

Chapter 5: Intersections and Turns



CHAPTER FIVE

INTERSECTIONS AND TURNS

Intersections and Turns

Note: Practice quizzes are available only for those sections of the manual covering rules of the road (Chapters 4 through 11 and Road Signs).

Most traffic crashes occur at intersections when a driver makes a turn. Many occur in large parking lots that are open to public use, like at shopping centers. To prevent this type of crash, you must understand the right-of-way rules and how to make correct turns.

Right-of-Way

Traffic signs, signals and pavement markings do not always resolve traffic conflicts. A green light, for example, does not resolve the conflict of when a car turns left at an intersection while an approaching car goes straight through the intersection. The right-of-way rules help resolve these conflicts. They tell you who goes first and who must wait in different conditions.

Here are examples of right-of-way rules:

- *A driver who approaches an intersection must yield the right-of-way to traffic that is in the intersection.*
Example: You approach an intersection. The traffic light is green and you want to drive straight through. Another vehicle is already in the intersection making a left turn. You must let that vehicle complete its turn before you enter the intersection.
- *If drivers approaching from opposite directions reach an intersection at about the same time, a driver that turns left must yield to traffic that moves straight or turns right.*
Example: You want to turn left at an intersection ahead. A vehicle reaches the intersection from the opposite direction and moves straight ahead. You must wait for approaching traffic to go through

before you turn. You may enter the intersection to prepare for your left turn if the light is green and no other vehicle ahead of you plans to make a left turn (see "[Turns](#)" later in this chapter). When you enter the intersection, keep to the right of the center line. Keep your wheels straight to prevent being pushed into oncoming traffic if your vehicle is hit from behind. When traffic headed toward you clears or stops for a red light, complete your turn when you can do so safely.

You must also yield to traffic headed toward you when you turn left into a driveway, parking lot or other area, even if there are no signs or signals that control the turn.

For any left turn, the law requires you to yield to any traffic headed toward you that is close enough to be a hazard. The decision about when traffic is too close takes experience and judgment. If you have any concern, wait for traffic to pass before you turn left.

- *At intersections not controlled by signs or signals, or where two or more drivers stop at STOP signs at the same time and they are at right angles, the driver on the left must yield the right-of-way to the driver on the right.*

Example: You are stopped at a stop sign and you are going to go straight through the intersection. A driver on the cross road has stopped at a stop sign on your right and is also going to go straight. You must yield the right-of-way to the other driver.

- *A vehicle that enters a roadway from a driveway, alley, private road, or another place that is not a roadway, must stop and yield the right-of-way to traffic on the roadway and to pedestrians.*

Example: You intend to leave a parking lot and turn right when you enter a street. You are driving out of a parking lot and turn right as you enter a street. A vehicle approaches from your left. You must stop and wait for the vehicle to pass before you enter the street. If you were to turn left, you would have to yield to vehicles that approach from both directions. If a pedestrian walked across the parking lot exit, you would have to wait for that person to go across.

- *Drivers must yield to pedestrians who legally use marked or unmarked crosswalks. This means you must slow down or stop if necessary. In all situations, drivers must take care to avoid colliding with pedestrians and bicyclists.*

Example: You are stopped at a red light. A pedestrian steps into the crosswalk, and then the light turns green. You must wait for the pedestrian to go across. You must also yield to pedestrians in crosswalks on your left or right before you turn.

- *You cannot enter an intersection if traffic is backed up on the other side and you can not get completely through the intersection. Wait until traffic ahead clears, so you do not block the intersection.*
- *Be alert to cross-streets or offset intersections so that you don't cause gridlock by blocking another street.*
- *A driver who approaches a traffic circle or rotary must yield the right-of-way to drivers already in the circle. (For more information on how to drive in a rotary see "[How to Drive Through a Roundabout](#)" in Chapter 8 of this manual.)*

Emergency Vehicles

You must yield the right-of-way to fire, ambulance, police and other authorized emergency vehicles when

they respond to emergencies. They will display lights that are flashing red, red and blue or red and white and sound a siren or air-horn. (Vehicles responding to emergencies for a Police Department, Sheriff Department or the New York State Troopers are not always required to use an audible siren or horn.) When you hear or see an emergency vehicle heading toward your vehicle from any direction, safely pull over immediately to the right edge of the road and stop. Wait until the emergency vehicle passes before you drive on. If you are in an intersection, drive out of it before you pull over.

