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Washington DOL Written Test Study Guide

Study the information and road signs from the official driver's handbook below to help you prepare for your Washington written test.

Use this guide to review information that may show up on your official written test.

Make sure you read through the official Washington DOL Handbook in addition to using this study guide and taking our online practice tests.

In this study guide you'll find:

- Driver's Handbook topics and common questions
- Road signs, traffic signals, and lane markings
- Note sections on each page to help you study

For official information from the Washington DOL, to find application requirements, and to make appointments, please visit: <https://www.dol.wa.gov/>

When should you give up your right-of-way?

Always yield your right-of-way **when it will prevent a collision or an unsafe situation.**

Where should you stop when you come to a crosswalk with pedestrians crossing?

When you come to a crosswalk, **stop before the line.**

Always yield to pedestrians who are entering or are already in a crosswalk before crossing through a crosswalk.

What should you do at an uncontrolled intersection (no signs, no signals)?

- Slow down and be ready to stop.
- Yield to pedestrians.
- Yield to traffic or bicycles that **arrive first.**
- If traffic arrives at the same time, **yield to the vehicle on the right.**

Who has the right-of-way at a T intersection?

Yield to vehicles and pedestrians on the through-street, they have the right-of-way.

Who has the right-of-way when you are making a left turn?

Yield to oncoming traffic. Keep your wheels pointed straight when waiting to make a left turn. In the event you are hit from behind, this will help prevent your vehicle from rolling into oncoming traffic.

What are the right-of-way rules at intersections controlled by stop signs?

- Yield to pedestrians.
- The vehicle to **arrive first, goes first.**
- If vehicles arrive at the same time, **yield to the vehicle on the right.**

Notes:

Which direction does traffic move in a roundabout?

Traffic moves counter-clockwise, or to the right of the island, in a roundabout.

What is the proper way to use a roundabout or rotary intersection?

- Slow down before you reach the roundabout.
- Yield to pedestrians and bicycles.
- Obey traffic signs and lane markings.
- Yield to traffic inside the roundabout.
- Enter the roundabout when there is a gap that allows you to merge safely.
- Do not stop or pass other vehicles in the roundabout.
- Signal to change lanes or exit.
- If you miss your exit, continue around to it again.

Who has the right-of-way on a steep, narrow mountain road with no room to pass?

The vehicle facing downhill must yield to the vehicle facing uphill.

The vehicle facing downhill will have more control when backing up the hill.

The vehicle facing uphill has the right-of-way.

What do the posted speed limit signs indicate?

Speed limits regulate the maximum speed **when driving conditions are good**.

Notes:

What are some situations that may require you to drive slower than the posted speed limit?

- In bad weather.
- In poor visibility.
- When driving at night.
- Around children, schools, and parks.
- When towing a vehicle.
- In areas where you can't see the road ahead (blind intersections, curves, corners)
- Near wildlife crossing areas.

What are the main factors that determine how much time and distance you will need to stop?

- **Perception time:** how long it takes for you to perceive a hazard. The average perception time for an alert driver is $\frac{3}{4}$ second to 1 second.
- **Reaction time:** how long it takes for you to react to a hazard. The average driver has a reaction time of $\frac{3}{4}$ second to 1 second.
- **Braking distance:** how far your vehicle needs to come to a complete stop.

Total stopping distance also depends on road conditions, tire conditions, brake conditions, vehicle weight, and speed.

How does total stopping distance and force of impact change as you increase your travel speed?

Doubling your speed from 20 to 40 mph, increases your braking distance and force of impact by 4.

Tripling your speed from 20 to 60 mph, increases it 9 times.

Quadrupling your speed from 20 to 80 mph, increases it by 16 times.

Notes:

How can you identify hazards and avoid last minute maneuvers?

- **Scan the road at about 10 to 15 seconds** ahead of your vehicle to spot hazards early.
 - About 1 block in the city, or about ¼ mile on the highway.
- Use your mirrors to scan what is happening on the sides of and behind your car.
- Scan nearby lanes, oncoming lanes, and the sides of the road to spot hazards before they become a problem.
- Don't follow other vehicles too closely.
- Avoid fixating on the vehicle in front of you.
- Look both ways at intersections even if you have a green signal. Look left, right, and left again.
- Don't remain in another vehicle's blind spot for too long.
- Keep space between your vehicle and vehicles parked along the side of the road.
- Check around your vehicle when backing up. Do not depend on your mirrors alone. Turn your head and body so you can look out of the rear window.

