

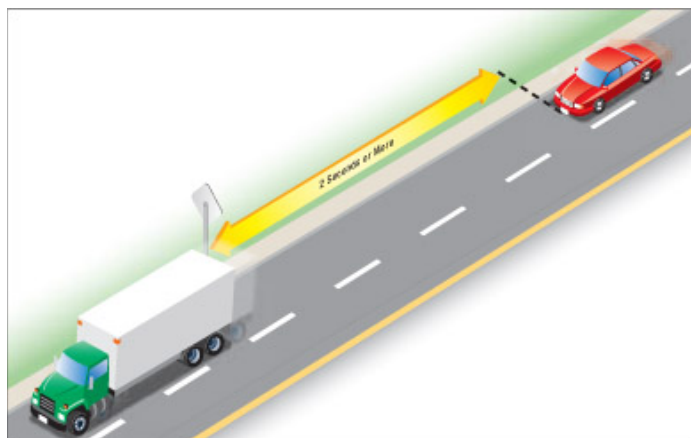
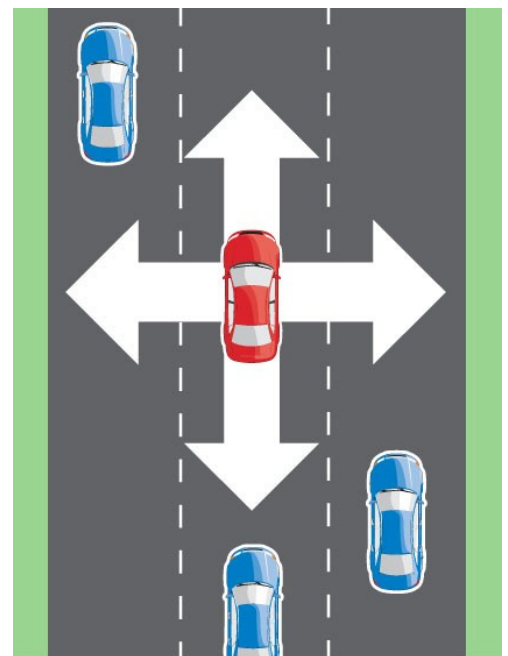
# The Importance of Remembering Time & Distance

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Spring has arrived in the Northeast! The sun is shining, the flowers are beginning to bloom and massive potholes are everywhere! Now is the perfect time to remind ourselves of some simple, but important rules that we should respect and follow to keep ourselves and the others we share the road with safe out there.

With the many distractions around us as we travel from place to place, it is vital we stay aware of two key things: time and distance. Over time this awareness can become second nature and we can fall into a comfort zone. We can easily take for granted the amount of risk that lies around the next corner in our ever changing environment. Although we can never fully eliminate all risk while on the road, there are some basic skills we can keep in mind to reduce this risk quite significantly.

First, we should do our best to keep a good buffer of space around our vehicle in all four directions. This space should be enough to allow you time to escape in the event that a hazard occurs. In order to have this time, you need to be able to plan ahead. This means scanning your surroundings and being aware of what's happening at least 12-15 seconds ahead of you - or as far ahead as you can see. If you can see it, you should be able to predict a potential hazard and analyze the situation for the appropriate response.



Secondly, when following a vehicle you should always leave a minimum of 2-3 seconds of space in front of you. Sometimes it can be difficult to measure this time, so here's a quick tip to help you. Find a stationary object along the roadway and once the vehicle you're following passes this object start counting: one one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand. If you reach the object before you finish counting then you need to slow down and leave more following distance.

To avoid potential hazards, it's important for all drivers to use a system and have a plan. Although this system can be automatic and second nature, it's important that we make ourselves aware of it and remember to practice to keep it fresh in our minds. One of the quickest and most simple driving systems is called the SIPDE process, which I first learned from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF).

- S** - Scan aggressively in all four directions
- I** - Identify potential hazards
- P** - Predict what the hazard will do
- D** - Decide what you should do and how you will do it
- E** - Execute the maneuver

If you'll notice, the first four steps of this system are completely mental with only the last step being physical. Hence the saying that driving is 90% mental. Accidents usually happen because the driver is surprised; something unexpected enters their path of travel and they don't have enough time to react. If the driver is focused and looking well ahead, chances are they will have time to perceive the potential hazard before it becomes an unwanted part of their car. The sooner you become aware of a potential hazard the sooner you can react to it. Remember that at 40 mph you're traveling 59 feet per second. If you save a tenth of a second by scanning and identifying correctly, you have now saved 6 feet of travel - the average width of most vehicles.

In simple terms, successful roadway navigation comes down to managing two things: time and distance. So stay alert - be aware of your surroundings and give yourself and the others around you a little more space. And most importantly, stay safe out there!

## Understanding Distraction

