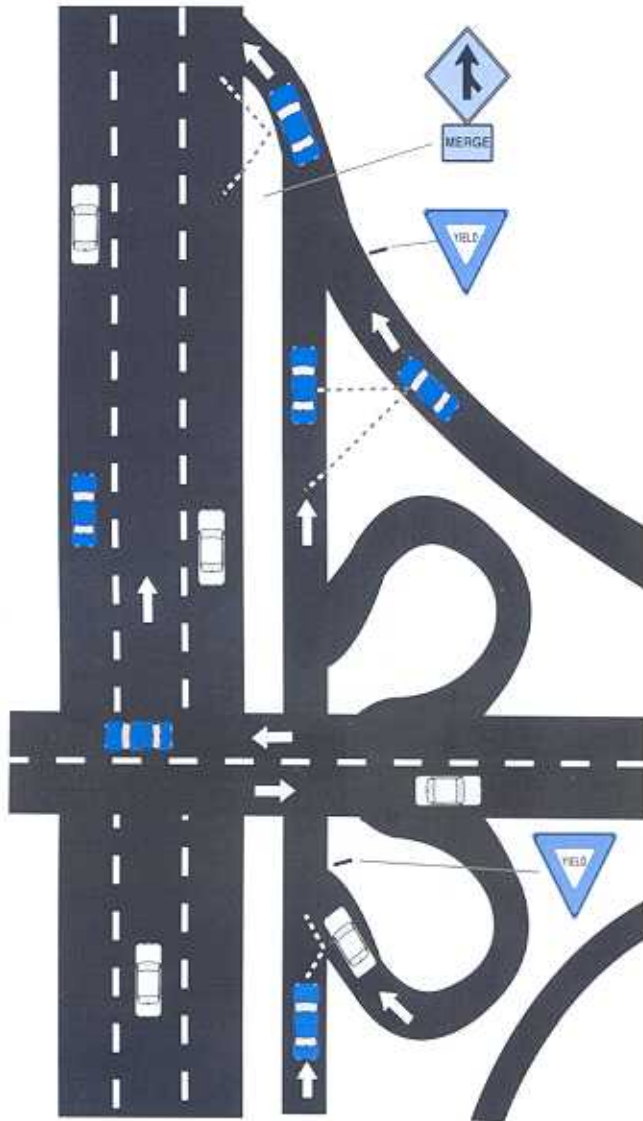
Some freeways position entrance-ramp acceleration lanes and exit-ramp deceleration lanes close together. These lanes require additional attention to traffic flow to avoid potential conflicts.

Some interchanges have an access lane that leads to the entrance lane. This requires merging twice - once into the access lane, then again into through traffic on the freeway. Keep a safe distance between other merging vehicles and watch speed closely.



Where acceleration and deceleration lanes are very close, watch for conflicting traffic movement.

Complex interchanges require additional attention, especially when access lanes parallel to the freeway require merging twice in a short space to enter traffic.



Exiting the Freeway.

Plan your route for smooth exits.

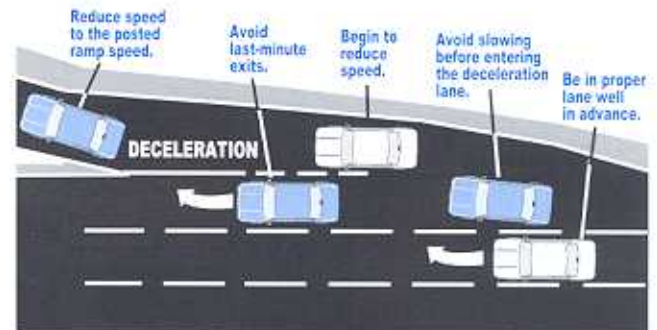
Since freeway exits usually are some distance apart, planning ahead is important. Traffic moves quickly on the freeway; make sure you have enough time to navigate to the exit lane well ahead of your intended exit.

Map your route before driving. Learn the name, route and exit number. Also, the travel directions of your selected exit. Knowing which exit precedes the one you want will allow more time to prepare. Guide signs located in advance of an exit indicate distance and route direction.

Negotiating the exit.