What is a good following distance rule to follow?

Use the 4 second rule when following other vehicles.

When the vehicle ahead of you passes a certain point, count: one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, etc. If you pass the point before you finish counting, increase your following distance.

Certain situations like heavy traffic or poor conditions may require a longer following distance.

What should you do if a vehicle cuts you off?

Remove your foot from the gas. This allows you to create space without slamming the breaks or swerving dangerously.

Notes:

What are some situations when you should increase your following distance?

- Someone is tailgating you.
- Driving in poor conditions.
- Following a motorcyclist or bicyclist.
- When the driver behind you is trying to pass.
- When towing a trailer.
- When following large vehicles.
- When merging onto the freeway.

What is the proper way to make a left turn?

- Drive close to the center divider line or into the left turn lane.
- Signal before the turn.
- Look over your left shoulder and slow down.
- Stop behind the limit line.
- Look left, right, and left again.
- Turn when safe.
- Avoid cutting the corner.
- Keep your wheels pointed straight before you begin to make the turn.

What is the proper way to make a right turn?

- Drive close to the right edge or the road.
- If there is a bike lane, do not drive in it for more than 200 feet before your turn.
- Watch for pedestrians, bicycles, or motorcycles who may be between you and the curb.
- Signal before the turn.
- Look over your right shoulder and slow down.
- Stop behind the limit line.
- Look both ways.
- Turn when it is clear and safe to do so.
- Avoid swinging wide to the left to make the turn.

Notes:

What are some areas where you can not make U-turns?

- At railroad crossings.
- On a divided highway with a dividing section, curb, land strip, or two sets of double yellow lines.
- Where you cannot see 200 feet in either direction.
- Where you see a No U-Turn sign.
- Where you will cause a collision.
- On a one-way street.
- In front of a fire station.
- In business districts unless a sign allows you to do so.

When are you permitted to pass on the right?

- An open highway is marked for 2+ lanes of traffic in the same direction and you cannot pass on the left.
- The driver ahead of you is turning left and passing on the right means you will stay on the roadway.

What should you do if another vehicle is trying to pass you?

Maintain your lane position and do not speed up.

What are some situations where you can not pass?

- When approaching a hill or curve where you cannot see oncoming traffic.
- Within 100 feet of an intersection, bridge, tunnel, railroad crossing, or other hazardous area.

How do you change lanes safely?

- Signal your intention.
- Check your mirrors.
- Turn your head to check your blind spots.
- Make sure there is enough room.
- Make the change.
- Cancel your turn signal.

Which lane should you use when passing other vehicles, turning left, or driving faster?

Use the left lane or Number 1 lane.

Notes:

Which lane should you use to enter or exit traffic, turn right, park, leave the road, or drive slower?

Use the rightmost lane.

How does freeway driving differ from driving on the regular street?

Freeway driving differs from driving on a regular street because freeways are designed to handle more traffic at higher speeds and require you to react more quickly.

What should you do when **entering the freeway?**

- Match the speed of freeway traffic.
- Do not cross the solid white line early.
- Do not stop in the acceleration lane unless absolutely necessary.
- Yield to traffic on the freeway.
- Signal and move into the freeway lane.

What should you do when **leaving the freeway?**

- Move towards the deceleration lane well in advance of your exit.
- Change lanes one at a time.
- Slow down once you reach the deceleration lane.
- Do not slow on the freeway.
- Do not make last second exits.
- Follow the advisory speeds on the exit ramp.

When should you use your turn signals?

Signals must be given by hand signals or your vehicle's turn signal lights before turning left or right, changing lanes, slowing down, or stopping.

How far in advance must you use your turn signals?

Turn signals should be given at least 100 feet before making a turn.

Notes:

What should you do if you plan to make a turn after an intersection?

Start signaling after you have entered the intersection. Signaling too early may cause other drivers to turn out in front of you.

What are the correct hand signals?

Left Turn Hand Signal: Left arm extended out to the left.

