

Emergency driving

If you use the proper search patterns and see things well in advance, you should avoid most emergencies. However, as part of your IPDE method of driving, expect that other drivers may sometimes proceed when they shouldn't. This means that you will have to execute your decision in a hurry if you are to avoid a collision.

In this section, you will deal with the techniques you need to control your vehicle during the **execution** part of an emergency situation. To become skilled in emergency techniques, you need to practice, if possible, with a trained instructor.

Where to look

The rule is simple! **Look where you want to go and steer there.** Do not look at the tree you want to avoid, look at the gap you want to get through.

Emergency braking techniques

Always try to brake in a straight line. Get your wheels straight and line up your vehicle so that it can go straight ahead while you are braking. Do not try to brake when your vehicle is turned - you could spin out. (See [Braking](#).)

Emergency steering techniques

The difference between steering in an emergency situation and steering in a normal driving situation is the speed and amount that you need to turn the wheel.

If you do skid and need to recover, turn the wheel to correct your direction of travel. This method just takes practice. The difficult part is knowing when your wheels are straight.

At higher speeds, use the "9 and 3" steering method. (See [Hand positions](#).) Twist the wheel without moving your hands on the wheel. When your hands return to "9" and "3," you know your front wheels are straight.



Steering around an object involves three movements:

Steer

Twist the wheel in the direction you wish to go.

Counter-steer

Turn the wheel back the other way beyond the center point.

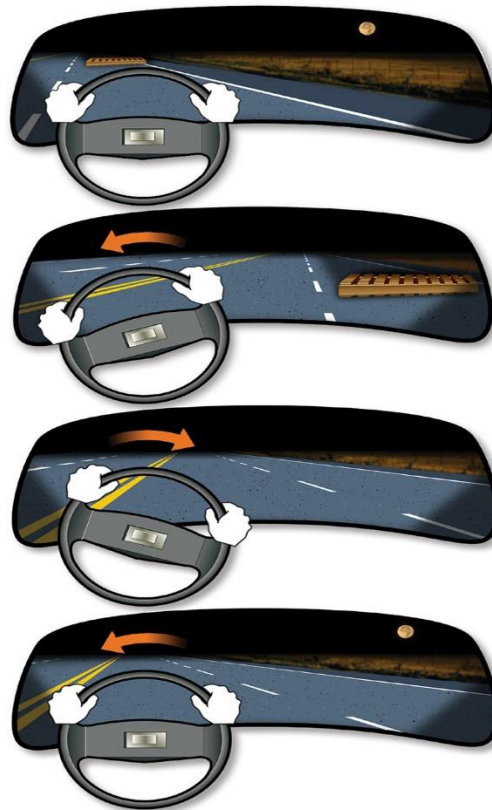
Straighten out

Twist the wheel back to the point where your wheels are straight.

Timing is crucial, so it is advisable to practice this manoeuvre with an experienced instructor.

It is important, after turning around an obstacle, to get the vehicle going straight before you begin a second steering movement.

If your choice is between braking or steering, choose to steer. You can steer around an obstacle in a shorter distance than it takes to stop in front of it.



Combined braking and steering

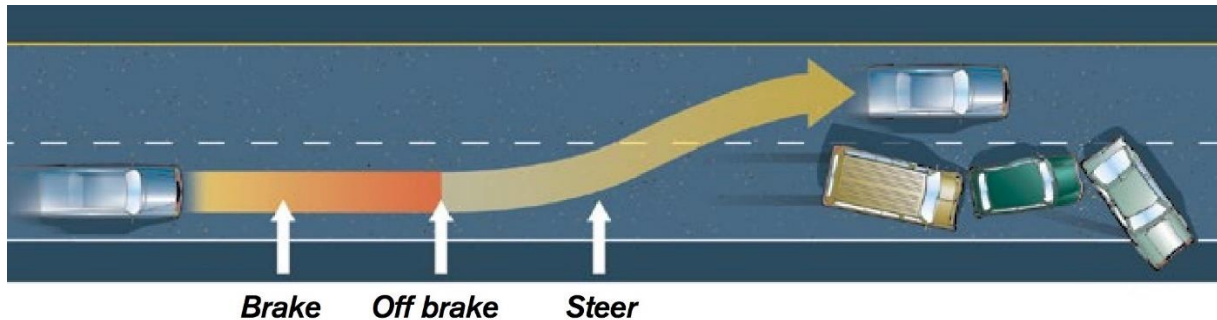
Where you have a choice, the best method of dealing with an emergency is to combine braking and steering. Brake first, while you slow down and regain control and finish deciding where you want to go.