You must pull over and stop for an emergency vehicle even if it is headed toward you in the opposite lane of a two-way roadway.

If you hear a siren or air-horn close by but do not know exactly where the emergency vehicle is, you must safely pull over to the right-side edge of the road and stop until you are sure it is not headed toward you.

An emergency vehicle that uses lights and a siren or air-horn can be unpredictable. The driver can legally exceed the speed limit, pass red lights and STOP or YIELD signs, go the wrong way on one-way streets and turn in directions not normally allowed. Although emergency vehicle drivers are required to be careful, be very cautious when an emergency vehicle heads toward you.

Move Over Law

Drivers must exercise due care to avoid colliding with **any** vehicle that is parked, stopped or standing on the shoulder or any portion of a highway.

When driving on parkways, interstates and other controlled access roads with multiple lanes, due care includes moving from the lane immediately adjacent to where such vehicle is parked, stopped or standing unless traffic or other hazards prevent doing so safely. When encountering parked, stopped or standing authorized emergency vehicles and hazard vehicles with emergency lights or hazard lights activated, motorists must also reduce their speed.

Blue, Green and Amber Lights

Personal vehicles driven by volunteer fire fighters responding to alarms are allowed to display blue lights and those driven by volunteer ambulance or rescue squad members can display green lights. Amber lights on hazard vehicles such as snow plows and tow trucks, or the combination of amber lights and rear projected blue lights on hazard vehicles designed for towing or pushing disabled vehicles, warn other drivers of possible dangers. Flashing amber lights are also used on rural mail delivery vehicles and school buses to warn traffic of their presence. The vehicles that display blue, green or amber lights are not authorized emergency vehicles. Their drivers must obey all traffic laws. While you are not required to yield the right-of-way, you should yield as a courtesy if you can safely do so.

Turns

Always signal before you turn or change lanes. It is important that other highway users know your intentions. The law requires you to signal a turn or lane change with your turn lights or hand signals at least 100 feet (30 m) ahead. A good safety tip is, when possible, to signal your intention to turn before you begin to brake or

make the turn. The proper hand signals are shown below.



LEFT



RIGHT



STOP

Remember these other tips when you prepare to turn:

- Reduce your speed.
- Be alert for traffic on all sides. Take special caution to check for motorcycles. Most crashes that involve motorcycles and other vehicles are caused because the driver of the other vehicle has failed to see the motorcycle.
- Keep your wheels straight until you actually begin to make your turn. If your wheels are turned and you are hit from behind, your vehicle could be pushed into the oncoming lane of traffic.
- Remember that your rear wheels will travel inside the path of the front wheels, nearer to the curb (right turn) or to traffic headed toward you (left turn).
- Watch for pedestrians, bicyclists and moped riders, especially on right turns. They are often difficult to see in traffic.
- Be especially alert to individuals in wheelchairs, people pushing strollers, or someone pulling a wheeled suitcase behind them. They may be closer to the ground and hidden behind a car.

The following illustrations show the correct position of your vehicle for turns. These positions are from requirements in the law, and are not just good advice.

RIGHT TURN:

As you prepare to turn, get as far to the right as possible. Do not make wide, sweeping turns. Unless signs direct you to do otherwise, turn into the right lane of the road you enter. See the example below.

Video file

Video of car turning right from a two-way road onto a two-way road.

LEFT TURN FROM ONE-WAY ROAD INTO ONE-WAY ROAD:

Move into the left lane when you prepare to turn. If the road you enter has two lanes, you must turn into its left lane. See the example below.

Video file

Video of car turning left from a one-way road onto a one-way road.