Right Turn Hand Signal: Left arm bent 90 degrees pointing up.

Slow or Stop Hand Signal: Left arm bent 90 degrees pointing down.

When should you use your headlights?

If weather conditions require the use of your windshield wipers, you must turn on your low-beam headlights.

Turn on your low-beam headlights any time conditions prevent you from seeing other vehicles.

Use your headlights on country or mountain roads, even when it is sunny.

Use your headlights when visibility is less than 1,000 feet.

Turn on your headlights **from ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise.**

When should you dim your high-beam headlights?

Dim your high-beam headlights within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle or when following within 300 feet behind another vehicle.

What should you do if you are blinded by the headlights of an oncoming vehicle?

Look towards the right edge of your lane until they pass.

When should you not use your horn?

- To alert a bicyclist.
- To tell other drivers they made a mistake.
- Because you are upset.

Notes:

- To honk at pedestrians on the side of the road.

What are some places where you are not permitted to park?

- Where there is a “No Parking” sign.
- In a crosswalk, sidewalk, or in front of a driveway.
- Blocking a ramp for a disabled person.
- In a tunnel or bridge, unless permitted.
- Between a safety zone and curb.
- On the wrong side of the street.
- On the freeway, unless it is an emergency or when directed to do so by a police officer.

How should you turn your wheels when parking on a hill?

When parking on an incline, **turn your wheels so the vehicle WILL NOT roll into the street if the brakes fail.**

When you are **facing downhill**, turn the wheels towards the curb or the side of the road.

When you are **facing uphill**, turn your wheels away from the curb and let your

vehicle roll back a few inches to catch the curb.

Always **set the parking brake** and leave the vehicle in gear or the “Park” position when parking the car.

What should you do when you hear or see an emergency vehicle?

You must yield the right-of-way to any **emergency vehicle using sirens and flashing lights.**

Slow down and drive to the right edge of the road and stop until the emergency vehicle has passed.

If you are in an intersection, continue through the intersection first, and then pull over and stop.

Do not follow within 500 feet behind an emergency vehicle with lights flashing or sirens on.

Notes:

What should you do if you approach an emergency vehicle on the side of the road with its lights flashing and/or sirens on?

If you approach an emergency vehicle on the side of a multilane highway with its lights flashing or sirens on, you should **move over one lane if possible and safe to do so and slow down.**

What should you do if you approach a school bus stopped with its lights flashing and stop arm extended?

If you approach a school bus that is stopped on the road with its signal arm extended and lights flashing, you must **stop and remain stopped until the signal is turned off.** Remain cautious for children in the area.

You are not required to stop on a divided highway with four or more lanes (at least two in the opposite direction) when you are headed in the opposite direction.

Why must you be cautious when sharing the road with large trucks, buses and commercial vehicles?

Large vehicles take more time, space, and distance to maneuver, stop, and accelerate.

How can you reduce the chances of a collision with a large vehicle?

- Do not move in front too quickly or with too little space.
- Avoid making sudden stops in front of a large truck.
- Avoid remaining in the large vehicle's "No Zones" to the front, rear, and sides of the vehicle.
- Realize that longer vehicles must swing wide to the left to complete a right turn. Do not try to squeeze between the truck and the curb when the truck swings left.
- Avoid cutting off a truck to exit or turn.
- Do not take too long to pass a truck.
- Do not tailgate a truck.

Notes:

How can you share the road safely with motorcyclists?

- Make a visual check for motorcyclists when changing lanes or turning.
- Allow a 4-second following distance behind motorcycle riders. If they should fall, you'll need more space to avoid hitting the rider.
- Allow motorcyclists to use a full lane width.
- Do not try to pass a motorcycle in the same lane.
- Move away from the motorcycle when they are passing you.

What are some rules to follow when sharing the road with bicyclists?

- Give the bicyclist at least **3 feet of space** when you are trying to pass.
- Merge behind the bicyclist and wait until they have passed before making a turn.
- Do not drive in the bike lane before making a turn for **more than 200 feet**.

What precautions must you follow when you encounter a blind pedestrian?

Be extra cautious around **blind pedestrians who are using a white cane or a guide dog**:

- Stop within 5 feet of the crosswalk.
- Stop at all crosswalks where pedestrians are waiting.
- Do not block the crosswalk.
- Do not give directions or honk your horn at a blind pedestrian.
- Do not block the sidewalk.