If you have time and you are feeling calm, threshold brake. If not, lock your four wheels. Regardless of the method of braking you use, take your foot off the brake to steer around the object. Most importantly, do one thing at a time, either brake or steer. If your wheels are locked, the car will go straight ahead regardless of how you turn the steering wheel.

If you are driving a vehicle equipped with ABS, the best way to deal with an emergency is to brake hard and steer where you want to go.

Neutral/declutch

It is best to shift to neutral, or declutch, in all emergencies, except when you plan to use the accelerator to get out of trouble.



Skidding

A skid usually occurs on a slippery surface when there is not enough traction to keep the tires rolling. You will go into a skid when it is wet or slippery if you brake or accelerate too hard or turn too sharply.

Regardless of the kind of skid, **always shift to neutral (declutch)**. Turning the wheel in the direction of the skid is correct, but complicated. A much simpler way to decide what way to steer is to look where you want to go and steer there.

Never use cruise control when roads are wet or slippery or on gravel.

Skids resulting from braking

The remedy is the same in any skid resulting from braking, regardless of how many wheels lock. Shift to neutral (declutch) and remove your foot from the brake. Look where you want to go and steer there. By shifting to neutral, you will ensure that the skid does not get worse and you will get the wheels rolling again so that you can steer.

You will probably have to correct the steering. Look where you want to go and steer there. This will usually mean steering, counter-steering and straightening out.

Skids resulting from too much acceleration

Sometimes too much acceleration or using cruise control on a slippery surface will cause the vehicle to skid. To correct this situation, shift to neutral (declutch), take your foot off the accelerator, look where you want to go and steer there. Do not touch the brake. Some corrective steering may be necessary. Never use cruise control when roads are wet or slippery or on gravel.

Skids resulting from steering too sharply

If you turn the wheel too far to the left or right on a slippery surface, the front wheels will skid straight ahead. To correct this, you must shift to neutral (declutch) and turn the wheel back towards the center. As the wheels move to a position where they are turned less sharply, they will begin to grip again and you will be able to steer. You actually turn the wheel in the opposite direction from which you wish to go until the wheels begin to roll. Only at this point do you look where you want to go and steer there.

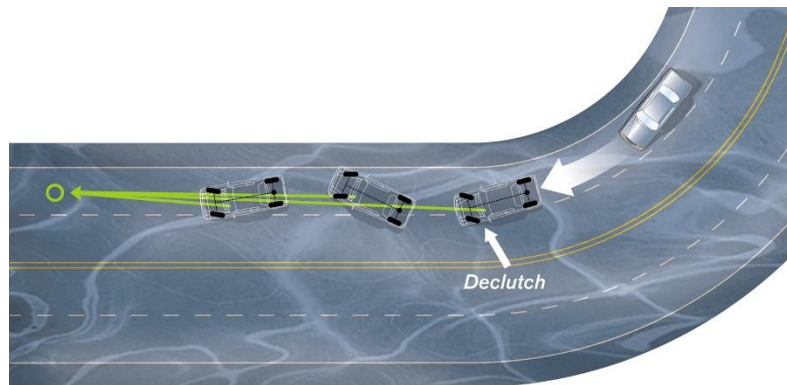
When skids go too far

Sometimes, when a skid has gone too far, the vehicle will start to spin. You may not be able to stop the spinning, but you do have a choice of where it spins. Shift to neutral, if you have time, and lock all four wheels. The vehicle will spin in a straight line, continuing in the direction in which it was last going. Usually, if you do this you can stay on the road.