Follow these steps to avoid traffic congestion at an exit:

- Watch for signs designating the exit deceleration lane for your desired exit.
- Enter the lane next to the exit deceleration lane a mile or more before your intended exit.
- Signal and enter the exit lane well in advance to avoid sudden, last-second movements.
- If you miss your exit, go to the next exit. Backing up on a freeway is extremely dangerous and greatly increases the risk of a rear-end collision.



Follow speed recommendations for the exit lane.

Most freeways have deceleration lanes at each exit. These lanes allow drivers to reduce speed safely without hindering traffic on through lanes. Wait until you are fully in the deceleration lane, then reduce speed to the posted exit-ramp limit. Exit ramps may be sharply curved; proper exit speed is necessary to maintain control of your vehicle.

Once off the freeway, adjust speed to meet two-way traffic, intersections and slower traffic.

Freeway Driving.

Choose and appropriate speed.

Freeway driving requires special speed control. Traveling slower or faster than other traffic increases the risk of collisions.

Choosing the speed used by most other drivers will reduce conflicts. The drive also will be more relaxing and fuel efficient if you maintain consistent speed.

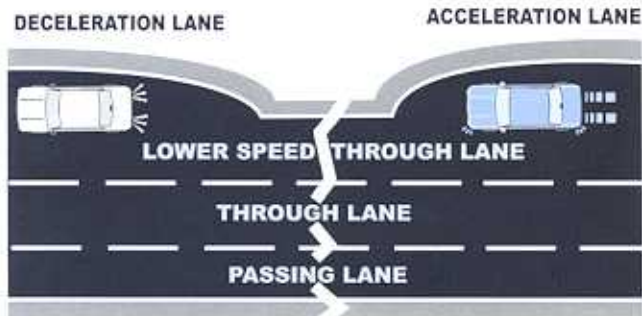
Choose a legal speed that matches the speed of other traffic. Consider visibility, traffic, weather and road conditions. Choose a speed you feel comfortable driving.

Drivers sometimes lose their sense of speed during extended freeway driving. Speed may gradually increase to a point much higher than intended. Correct this problem by frequently glancing at the speedometer or setting the cruise control.

Choose the proper lane for your speed.

Match your speed to the appropriate lane for smoother traffic flow:

- On a two-lane freeway, use the right lane as a cruising lane and the left lane as a passing lane.
- On a three-lane freeway, consider the right lane a lower-speed through lane, the center lane a higher-speed through lane and the left lane a passing lane.
- When approaching interchanges, move out of the right lane - if traffic conditions permit - to avoid merging conflicts.



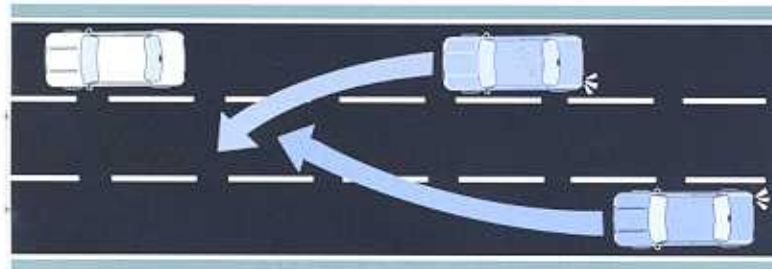
On heavily traveled freeways with frequent merge areas, through traffic should stay out of the right lane to avoid merging conflicts.

Visibility is an issue when changing lanes.

At freeway speeds, fast-moving vehicles can quickly enter your "blind spots." Follow these steps for safe lane changes:

- Check for ample space between your car and the vehicle in front of you.
- Make sure that a driver ahead or in another lane is not about to change lanes.

- Glance behind to make sure a driver behind you is not about to pass.
- Before moving to another lane, check inside and outside rear-view mirrors. Then glance over your shoulder in the direction of the lane you want to enter to check for vehicles in your blind spots.

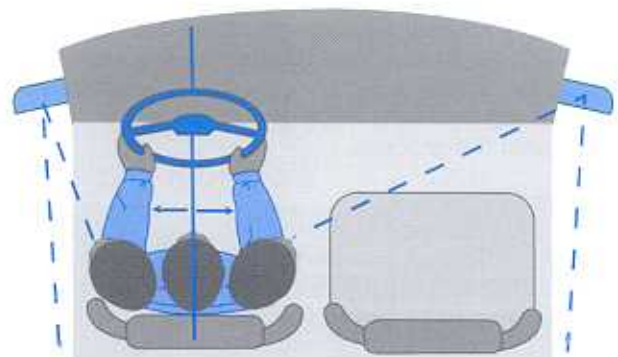


Check over your shoulder and signal well in advance before changing lanes to avoid lane-change conflicts.