What should you do when you see pedestrians on the side of the street?

Drive with caution and always **yield to pedestrians who are entering or actively crossing the street**.

Notes:

What are some ways to reduce the risks of becoming an aggressive driver or agitating an aggressive driver?

- Allow yourself lots of time to reach your destination; don't be in a rush.
- Don't cut people off.
- Do not drive slowly in the fast lane.
- Do not follow other drivers too closely. (tailgating)
- Do not make obscene gestures or yell at other drivers.
- Do not use your horn unless necessary to avoid a collision.
- Allow other drivers to pass you.
- Always use your turn signals.

How should you handle driving on a curvy road?

Slow down before you enter a curve in the road.

Avoid braking inside the curve as this may cause a skid.

What is hydroplaning?

Hydroplaning occurs when your tires lose traction on a wet road.

Tires can **lose all contact with the road at speeds of 50 mph and higher.**

Hydroplaning can start to occur at **speeds as low as 35 mph.**

What should you do if your vehicle begins to hydroplane?

If your **vehicle begins to hydroplane:**

- Slow down gradually.
- Do not apply the brakes.
- Steer straight.

What are some things to remember about wet and icy roads?

- Shade from trees and buildings can **hide icy spots.**
- **Bridges and overpasses often freeze first** and thaw last.
- The roads are often most slippery during the **first few minutes of a rainfail.**

Notes:

What should you do when driving in an area of high wind?

- Slow down.
- Maintain a firm grip and control of the steering wheel.
- Stay alert.
- Don't use cruise control.
- Pull over and wait for the storm to pass if necessary.

What should you do when driving in fog, smoke, or low visibility conditions?

If visibility is extremely poor, avoid driving altogether.

If you must drive, use your **low-beam headlights**.

Increase your following distance and slow down.

Why do skids occur?

Skids can occur on slippery surfaces, by driving too fast, or braking too quickly.

What should you do if your vehicle begins to skid?

- Ease off the gas.
- Avoid braking.
- Turn the steering wheel in the direction of the skid.

What should you do if your tires run off the pavement?

- Grip the wheel firmly.
- Ease off the gas.
- Brake lightly.
- Check for traffic behind you.
- Steer gradually back onto the pavement.

What should you do if your accelerator malfunctions?

- Shift into neutral.
- Apply the brakes.
- Keep focused on the road.
- Look for a safe escape route where you can slow down and stop.
- Use your horn and emergency flasher to warn other drivers.
- Get the car safely off the road.
- Come to a stop and turn off the ignition.

Notes:

Why is it important to not turn your ignition into the lock position while the car is in motion?

Your steering wheel can lock, causing you to lose control of the car.

What should you do if you have a tire suddenly blowout?

- Hold the wheel tightly.
- Keep the vehicle going straight.
- Take your foot off the gas pedal.
- Slow down gradually.
- Pull off the roadway if possible.

What are ways to prevent drowsy driving?

- Getting enough sleep and being well rested.
- Switching drivers if you get too tired.
- Taking regular rest stops and breaks.

What should you do if you suddenly encounter an animal in the roadway?

Avoid trying to swerve drastically to avoid hitting an animal. Concentrate on retaining control of the vehicle.

What are the 3 main types of driving distractions?

- **Visual distractions** - things that take your eyes off the road.
- **Cognitive distractions** - things that take your mind off the road.
- **Manual distractions** - things that take your physical control of the vehicle away (i.e. hands off the wheel).

Notes:

What are some activities that can be considered distracted driving?

- Using a cellphone or other handheld device.
- Reaching for an object.
- Watching something outside of the vehicle.
- Reading.
- Eating or drinking.
- Grooming.
- Talking on the phone.
- In depth-conversations with passengers.
- Attending to children or pets in the car.
- Adjusting dashboard controls or music.

What are your 3 main options when it comes to avoiding a collision?

- Speeding up.
- Turning quickly.
- Stopping or slowing down quickly.

What is the only way to sober up after using alcohol or drugs?

The only way to reduce the effects of alcohol (and your BAC) or drugs is time.