To avoid getting into skids

To avoid getting into a skid, first adjust your speed to the conditions, then look well ahead so that you have plenty of time to react slowly and smoothly. If you must make any movements on a slippery surface, make

them smoothly and gently and avoid sudden movements of the steering wheel.



Do not turn a little problem into a tragedy

Many collisions are caused by the driver's over-reaction to a possible emergency situation. If you find yourself in an emergency situation, try to remain calm and take the time to think before you act. As a skid develops, the earlier you take action, the smaller the corrective movement required and the greater are your chances of controlling it.

Drifting onto a soft shoulder

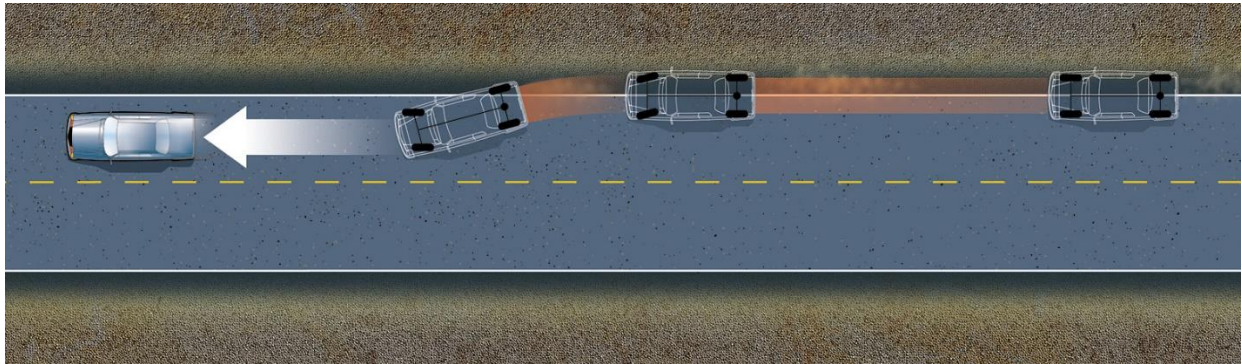
If you drift onto a soft shoulder, it is not what you do that is important, it is what you **do not do** that counts.

If your right wheels drop onto a soft shoulder, do not jerk the wheel to get back on the road in a hurry and do not brake hard.

Do not take any corrective action immediately, just steer straight along the shoulder, **gradually slowing down**. Then, when you have slowed and there are no other vehicles around, turn the wheel left and almost immediately (when you feel your front wheel come onto the road) counter-steer and straighten out.

It is a simple procedure as long as you do not steer very much. You should, however, grip the wheel tightly.

If you come off in a critical location, for example, just before a bridge, then treat your return to the road like an emergency lane change and steer, counter-steer, straighten.



Ditches

With ditches, as with soft shoulders, it is what you do not do that is important.

Do not brake hard, **do not** turn the wheel violently and **do not** try to get back on the road. These actions are very likely to cause your vehicle to roll over.

The important thing is to drive **down** the ditch. The greater the slope of the ditch, the more you will have to steer down the ditch to keep from rolling.

To drive down the ditch, hold the wheel firmly. Look and steer gently down the slope to where you want to go. Stay off the brake. Gradually release the accelerator. If you need to steer to avoid an obstacle, do it **slowly and gradually** and, if you have a choice, choose the direction that will send you down the slope.

If you suddenly find yourself going into a ditch, do not over-react. Try to resist doing anything until you think about what you must do. You are better off to do nothing than to try the wrong thing.

It is perfectly all right to drive in a ditch, provided you do not hit an approach road or something hard. The main cause of rollovers is

attempting to return to the road too early. You may have to be towed out, but that is a small price to pay compared to rolling the car.

Gentle ditch



Steep ditch



Blow-outs

With a front or rear tire blow-out, do not over-react. Look where you want to go and steer there, holding the steering wheel firmly. Gradually ease off the accelerator and gently brake. Once you have slowed down, steer the vehicle off to the side of the road.

