Rear-End Collisions

When you rear-end someone:
- Occupants of both vehicles are often injured
- In heavy traffic, you may be subsequently rear-ended
- You are almost always found to be at fault, even if the driver in front:
  - Slammed on their brakes unexpectedly
  - Cut in front of you at the last minute

You are responsible for maintaining an adequate gap in front of you!

You need time and distance to perceive, react and stop

**Safe Following Distance:**
Most people cannot visually determine distances between moving vehicles. Best practice, recommended by the National Safety Council and most state driving manuals, is the seconds-counting method:

- Determine the minimum number of seconds for your vehicle — 3 seconds for sedans and light trucks
- When a vehicle in front passes a fixed object, such as a light post or sign, begin counting: One one-thousand, two one-thousand...
- If your vehicle passes the fixed object prior to your seconds, slow down and re-count

**Recommended Min. Following Distance (Seconds)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 sec</td>
<td>Sedans and Light Trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 sec</td>
<td>Large Vans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 sec</td>
<td>Light Vehicles Pulling Trailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 6 sec</td>
<td>Med/Large Straight Trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 8 sec</td>
<td>Tractor-Trailers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increase your following distance further during inclement weather: rain, snow, ice and fog.

**Perception Distance:**
Realizing you need to brake, which is influenced by age and alertness:

- Fatigue
- Illness
- Distractions

**Reaction Distance:**
Moving your foot to the brake and applying it.

**Stopping Distance:**
Time it takes for vehicle to stop once brake is depressed.
Influenced by:

- Speed
- Size and weight of vehicle
- Condition of brakes/tires
- Weather: rain, ice, snow
- Vehicles with air brakes need additional distance due to brake lag time


Maintain a safe speed: Speeding reduces your ability to perceive hazards and increases the time it takes to stop.
**Distracted driving** is a primary cause of rear-end collisions, as distractions diminish your ability to perceive and react to a hazard. **Limit visual, manual and cognitive distractions while driving!**

**Visual distractions:**
Tasks that require you to look away from the road ahead.

**Manual distractions:**
Tasks that require you to take a hand off the steering wheel to manipulate a device or object.

**Cognitive distractions:**
Tasks that require you to avert your mental attention away from the task of driving.

Tasks that require all three are the most hazardous

**Length of distraction:**
Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of an entire football field, or past 4 semi-trucks, with your eyes closed.¹

Keep glances away from the road ahead to 1.5 seconds or less.² Like when checking mirrors, for example.

**Scanning ahead** is an important process to prevent rear-end collisions. Do not rely on the vehicle’s brake lights in front of you to signal a hazard. Scan well beyond the vehicle in front of you.

**Rear-end collisions at intersections:**
Watch for vehicles:
- That may try to make a changing light, but brake suddenly when they decide not to
- That begin to move ahead when a light changes, then unexpectedly slows or stops

When stopped at intersections leave a gap between you and the vehicle ahead, at least enough that you can see the bottom of their rear tires.

**Reduce your chance of being rear-ended:** Maintaining a safe following distance also allows you to slow gradually so you are not rear-ended by a distracted or tailgating driver.

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¹ The information used to create this brochure was obtained from sources believed to be reliable to help users address their own risk management and insurance needs. It does not and is not intended to provide legal advice. Nationwide, its affiliates and employees do not guarantee improved results based upon the information contained herein and assume no liability in connection with the information or the provided suggestions. The recommendations provided are general in nature; unique circumstances may not warrant or require implementation of some or all of the suggestions. Nationwide, Nationwide is on your side, and the Nationwide N and Eagle are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. © 2022 Nationwide CMO-1683AO (03/22)