

Job #1 when operating a vehicle, regardless of size, is to do so safely. Yet, according to the National Highway Safety Administration, US drivers are involved in 6 million auto accidents per year, with rear-end collisions account for nearly a third of these accidents, 20% of those being fatal. Collisions can range from accidents involving two vehicles to multi-vehicle collisions in heavy traffic congestion. Unsafe following distance is a key factor in these incidents. The good news is that rear-end collisions are the most avoidable type of accident. If you follow the simple rules for the road regarding safe speed and distance below, you can increase your ability to avoid being involved in a rear-end collision.

Perception + Reaction Distance + Braking Distance = Total Stopping Distance

1

The 1.5 seconds that pass between the driver seeing a hazard and applying the brakes does not vary with speed. Conversely, speed greatly impacts the braking distance. To better understand, the 62 feet stopping distance at 20 mph increases to 460 feet at 80 mph.



2

3-Second Rule As the car ahead passes a fixed object, count to three. If your vehicle passes the fixed object before you reach three, increase the distance between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead to allow for a safe following distance. Add an additional second or two for heavier vehicles and/or adverse driving conditions.



3

Distracted Driving Behind-the-wheel distractions such as phone calls, texts, navigation, music, eating or drinking, and passengers contributed to the loss of 3,308 lives in 2022. (NHTSA. Texas law prohibits texting and driving and requires the use of hands-free technology. Involvement in a serious accident while texting and driving can result in criminal charges and jail time.

4

Driving in Adverse Conditions Weather conditions such as rain, snow, sleet and fog impact visibility as well as the stopping distance of the vehicle. Reduce your speed to allow additional space between your vehicle and the lead vehicle.



5

Drive Defensively Scan the road ahead for indications that you may need to slow down or stop suddenly. Check your mirrors for tailgaters and slow down or change lanes to allow them to pass. Give your fellow drivers adequate time to react by avoiding sudden stops and last minute turns, and using your turn signals to alert drivers of your intentions.

LEARN MORE WITH THESE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Texas Department of Insurance: <https://www.tdi.texas.gov/pubs/videoresource/fsriskstailgati.pdf> (texas.gov)
- NHTSA [CMV Driving Tips - Following Too Closely](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohlp/cmv_driving_tips_following_too_closely/) | FMCSA (dot.gov)