Mirrors.

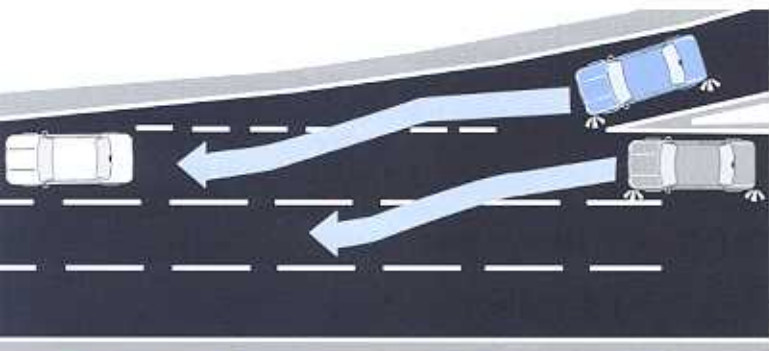
To reduce side and rear blind spots, you can adjust your outside mirrors outward approximately 15 degrees from the side of the car. This can be accomplished by:

- Placing your head against the window (see illustration), and set the mirror so you can just see the side of the car.
- Passenger side mirror; same as driver's side, but position your hand at the middle of the car (see illustration).



Courtesy lane changes.

As you encounter drivers trying to enter the freeway, make the necessary changes to help them merge smoothly. Adjust your speed or, if possible, move into the next lane to create a gap for other drivers to safely enter the freeway.



Provide a gap for drivers to enter the freeway; move into the next lane or adjust speed.

You also find drivers decelerating for an exit in the right lane. Through traffic should use the center or left lanes. This allows other drivers to exit safely without disrupting the flow of traffic.

Keep your distance.

A safe following distance is key in avoiding collisions on the freeway. With good conditions, plan to keep a three-second gap between your car and the vehicle ahead. This three-second following distance will give you time to steer around other drivers, provided you have identified an escape route.

To estimate a three-second following distance:

- Find a fixed object on the side of the road.
- When the vehicle in front of you passes the object, begin counting one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three.
- If you pass the object before you say the word "three," there is not enough space between you and the vehicle in front of you. Slow down and repeat the process.

Get the big picture.

It takes four to five seconds to stop your vehicle from 55 mph. At highway speeds, you need advance notice of an emergency stop. Monitor traffic conditions at least four to five vehicles ahead for clues to traffic tie-ups. This will give you time to stop if there is no room to maneuver around an obstacle.

Looking 20 to 30 seconds ahead gives you time to spot potential dangers, plan evasive steering maneuvers, warn traffic to the rear and slow gradually. If the road is not completely blocked, steer around an obstacle; sudden stops increase the risk of a rear-end collision. If you must stop, tap the brakes several times to warn following vehicles.



Look 20 to 30 seconds ahead to anticipate hazards.

Dealing with breakdowns.

A vehicle malfunction is frustrating under the best of circumstances, but it can be unnerving on a busy freeway. Follow these safety tips if your vehicle breaks down on a freeway:

- Stopping on the shoulder usually is prohibited except in an emergency, such as vehicle breakdown.
- If you must stop, signal and drive completely off the freeway onto the shoulder, if possible.
- A raised hood or trunk and a white cloth tied to the antenna, door handle or out-side mirror will let emergency crews know you need help.
- Use four-way flashers to warn traffic approaching from behind.
- If it is safe to do so, place flares or warning triangles behind your vehicle.
- When re-entering the freeway from the shoulder, make sure the shoulder ahead is free of large debris or other vehicles.
- Accelerate along the shoulder, signal properly and steer into the freeway lane when an adequate gap in traffic is available.

Hint: Motorists often place warning devices too close together. Place the farthest warning device 100 paces (200 to 300 feet) away from the disabled vehicle.

ON DIVIDED HIGHWAYS

