



Roadside Assistance
from  Allstate



Motoring Tips HANDBOOK



AARP Roadside Assistance
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www.aarproadside.com

Introduction

Motoring Tips was prepared especially for members of AARP Roadside Assistance from Allstate. We hope it will be helpful in making your motoring safer and more enjoyable.

Here are some interesting statistics we discovered while preparing this guide:

- There are over 175,128,000* licensed drivers in the United States.
- Almost 1/3 (32%) of them (57,324,500)* are over the age of 50.
- The National Safety Council states this age group has only about 20% of the accidents.

While we may find some pride in this statistic and appreciate the fact that some auto insurance companies even lower their rates for drivers of our age group, a closer examination of all the figures shows some disturbing surprises. Even though older drivers have fewer accidents per driver than younger drivers, we tend to drive fewer miles.

So when the “miles-driven” factor is taken into account, it turns out that drivers over 50 have more accidents per miles driven than do drivers between ages 25 and 49. What this means is, we don’t have to go nearly as far to get into trouble. There are some obvious reasons for this situation. Almost everyone begins to experience some physical changes around age 50 and these changes have an effect on the way we drive. For this reason we have paid particular attention to those areas of driving that may be most helpful to the driver over age 50.

The information on Driving Tips is based on AARP’s “Driver Safety Program” classroom refresher course. Given in two 4-hour sessions, “The AARP Driver Safety Program” helps those 50 and older update their driving knowledge, sharpen driving skills, and, where applicable, qualify for insurance discounts. Over 14,000 classes are held annually throughout the nation.

To enroll, write to:

AARP Driver Safety Program
601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049

*National Safety Council 1994.

Driving Tips

RIGHT-OF-WAY

Right-of-way rules establish traffic priority. It is important to emphasize that the law does not really give anyone the right-of-way. It only says who should yield it. A good rule to follow is: “never insist on taking the right-of-way, even when you know you have it.”

Yield to pedestrians:

- In or near crosswalks, even if not marked.
- In your right- or left-turn path.
- At all yield signs.
- At any time on any roadway.

Yield to other vehicles:

- That have already entered an intersection.
- That are oncoming when you are making a left turn. Those turning left must yield.
- At yield signs.
- Still in the intersection at lights that have just turned green.
- At four-way stops when other vehicles have arrived first or are at your right if you arrive at the same time.
- At two-way stops to all traffic on the through street.
- To all emergency vehicles sounding a siren or using a flashing light. Stop clear of any intersection close to the curb. Wait for vehicles to pass.
- When entering a freeway. In cases where there is a merging lane, increase your speed to that of the freeway traffic, before entering the freeway.
- When leaving a freeway. If an exit lane exists, move into it before slowing down so that you do not hinder the regular flow of freeway traffic behind you.
- To all moving traffic when leaving a parking space.
- To funeral processions.
- In all right-of-way situations, caution, courtesy and common sense should govern your actions, but do not expect them in return.

THE THREE-SECOND FOLLOWING DISTANCE FORMULA

1. The car ahead is about to pass a checkpoint (such as a sign, driveway, pole or a parked car).
2. Start counting seconds (1001, 1002, 1003) as the rear of the car passes the checkpoint.
3. Stop counting when the front of your car reaches the checkpoint. If it takes less than three seconds for your car to pass it, increase your following distance.
4. If it takes three or more seconds to reach the same checkpoint you have a safe following distance.

TURNING

Appropriate turn signals must be given when a driver intends to make a left or right turn. Motor vehicle operators may indicate a turn by using a flashing electric signal or hand and arm signals.

When making a left turn:

1. Position your car in the proper lane for turning.
2. Signal your intent to turn well before the intersection and before you reduce your speed to turn.
3. Yield to any oncoming traffic or pedestrians in the roadway.
4. Make a full turn when it is safe to do so and don't cut the corner.
5. Turn off your signal if it does not self-cancel.

SKIDS

The most important factor in controlling skids is the type of brakes on your car. Skids occur when brakes are applied too hard, the wheels lock and tires lose traction.

Precautions are the same for cars with either front- or rear-wheel drive.

If your vehicle starts to skid:

1. Don't panic
2. Take your foot off the accelerator pedal at once.
3. Steer in the direction you want the car to go — the direction the rear end of the car is skidding.

Driving Tips (continued)

4. Don't brake, unless it is absolutely necessary.
 - For Conventional Brakes: Pump (instead of jamming) the brake pedal to avoid wheel lockup.
 - For ABS (Antilock Brake System):
 - ABS brakes work by pressing and holding the pedal down — not by pumping. If the pedal pulses, groans or feels heavy, the system is working.
 - Remember that ABS is not a miracle device — you must still watch for slippery roads. ABS makes the most of any available traction, but, if there's no traction, even ABS can't grip. On slick roads, test conditions by braking lightly. If the ABS activates, slow down.

