

DEFENSIVE DRIVING BASICS INTERSECTIONS

A lot goes on at an intersection. In fact, over half of all city crashes happen at intersections. Let's look at some different kinds of intersection controls and how to deal with them.

Traffic Lights. Everyone knows that green means go, red means stop and yellow means speed up to get through the intersection before the light changes. Right? Wrong. In some states it is actually illegal to speed up on a yellow light. And it never makes good safety sense. The purpose of a yellow light is to allow you to stop without skidding before the light turns red.

When a light has been green for a while, approach the intersection slowly, with your foot over the break, so that you are prepared to stop. After a light turns green be cautious about going into an intersection. Remember that traffic lights don't stop cars. People stop cars. There may be cross traffic that continues after the light changes.

Stop Signs. A stop sign means just that—bring your vehicle to a full stop. A rolling stop is illegal and can get you a ticket. Remember that a flashing red light means the same as a stop sign.

Know the Right-Of-Way Laws. Misunderstandings about right-of-way are responsible for many traffic accidents in intersections. Here are some right-of-way guidelines:

- Traffic going straight has the right-of-way over traffic making a turn.
- Traffic at stop or yield signs must wait for cross traffic without signs to clear.
- At a four-way stop or uncontrolled intersection—one with no signs—always yield the right-of-way to a vehicle already in the intersection. If two cars arrive at the same time at adjacent corners, the car on the left must yield to the car on the right.
- If traffic on the other side of the intersection is backed up to the intersection, stay out of the intersection until traffic clears.
- Always yield to pedestrians.
- Never insist on the right-of-way if another driver does not yield to you. It's better to give in than to be "dead right". However, avoid giving up your right-of-way just to be polite. It confuses people and delays traffic.

Turning. Always use your turn signal for at least 100 feet—one third the length of a football field—before turning or changing lanes. When turning, always turn from the lane closest to the direction you are turning in, to the lane nearest the direction you have come from.

There are three keys to safety in intersections:

1. Know traffic and right-of-way laws governing intersections in your state.
2. Slow down and scan oncoming and cross traffic when approaching any intersection. Be ready for anything, including drivers who do not know the right-of-way laws.
3. Signal your intentions by your position and turn signal if necessary.

Following these three rules will guarantee your safety in any intersection.