Blow-outs can cause tremendous steering and wheel vibration. **Do not** be alarmed. Remember, gentle braking will improve stability and reduce steering and wheel vibration.

Rear wheel blow-outs can cause the back of the car to fishtail. Do not over-correct your steering. Just brake gently and steer where you want to go. Remember to shift to neutral (declutch).

Brake failure

Vehicles are manufactured with a two-circuit hydraulic brake system, and total brake failure is very rare. If one half of the system fails, the brake warning light will usually come on when you apply the brakes and you will have to push much harder to slow or stop the vehicle. Even if the brake pedal goes right to the floor, do not give up. It will still have stopping power.

You can help slow the vehicle by using the parking brake. Try to avoid having the rear wheels lock as this will cause the vehicle to spin around. By adjusting the parking brake release, you will make it easier to vary the pressure and avoid locking.

Do not pump your brakes. It is the wrong thing to do with a modern brake system. If the vehicle pulls to one side, grasp the wheel firmly, counter-steer and shift to a lower gear. After the car has stopped, do not drive any further. Call for help.

Power steering or power brake failure

Most vehicles have some form of power assistance for braking and steering to reduce the force necessary to operate the controls.

If the engine stalls, you will lose your power assistance and you will have to apply a great deal more force to the brake or steering wheel to maintain control. Try shifting to neutral and re-starting the engine, then return the shift lever to drive.

Accelerator sticking

If your accelerator sticks, do not panic. Shift to neutral (or declutch), slow down, pull over and stop. Then, turn the key off and try unsticking the pedal with your feet.

Headlight failure

If your headlights suddenly go out, immediately slow down to keep your original course, pull over and stop. Check the headlight switch and the dimmer switch. If these do not work, put on the parking lights or hazard lights.

Animals on the road



Peak times

Wild animals are unpredictable but there are times when the risk of a collision is particularly high. Be alert during the months of May and June when animals are drawn to ditches for road salt and to escape biting insects. Animals are also especially active in the late fall and early winter during mating season and migration. The peak times for collisions are dawn and dusk.

Watch your speed

Yellow wildlife warning signs indicate areas of high risk. No matter the season or time of day, it's important to watch for signs of wildlife and reduce your speed accordingly. Slowing down reduces the distance required to stop and decreases the force of impact in the event of a collision.

Be alert

It's important to constantly scan the road from shoulder to shoulder. Being alert is still your best defence to prevent a collision. When you see an animal at the side of the road, slow down and pass by slowly. For night driving, look for the glowing eyes of animals and use your high beams whenever possible.

When encountering an animal, try to do the following:

- Remain calm if an animal appears on the road in front of you. If you have time to stop, do so at a safe distance and stay alert. When one animal crosses the road, others often follow. You can also sound your horn to scare wildlife away from the road.

- If an animal appears suddenly and surprises you, remember to brake firmly and stay in control of your vehicle. Avoid swerving because you may turn into oncoming traffic or roll into the ditch.

When a collision is unavoidable

Sometimes collisions with wildlife are unavoidable even if you take every precaution and remain alert at the wheel. In these circumstances, try to remain calm.

- Aim your vehicle at the spot where the animal came from, not where it's going.
- Try for a glancing blow rather than a head-on encounter and let up on your brake just before you collide. This causes the front of your vehicle to rise slightly and reduces the chances of the animal going through your windshield.
- Hitting an animal can be a traumatic experience. If possible, move to the shoulder and turn on your hazard lights. Take a moment to regain your composure and then assess the damage to your vehicle.
- Don't approach the animal, especially if it appears to be wounded. Injured animals can be dangerous.
- Call the police or your local RCMP detachment if there are human injuries or significant damage to your vehicle. If the damage is less severe, you may continue driving and follow regular SGI claims reporting procedures.
- Call the Conservation Officer Service if there is a dead or injured animal to report.

https://www.sgi.sk.ca/handbook/-/knowledge_base/drivers/emergency-driving