NIGHT DRIVING

- Do not overdrive your headlights. Reduce speed to allow a complete stop within the area illuminated by your headlights.
- Never wear sunglasses or tinted glasses at night.
- Avoid looking directly into the headlights of oncoming vehicles. Keep eyes on the right edge of the road.

DRIVING IN THE RAIN

- Reduce speed and increase following distance.
- Turn on low beams to help others see you.
- Roads are very slick at the beginning of a rainfall, when road dust and oil mix with water.
- Driving too fast on wet roadways where the water is deeper than the tread on your tires causes "hydroplaning." Your vehicle loses contact with the pavement and rides on layers of water, much like a water ski. If this happens to you, take your foot off the accelerator and wait until your tires regain traction with the pavement. Do not brake until you regain control or you could go into a skid.

Emergency Driving Tips

TIRE FAILURE

1. Brake gently.
2. Concentrate on maintaining steering control. Steer straight ahead.
3. Continue braking gently.
4. When the car is under control, pull completely off the roadway.

JAMMED ACCELERATOR

1. Keep your eyes on the road.
2. Slap the accelerator pedal hard with your foot.
3. Shift into neutral. While this may cause damage to your engine (over revving), it is certainly better than a high speed crash.
4. Brake to stop.

BRAKE FAILURE

1. Pump the brake pedal rapidly and hard several times. This will often build up enough brake pressure to stop the car.
2. Shift into low gear and look for a place to slow to a stop.
3. Try the parking brake. If it is working, hold the brake release handle so you can let off on the brake if the rear wheels lock and you begin to skid.

RUNNING OFF THE PAVEMENT

1. Hold the steering wheel tightly and steer straight ahead.
2. Stay on the shoulder.
3. Ease up on the accelerator and brake gently.
4. When the car is under control, turn back on roadway slowly at a lower speed.

ENGINE FIRE

1. Pull off the roadway and stop the car as soon as safely possible.
2. Turn off engine.
3. Get out and away from the car.

A FINAL WORD

Driving is basically a decision-making process that is dependent on perceptions and judgements. To drive intelligently and safely demands that the driver not only see objects in his area of travel, but also that the driver recognize and understand their meaning or implication for safety.

This ability to recognize and interpret what is seen is called perception. The perceptive driver readily searches out those clues important in a traffic situation and adjusts his or her driving accordingly.

A “seeing” driver may observe some children playing on the sidewalk. But a “perceptive” driver viewing the same situation, recognizes that the children could dash into the street without warning and adjusts his speed accordingly. This advance understanding gives the perceptive driver command over the situation. He can react quickly, smoothly and safely, to the first clues of potential hazard.

As we grow older, we need more time to perceive a situation, organize the information gathered, and react. It is extremely important to concentrate on the driving task at all times, and to be alert for those clues as they are presented to us in any given traffic situation.

Road Emergency Kit

It's a good idea to carry an emergency kit in your car in case a stop is necessary. A basic emergency kit is relatively inexpensive and should include the following:

- Your AARP Roadside Assistance Membership Handbook. It lists the Roadside Assistance number to call in an emergency and exactly what procedures to follow to get help.
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Safety flares or reflective triangles
- "Help" flag
- Screwdrivers (a flat blade and a phillips)
- Pliers
- Adjustable wrench
- Fire extinguisher
- Work gloves
- Blanket
- Jumper cables.

MORE EMERGENCY TIPS

- See that your spare is inflated. If you have a "space-saver" spare, regularly check the canister used to inflate the tire. Keep your jack in good operating condition.
- You may want to consider carrying an extra set of belts for the fan, alternator, and power steering, especially if you own a foreign automobile.
- A container of sand is helpful if you are stuck in snow or ice — gallon milk containers are ideal for this.

USING JUMPER CABLES

Jumping a battery is dangerous if not performed correctly. Always follow these rules:

1. Always wear glasses or goggles to protect your eyes.
2. Connect the red clip of one cable end to the positive (+) terminal and the black cable to the negative (-) terminal of the starting battery.
3. Attach the red clip of the other end of the cable to the positive (+) terminal of the battery to be jumped and connect the black clip to the car's

frame, engine support bracket or other good grounding element.

4. Stand back and start the car that's giving the jump.
5. Wait a few minutes, then start the car that had the dead battery.
6. Remove the cables in reverse order.

IF YOU HAVE TO PULL OVER

1. If you are forced to make an emergency stop along a roadway, pull on to the shoulder or into the emergency lane as far as possible so that your car is completely off the road.
2. Turn on your warning flashers and raise your hood. Place two flares or reflective triangles behind your car — one approximately 300 feet and the other no closer than 10 feet from the rear of your car.
3. Never stand behind your car or between two parked cars.

