

Shift into Winter

Tips for Winter Driving

Rain, fog, snow and ice. Together with winter's lower light, driving in these conditions can be a challenge. Brush up on your winter driving IQ to help you get there safely.



Drop your speed to match road conditions –

The posted speed is the maximum speed under ideal conditions. It is often safer in winter to drive below the posted speed. Use caution when passing and ease up on the gas – it won't take much longer to get there.

Driving 20 km? At 80 km/h it takes 15 minutes. At 60 km/h it takes only 5 minutes longer.

Maintain a safe following distance – You've heard about the two-second rule. But in winter conditions, you need to at least double that to four seconds.

Driving 80 km/h? That's 22 metres per second. Leave at least 88 metres between your vehicle and the one in front. That's about 14 vehicle lengths or way longer than the length of a hockey rink!

Watch for hidden dangers – Shaded areas, bridges and overpasses, railway crossings and intersections can be icy, even if other areas are not.

Think you'll see it in time? Maybe, but black ice is difficult to see. Why push your luck? Slow down as you get closer to these areas.

Turn your cruise control off – Slippery roads can cause your wheels to spin. You need to reduce your speed to regain control. But if your cruise control is activated, your wheels will continue to spin.

Think using cruise control makes highway driving easier? If your wheels start to spin and you lose control, you'll have to turn it off before you can regain control. And what if it's too late?

Avoid sudden moves – Sudden or abrupt braking, accelerating or turning in wet, snowy or slippery conditions can make your car skid. Make your moves smoothly and steadily. *Think you can get away with it? Why take a chance that could result in your vehicle turning donuts in oncoming traffic?*

Know how to handle a skid – If you start to skid, ease off the brake or accelerator, look and steer smoothly in the direction you want to go. You may overcorrect, causing your vehicle to then skid in the opposite direction. This may happen a few times. Repeat the procedure until you regain control. Once you do, proceed with caution.

Feel confident in your skid handling? Remember – every vehicle handles differently in each of winter's driving conditions. But the principle remains the same – look and steer smoothly in the direction you want to go.

Be cautious when approaching highway maintenance vehicles (e.g., snow plows and winter road maintenance trucks) – Maintain a safe following distance. These vehicles throw up snow and spray, making it difficult to see. *Tempted to pass? Think again. You won't be able to see what lies ahead as you pass. And passing on the right is a really bad idea. Many plow trucks have wings that extend out to the right of the truck.*

Make sure you Shift into Winter.

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