On average, it takes the body about **1 hour to dispose of the alcohol in 12 ounces of beer** or its equivalent.

What are some equivalents of a standard alcoholic drink?

A standard drink of alcohol is defined as:

- 12 ounces of beer.
- 5 ounces of wine.
- 1.5 ounces of liquor.

Which blood alcohol concentrations qualify as driving under the influence?

It is illegal and considered driving under the influence (DUI) if you operate a vehicle with a BAC of .08% if you are at least 21 years old.

Notes:

What should you do if you are involved in a crash?

- Stop and pull off the road if possible.
- Call 911 if anyone is injured.
- Assist the injured.
- Exchange information with the drivers involved.
- Make an accident report.

Keep proof of your car insurance policy in your car along with your registration when you operate the vehicle on public roadways.

Parking at Colored Curbs

White Curb: Stop only to pick up/drop off passengers or mail.

Green Curb: Parking is permitted for a limited amount of time.

Yellow Curb: Stop no longer than the posted time to load/unload passengers or freight. Non-commercial drivers must stay with their vehicle.

Red Curb: No stopping, standing, or parking.

Blue Curb: Parking is only for disabled

person or driver displaying a disabled placard or license plate.

Lane Controls & Marking

Solid Yellow Lines - Indicate the center of a road with traffic moving in both directions.

Broken Yellow Lines - Indicate that you may pass if the broken line is next to your lane and it is safe to do so.

Double Solid Yellow Lines - Indicate no passing. Do not drive to left of double solid yellow lines unless you are:

- In an HOV lane with an entrance on the left.
- Instructed to do so by a police office or construction detour.
- Making a left turn to enter or exit a driveway, private road, or making U-Turn.

Double Solid Yellow Lines Spaced at least 2 feet Apart - Indicate a barrier and should not be crossed.

Solid White Lines - Indicate lanes of traffic going in the same direction or the edge of the road.

Broken White Lines - Separate lanes of traffic with two or more lanes moving in the same direction.

Notes:

Double White Lines - Indicate a barrier between a normal lane and a preferential use lane like an HOV lane or bus lane. Do not cross a double solid white line.

Traffic Signal Lights

Solid Red Traffic Light - Stop. You can turn right on red after you stop and yield to pedestrians, bicycles, and other traffic unless there is a "No Turn on Red" sign.

Solid Red Arrow - Stop. Remain stopped until the light turns green. Do not turn on a red arrow.

Flashing Red Traffic Light - Stop. After stopping you may proceed. Observe the right-of-way rules and treat it as a stop sign.

Solid Yellow Traffic Light - Caution. The red light is about to appear. Stop if you can do so safely, otherwise, cross the intersection cautiously.

Solid Yellow Arrow - Protected turning is ending and the light will change to either red or solid green. Be ready to obey the next signal light.

Flashing Yellow Traffic Light - Proceed with caution. Slow down before entering the intersection and yield to pedestrians, bicycles, and other traffic. You do not need to stop unless necessary.

Flashing Yellow Arrow - Turns are permitted after yielding to oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

Solid Green Traffic Light - Go. Give the right-of-way to traffic, pedestrians, or bicycles in the intersection and proceed. Do not enter the intersection unless you can completely cross it.

Solid Green Arrow - Go. You can turn in the direction of the green arrow after yielding to pedestrians, bicycles, or other traffic still in the intersection. Green arrows indicated a protected turn where oncoming traffic and pedestrians are stopped.




Broken Traffic Signals - Treat a traffic signal that is broken or not working as a stop sign intersection, and proceed cautiously when safe to do so.

Notes:

Traffic Signs

Regulatory Signs



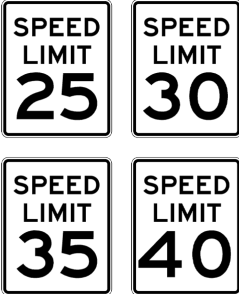

Regulatory road signs regulate the movement of traffic. They are either black and white or red and white. These signs must be obeyed.

	Stop Sign: Come to a complete stop at the limit line. Yield to pedestrians, bikes, and other vehicles. Proceed when safe.
	Yield Sign: Slow down so you can stop and yield if necessary.
	Wrong Way: You are heading the wrong way on the street or onramp.





