

TAILGATING DOESN'T PAY

Know and Follow the Four-Second Rule

One of the most important rules of safe driving is to leave yourself enough room to stop in time if the vehicle ahead of you comes to a sudden halt. Tailgating is highly dangerous, and the best way to avoid doing it is to follow the four-second rule. This rule builds a safe following distance between you and the vehicle ahead.

Stay Ahead of the Game

When the driver ahead of you passes a fixed object, such as a tree, telephone pole or billboard, start counting. Say "One thousand one, one thousand two." If your vehicle reaches that object before you stop counting, you're too close. Widen the gap. If the weather is bad or you're hauling a trailer, widen the gap even more.

By keeping a four-second gap between you and the vehicle ahead, you know that you'll always follow a couple of seconds behind the next vehicle. Regardless of your speed, you should have time to stop or change lanes safely if traffic halts ahead of you, as long as you stay alert to changing conditions.

It's a good idea to keep your eye on road conditions at least 12 seconds ahead. If you notice erratic driving or a vehicle suddenly slowing, you have time to take action.

How to Handle Tailgaters

Suppose someone is tailgating you. What's the best way to cope with the situation?

Simply change the four-second rule to four seconds. Slow down gradually and double the distance between you and the vehicle head. This will usually motivate the tailgater to back off or pass you.

Resist the urge to do something aggressive, such as speeding up or hitting your brakes. You'll be taking a big

risk in an already dangerous situation. Any you may encourage the tailgater, rather than discourage him. The object is to take care of yourself and let him go his way as soon as possible.

If You Find Yourself Tailgating

Suppose the vehicle in a center lane in front of you suddenly breaks down and you realize you've been following too closely. What should you do?

In this situation, the outside lanes offer more opportunities for avoiding an accident than the center lane.

Turn on your hazard-warning flashers to prevent a pileup behind you. If the disabled vehicle has stopped, check the right lane for an opening in the traffic. Signal and move into that lane.

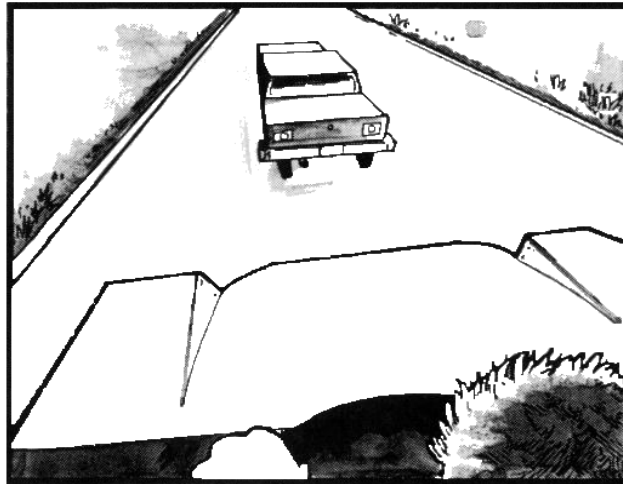
If the stricken vehicle is still moving, the driver will probably try to move into the right lane and pull off the road. In this case, see if there's a safe opening for you to move into the left lane. Keep in mind that left-lane traffic may be moving faster. Be prepared to accelerate.

If you can't move left or right, you may have to stop in your lane. Try to stop without skidding. Skidding into another lane could be worse than ramming the stricken vehicle.

If You Stall In Traffic

If your vehicle loses its fan belt or blows a radiator hose, the main thing to remember is to avoid stopping in traffic. Try to get to the shoulder. If the engine dies, put the transmission in neutral so you can coast. Turn on your hazard-warning flashers.

No matter how fast you're traveling, remember this; just four second between you and the vehicle ahead could give you the time to avoid an accident if you stay alert at the wheel. Any by keeping a close eye on traffic that's 12 seconds ahead, you can spot trouble before it happens to you.



Use the four-second rule to allow a safe stopping distance.