GETTING HELP

1. If you can get to a telephone, call the Roadside Assistance toll-free number.
2. If not, display your "help" flag where it can be seen by passing motorists or tie a handkerchief or a white cloth to the door handle or antenna.
3. If you have a cell phone, call 911 or another number to ask for assistance.
4. Even if you don't have a cell phone, many motorists do and will usually transmit a message requesting emergency help for a disabled car.
5. Generally, it is best to stay with your car unless you know where you are or a service station or garage is within site. If you do leave your car, be sure to roll up all the windows and lock all doors.

Auto Quick Check Tips

For safety, economy, and comfort, keep your car in top running condition by making these preventive maintenance checks at least once a month and before each extended trip.

FAN, AIR CONDITIONING, POWER STEERING, & ALTERNATOR BELTS

Check all of these belts for proper tension. When you depress the belt with your thumb, it should give no more than half an inch. Also, inspect for any cracks or fraying by twisting the belts so you see the underside. Have any loose belts adjusted and have those that are worn replaced.

BRAKES

When you depress the brake pedal, it should feel firm and travel no more than half way to the floor. Keep your foot on the brake pedal for approximately 10 seconds. If the pedal continues to go down, have your brakes checked immediately. (Note: If you have power brakes, the engine must be running.)

Check your brake fluid level. Add fluid if it is low, and have a mechanic look at your brake system as soon as possible. You may have a leak in a brake line that could be dangerous. While driving, if your car pulls in either direction when applying the brakes, you again should have them checked as soon as possible. Many of the newer cars have disc brakes in the front, some have them in the back as well. Inspect the rotors (the large flat discs) for grooving. If the pads are worn through, costly damages can be done to the rotors.

LIGHTS

Make a visual check to see that they are all working, and clean. Don't overlook your parking lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, back-up and brake lights. Your full service gas station can check for proper alignment of your headlights. Also make certain that all of your instrument warning lights and gauges, and your horn are working correctly.

RADIATOR

Check the coolant level either in the radiator or, if your car has one, the overflow tank. A word of caution: never remove the radiator cap when the engine is hot. The pressurized coolant can spray out and cause scalding. It's a good idea to wear gloves or use a cloth when removing the radiator cap.

If the coolant level is low, add a 50/50 solution of water and antifreeze. Also check your radiator hoses for cracks, bulging, and softness. If any of the hoses show deterioration, have them checked at a service station and replaced, if necessary.

With the engine running, inspect for any leaks, especially around the clamps. If any leakage appears, tighten the clamp around the hose and recheck. It is recommended that you have your radiator flushed (preferably back-flushed) and the coolant replaced at least once every two years.

COOLING SYSTEM CHECK-UP

According to the National Automotive Radiator Service Association (NARSA), consumers who have their automotive radiator checked annually can extend the life of their automotive cooling system. NARSA recommends an annual seven-point maintenance check that includes:

1. A radiator pressure cap test to check for recommended system pressure level.
2. A thermostat check for proper opening and closing.
3. A pressure test to identify any external leaks to the cooling system.
4. An internal leak test to check for combustion gas leakage.
5. A visual inspection of all cooling system components, belts and hoses.
6. A system power flush and refill with the car manufacturer's recommended concentration of coolant.
7. An engine fan test.

Auto Quick Check Tips (continued)

TIRES

The air pressure should be checked when the tires are cool, since tire pressure increases when your car has been driven enough to heat up tires. An accurate tire gauge is a good investment. Keep it in your glove compartment or in your Road Emergency Kit. Proper pressure for the tires on your car can be found in your owner's manual and generally, on the side wall of your tires. Maintaining proper pressure saves you gas and increases the life of your tires.

Check for tread wear, which, in addition to normal usage, can be caused by over-inflation (excessive wear in the center of the tire), and under inflation (excessive wear on the outer edges of the tire). Improper wheel alignment, out-of-balance tires, worn shock absorbers can cause scalloping.

Most tires have tread wear indicators, which show up as 1/8 inch wide smooth bars, across the tire. When the tread is worn down to about 1/16 of an inch, replacement is recommended at this time. If abnormal tire wear is noted, check with your mechanic as to the cause and have it corrected as soon as possible.

SHOCK ABSORBERS

Since your shock absorbers wear gradually, chances are that you will not notice any immediate change in the handling of your car. An easy test to see if they are in good condition is to "bounce" your car several times with both hands on the fender of each wheel. With good shocks your car will bounce only once after you let go. If it continues bouncing two or more times, you should replace them. As mentioned above, bad shocks can cause tire wear as well as poor handling.

