

TURNING LEFT AND RIGHT

Turning movements, generally, create a change in speed and direction that must be controlled, and the driver must anticipate how these changes may force other traffic to react. There are federal, state and local laws that regulate turning movements, and each driver must be familiar with these for each jurisdiction. Typical regulations include:



Turn signal use is required.

When turning right at an intersection, the driver must make the approach and the turn as close as practical to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway.

Left-hand approaches and turns must be made in that portion of the lane nearest the center line, and the turns must be completed in the new direction also in that portion of the lane closest to the center line.

The right-of-way must be yielded as specified in the law. Generally, this means that the driver of a vehicle within an intersection intending to turn to the left must yield the right-of-way to all vehicles approaching from the opposite direction.

U-turns are prohibited in many jurisdictions and permitted only under certain conditions in others. The driver must know and follow the applicable law, and use caution even where permitted. For instance, a u-turn would not be safe if the line of sight for either the driver and for other traffic is impeded by a curve or a hill.

Making left or right turns with long vehicles (trucks, vans, and trailer combinations) create additional challenges because of the length of potential blind spots and the space that is needed to make the turn. Vehicle length can force the driver to encroach upon adjacent lanes of traffic. Rear wheels and trailers may not track as anticipated, which creates a collision hazard with curbs, barriers, and other fixed objects. It takes more time for a long vehicle to make a turn, which increases the exposure time to the hazards. Safety begins with maintenance checks and prompt repairs should be made to broken or loose mirrors or to malfunctioning turn signals and brake lights.



Right Turn Tips for Longer Vehicles:

- Move to the right lane well in advance of intersection, positioned to make a safe turn.
- When turning, keep rear of vehicle to the right, blocking other vehicles from passing on the right.
- If encroaching upon other lanes, wait for other vehicles to clear and then turn slowly.
- Be careful that improper tracking does not cause the vehicle/trailer to ride onto curb or strike fixed objects.

Left Turns Tips for Longer Vehicles:

- When approaching with the turn signal engaged, watch for drivers who may misinterpret this signal as an intention to turn somewhere before the intended turning point.
- Start turning only when the front of the vehicle has traveled far enough for the rear of vehicle and/or trailer to clear the intersection without forcing opposing drivers to slow down or swerve.
- Do not assume opposing drivers are paying attention.
- Be careful that improper tracking does not cause the vehicle/trailer to interfere with other traffic.

CHANGING LANES

Generally, lane changes are only permitted when it is safe to do so. This sounds simple, but it gets complicated with heavy, fast-moving, and/or multi-lane traffic. Modern side-view cameras and side-swipe alarms are helpful, but are not a substitute for looking. Always make sure the side and rear-view mirrors are properly adjusted before departing. Always maintain constant awareness of the traffic approaching from behind, traveling in adjacent lanes, or entering the roadway from ramps, side streets, and driveways.

Check the blind spots thoroughly. These vary with the type of vehicle, but generally extend outward from the rear sides of the vehicle and are often not captured in the side-view mirrors even when properly adjusted. So, the driver must glance out and rearward before each lane change in addition to checking the mirrors. Once clear, engage the turn signal and then keep checking during the lane change to make sure another vehicle has not suddenly entered the intended lane. Most jurisdictions prohibit lane changes across solid lines even when it is clear to do so.

Keep in mind that a sideswipe accident caused by sudden lane change in an attempt to avoid an imminent accident to the front is not likely to be treated as an acceptable defense. Rather, the expectation is for the driver to maintain a safe enough stopping distance so that a sudden swerve is unnecessary.