LEFT TURN FROM ONE-WAY ROAD INTO TWO-WAY ROAD:

Approach the turn in the left lane. As you proceed through the intersection, enter the two-way road to the right of its center line, but as close as possible to the center line. Be alert for traffic that approaches from the road to the left. Motorcycles are hard to see, and it is hard to judge their speed and distance away. See the example below.

Video file

Video of car turning left from one-way road onto two-way road.

LEFT TURN FROM TWO-WAY ROAD INTO TWO-WAY ROAD:

Approach the turn from the right half of the roadway closest to the center. Try to use the left side of the intersection to help make sure that you do not interfere with traffic headed toward you that wants to turn left. Keep to the right of the center line of the road you enter, but as close as possible to the center line. Be alert for traffic, heading toward you from the left and from the lane you are about to go across. Motorcycles headed toward you are hard to see and it is difficult to judge their speed and distance away. Drivers often fail to see a motorcycle headed toward them and hit it while they turn across a traffic lane. See the example below.

Video file

Video of car turning left from two-way road onto a two-way road.

LEFT TURN FROM TWO-WAY ROAD INTO ONE-WAY ROAD:

Approach the turn from the right half of the roadway closest to the center. Make the turn before you reach the center of the intersection and turn into the left lane of the road you enter. See the example below.

Video file

Video of car turning left from two-way road onto a one-way road.

LEFT TURN FROM TWO-WAY ROAD INTO FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY:

Approach the turn from the right half of the roadway closest to the center. Enter the left lane, to the right of the center line. When traffic permits, you can move out of the left lane. See the example below.

Video file

Video of car turning left from two-way road onto a four-lane highway.

U-Turns

A "U-turn" is any turn you make so you can proceed in the opposite direction.

Do not try a U-turn on a highway unless absolutely necessary. If you must turn around, use a parking lot, driveway or other area, and, if possible, enter the roadway as you move forward, not backing up.

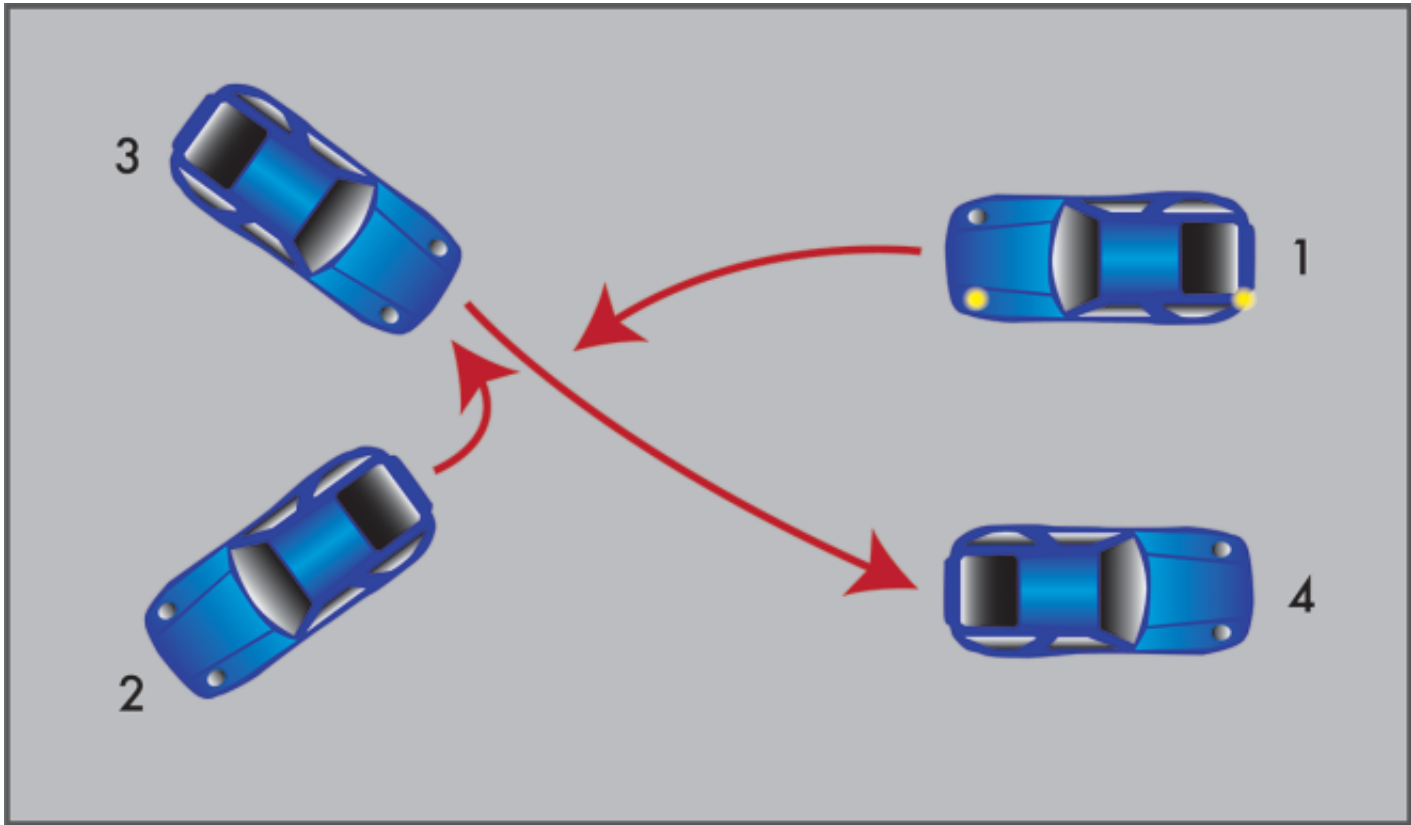
You can make a U-turn only from the left portion of the lane nearest to the centerline of the roadway, never from the right lane. Unless signs tell you otherwise, you can make a U-turn when you get permission to proceed by a green arrow left-turn traffic signal, provided it is allowed and you yield to other traffic.