WINDSHIELD WIPERS AND WASHERS

Check your windshield washer tank for fluid. Fill it if necessary. Be careful not to confuse the radiator overflow tank with the windshield washer tank. Make sure the washer jets are properly aligned and are spraying enough fluid to clean the windshield. If your wipers are streaking, the edges can sometimes be

rejuvenated with denatured alcohol. If not, they should be replaced. A poor field of vision is dangerous when it's raining or snowing, especially at night. Oncoming headlights will create a glare on a streaked windshield and can reduce visibility to almost zero.

LUBRICATING FLUID LEVELS

When checking your oil levels, be sure to also check the fluid level for the automatic transmission and power steering. If either are low, add the correct type of fluid to bring it to the proper level. Be careful not to overfill.

STRANGE SOUNDS

If your automobile is making some odd noises in the engine compartment, in the rear end, when braking or anywhere, or if it is handling in an unusual manner; there may be a reason, and it could be serious. Take it to your mechanic to have it checked out. It's obviously much better to find out there is nothing at all wrong, than to do unnecessary damage to your car or have an unfortunate accident.

BATTERY

Check the terminal posts and clean off any corrosion. See that the cables are not loose on the terminal posts. If your battery is the refillable type, the fluid level should just reach the filler neck. If the level is low, add water to bring it up to the proper level.

Warning — do not smoke or use an open flame around the battery. In fact, it's a good idea to never smoke when you have the hood up and are working around the engine.

Travel Tips

As we get older, we often have time to travel more extensively. Whether it's a visit to our children, our grandchildren, or motoring to another part of the country, the following can be useful when planning these trips.

LET PATHFINDER® HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY

If you are traveling through unfamiliar territory, take advantage of the Pathfinder Trip Routing service. It is one of the benefits of a Premier Plan membership with AARP Roadside Assistance. If you are in no hurry to reach your final destination, request the scenic route and enjoy the many points of interest listed.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Prior to starting out, there are several things you should do to make your trip more enjoyable and worry-free:

- Make sure your car is in top mechanical condition and properly tuned. If it's been some time since the last check up, have your service station look it over.
- Make arrangements with the post office and newspaper delivery to have service stopped while you are away. Call the police department and ask that they pay special attention to your house until you return. You may also want to consider purchasing some automatic timers to turn on your house lights to help deter burglars or vandals. A neighbor will usually be happy to water your plants and make periodic checks inside your home. Give away any food that could spoil. It's also a good idea to unplug air conditioners, radios, TVs, etc. Upon leaving, close and lock all windows and doors.
- Make sure your driver's license is valid, and that you have your insurance card, name and phone number of your insurance company or agent. Check to see your car registration is in your glove compartment, and that you have your AARP Roadside Assistance membership cards, along with your credit cards. Purchase traveler's checks, rather than carrying large sums of cash. Check your Road Emergency Kit for all the necessary items we suggested earlier and make sure they are in operating condition.
- Once you are on the road, try to limit your driving time to no more than seven or eight hours per day. Every couple of hours, take a rest break. Get out of the car and walk around. Have a cup of coffee or a soft drink. Try to avoid heavy meals when driving, since they tend to make you drowsy. If other passengers in your car drive, have them take regular turns at the wheel.
- It is usually best to begin driving earlier in the morning and to plan on stopping early in the afternoon to enjoy sightseeing and other activities. If using motels, it's best to make advanced reservations for the next day rather than risk reaching your destination and finding no available lodging. Be sure to figure into your overall driving time the stops you make for meals, sightseeing, and rest breaks.
- Higher altitudes affect most people to some degree. It's normal to get out of breath easily, and infants and the elderly may be especially affected. At a 9,000-foot elevation, oxygen levels are about half of what they are at sea level. Many people experience mountain sickness from low oxygen, with symptoms such as nausea, headaches, dizziness, gasping for breath or fatigue. Try these tips from the Rocky Mountain Travel Guide:
 - The first few days, limit your exposure to higher elevations.
 - If bothered by any of the symptoms listed, sit down and breathe deeply for a few moments, then go to a lower altitude as quickly as possible.
 - Sleep at a lower altitude.
 - Avoid alcohol.
 - Avoid smoking.
 - Limit strenuous activity.
 - Limit salt intake.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Eat more high carbohydrate foods.
- Take your time and relax. Traveling by car is the best way to see the country. Plan in advance to places you wish to visit, in order to relive the history and enjoy the beauty of our great country.

Drive safely and have a pleasant journey!

For Information, Service & Materials

MEMBERSHIP MATERIALS & INFORMATION

AARP Roadside Assistance from Allstate
P.O. Box 4426
Carol Stream, IL 60196-4426

OTHER MEMBER COMMENTS

AARP
601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049
1-800-424-3410