



JOB AID
Driving Safety: Tailgating

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Tailgating is when a driver follows so closely behind another that there is not enough time/distance to stop and avoid a collision.

Dangers of Tailgating

Stopping distance is made up of the distance drivers cover between the moment they perceive the need to stop and the moment they apply the brakes and come to a complete stop. Delayed braking, limited visibility, poor traction, fast speed, and heavy vehicles/loads increase the distance it takes for a vehicle to stop. Tailgaters do not have enough stopping distance between themselves and the vehicle ahead, leading to rear-end collisions.

Tailgating can trigger road rage (violent anger) and cause traffic jams (traffic stoppage).

All states have laws against aggressive driving, including tailgating or following too closely.

Strategies to Avoid Being a Tailgater

To avoid being a tailgater:

- Avoid distractions when driving
- Create and maintain a cushion/buffer of safety (space) around your vehicle and increase it in inclement weather and other hazardous conditions
- Leave space in front of your vehicle when stopped

To prevent rear-end collisions, monitor your **following distance** to make sure you have enough TIME and DISTANCE to come to a safe stop. Watch the vehicle in front of you pass an object, such as a road sign. Then, slowly count to see how long it takes until your front bumper passes that object.

The number of seconds that should pass depends on the size of the vehicle, the weight of its load, how fast it is traveling, the condition of the vehicle, and road conditions. A good rule is 3-4 seconds for small vehicles and 5-6 seconds for large vehicles. Add 1-2 seconds when road conditions, visibility or vehicle conditions necessitate.

Double your following distance in inclement weather. Whatever following distance count you use, it's always OK to add time for safety!

Strategies to Avoid Being Tailgated

Use safe practices to avoid being tailgated:

- Check mirrors often when slowing and stopping
- Brake smoothly and gradually
- Re-enter the flow of traffic cautiously
- Check and maintain brake lights

Allow the tailgater to safely pass you by changing lanes or slowing down. Don't get angry or try to make a point.

Avoid:

- Slamming the brakes (rear-end collision risk)
- Tapping the brakes (false stop indication can enrage drivers)
- Speeding up (may not stop tailgater and risks speeding)

Remember that your life is worth more than your ego.