You can not make a U-turn near the top of a hill, a curve or any other location where other drivers can not see your vehicle from 500 feet (*150 m*) away in either direction. U-turns are also illegal in business districts of New York City and where NO U-TURN signs are provided. You can never make a U-turn on a limited access expressway, even if paths connect your side of the expressway with the other side. In addition, it is prohibited for a vehicle to make a U-turn in a school zone.

Unless prohibited, a three-point turn may be used to turn around on a narrow, two-way street. You may be

required to make a three-point turn on your road test.

To make a three-point turn:



1. Signal with your right turn signal, then pull over to the right and stop. Signal with your left turn signal, then check carefully for traffic from all directions.
2. Turn left, go across the road so you come to a stop while you face the left curb or edge of the road.
3. Look again for traffic. Turn your steering wheel as far to the right as possible, then look behind you as you back up. Stop before you reach the right curb or any obstacle to the right curb or edge of the road.
4. Stop, check again for other traffic, then turn your steering wheel all the way to the left and pull forward to complete your turn when it is safe.

Questions

Before you go on to Chapter 6, make sure you can answer these questions:

- What is the hand signal for a stop? A right turn?
- If two drivers enter an intersection from opposite directions at the same time, and one travels straight, the other prepares to turn left, which must yield the right-of-way?
- If you enter an intersection to make a left turn, but oncoming traffic prevents the turn immediately what should you do?

- If you reach an intersection that is not controlled at the same time as a driver on your right, and both of you prepare to go straight, who has the right-of-way?
- What must you do if you enter a road from a driveway?
- You face a green light, but traffic on the other side of the intersection does not allow you to travel all the way through the intersection. May you enter the intersection?
- Does a vehicle prepared to enter a traffic circle or rotary have right-of-way over vehicles already in the circle?
- What will you do if you hear a siren nearby but cannot see where the emergency vehicle is?
- How far before a turn must you signal?
- When you prepare for a right turn, should you remain as close to the center of the lane as possible?
- Where must you position your vehicle when you prepare to make a left turn from a two-way roadway into a one-way roadway?

[Chapter 5 Quiz](#)