Notes:

	<p>Do Not Enter: You are heading the wrong way, you must not enter at this point.</p>
	<p>Railroad X, 3 Tracks: Railroad Crossing ahead with 3 tracks. Be sure you can make it all the way across before proceeding.</p>
	<p>No turns: You cannot make the turn indicated on the sign at this intersection.</p>
	<p>No Parking: You cannot park and leave your car here.</p>



Notes:

	<p>Handicap Parking: You must display a proper disabled placard or handicap plate to park here.</p>
	<p>Emergency Stopping Only: You can only stop your car here during an emergency situation.</p>
	<p>Speed Limit: This is the maximum speed you can travel under normal conditions.</p>
	<p>School Zone Speed Limit Ahead: Obey this speed limit in the school zone when children are present or as indicated on the sign.</p>

Notes:

	<p>Do Not Pass: You must not pass other vehicles after this sign.</p>
	<p>Median/Divider: Keep to the right or left of the divider.</p>
	<p>Intersection Lane Control: You can only go the directions indicated on the sign when in those lanes.</p>
	<p>One Way Arrow: You can only travel in the direction of the arrow.</p>

Notes:

	<p>Divided Highway: Divided Highway ahead.</p>
	<p>Bike May Use Full Lane: A bicyclist may use the full traffic lane if needed. Allow them enough space.</p>





Warning Signs

Warning signs are black and yellow and are used to warn drivers of hazardous conditions.





Notes:

	Sharp Turn in the Direction of the Arrow
	Curve in the Direction of the Arrow
	Gradual Curve in Each Direction Following the Arrow
	Winding Road





Notes:

	<p>Sharp Turns in the Road Following the Arrow</p>
	<p>Sharp Turn Ahead, Advised Speed is 25 mph</p>
	<p>Exit Ramp Speed Advisory</p>
	<p>Side Road Enters the Highway</p>





Notes:

	<p>Side Road Enters the Highway at an Angle</p>
	<p>Road Cross Ahead</p>
	<p>You cannot continue straight, road continue left or right ahead</p>
	<p>Roundabout Intersection</p>

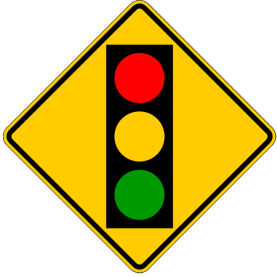



Notes:

	<p>Dip in the Road Ahead, Slow Down</p>
	<p>You can go left or right ahead</p>
	<p>Soft Shoulder, stay on the pavement</p>
	<p>Road Narrows ahead</p>





Notes:

	<p>Island/Divider ahead, keep to either side</p>
	<p>Railroad Crossing Ahead</p>
	<p>Fire Station, watch for emergency vehicles</p>
	<p>No Passing Zone Begins</p>





Notes:

	<p>Traffic Signal Ahead</p>
	<p>Stop Sign Ahead</p>
	<p>Yield Sign Ahead</p>
	<p>Maximum Clearance ahead</p>





Notes:

	Two-way Roadway
	Traffic Merges
	Lane Ends Ahead
	Divided Highway Begins Ahead


Notes:

	Divided Highway Ends Ahead
	Downgrade
	Slippery Road When Wet
	Cattle/Livestock Crossing

Notes:

	Wildlife/Deer Crossing
	Pedestrian Crossing, Yield to Pedestrians
	School Crossing, watch for children crossing
	School Bus Stop

Notes:

	Bike Crossing
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Highway Construction & Maintenance Signs

Construction signs are orange and black and are placed temporarily around construction and work zones to divert traffic or alert drivers to hazards.

Notes:





	Road Work Ahead
	Flag Person Ahead Directing Traffic
	Workers near the roadway

Guide Signs





Informational signs and guide signs give drivers directions and share information.

- Green and white signs communicate directions.
- Blue and white signs indicate services.
- Brown and white signs indicate recreational areas or points of public interest.


Notes:

	Hospital
	Gas
	Food
	Lodging

Notes:

	<p>Direction Sign</p>
	<p>Milepost Marker</p>
	<p>Interstate</p>
	<p>US Route</p>

Notes:

	<p>County Route</p>
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Notes:
