

How to Drive Safely in a Residential Area

Driving safely is important any time you are behind the wheel of a car, whether you are in a parking lot or on a major highway. Residential areas require you to be even more careful because there are often children and other members of the...

Part 1 of 3:

Preparing to Drive



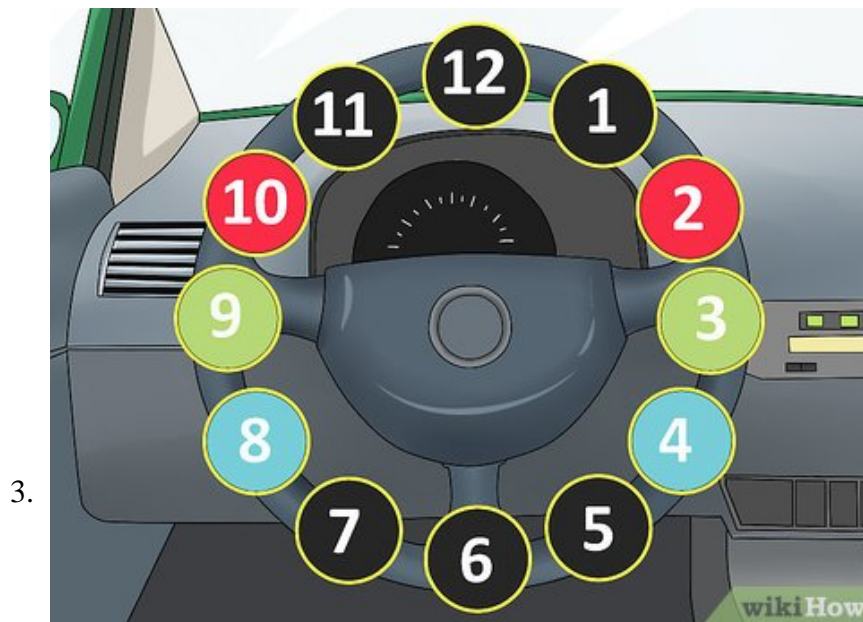
Familiarize yourself with residential traffic laws. Residential traffic laws may have changed depending on how long ago or in which state or country you received your driver's license.

1. Visit your state's DMV website or your local Department of Transportation if you are uncertain about your state or country's residential traffic laws.



Inspect your car before you drive it. Look for safety issues such as worn tires, leaking oil or faulty mirrors.

1. Wear your seatbelt and make sure any passengers are wearing their seat-belts as well.
2. Buckle children into proper car seats and restraints.^[1]



Safely position your hands on the wheel. Again, which hand position states and countries deem safest vary from state to state and country to country. There are three hand positions that are commonly considered safe: 10 and 2, 9 and 3, and 8 and 4. Keeping your hands in the proper place on the wheel will help you have the safest and quickest response to obstructions should one arise.^[2]

4.



Connect a bluetooth headset or hands free mobile phone device. It is illegal in most states and countries to use a mobile phone while driving a vehicle. If you anticipate the need to make or receive a phone call while driving make sure you have a handsfree option to keep your full attention on the road.^[3]

1. It is also generally illegal to wear earbuds in both ears while driving. If your hands free solution involves wearing earbuds, make sure you only have one earbud in at a time.
2. Pull over if you have an emergency call you need to make or take. Even hands-free devices can sometimes be distracting while you are driving.

Part 2 of 3:

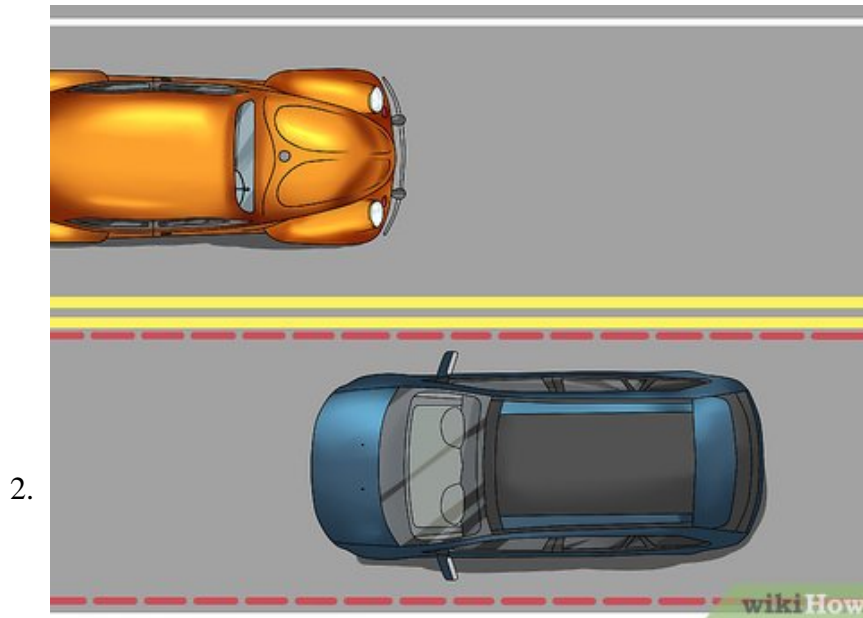
Obeying Residential Regulations

1.



Pay close attention to your speed. Speeding in residential areas, whether moderate or excessive, can be the difference between life and death. Check for signs posting the maximum speed limit in the residential area you are driving in. Paying attention to your speed and driving slowly will allow you enough time to respond to sudden obstructions in the road.^[4]

1. Keep your speed between 20 and 25 mph (32 and 40 km/h) if you do not see any posted signs.^[5]



Stay on your side of the road. Streets in residential neighborhoods are often narrower than major streets and highways. Make sure you are not taking up the whole road, especially when there is oncoming traffic.

1. If the road is too narrow to pass comfortably, pull over as far as you can onto the shoulder before continuing on.



Come to a complete stop at all stop signs. Some people are tempted to roll through stop signs, especially on quiet residential streets where they think no one will notice. Check for people who might be crossing the street, and wait for them. Many residential streets do not have crosswalks, so you need to pay attention

to anyone who needs to cross.

1. Look in all directions before you move again.
2. Pedestrians always have the right of way.

4.



Avoid driving while intoxicated or under the influence. Do not drive a vehicle if you have been consuming alcohol, illicit substances, or are taking medication that warns against driving. Avoid driving if your judgement and reactions are impaired and try to plan ahead if you anticipate drinking or taking necessary medication.^[6]

1. Enlist the help of a friend to take you home or to your next destination.
2. Call a taxi, Lyft, or Uber instead of driving yourself.

Part 3 of 3:

Driving with Caution



Be aware of your surroundings. Make sure to frequently check your mirrors to see what might be beside or behind you. Be alert as your surroundings can change quickly in residential areas.

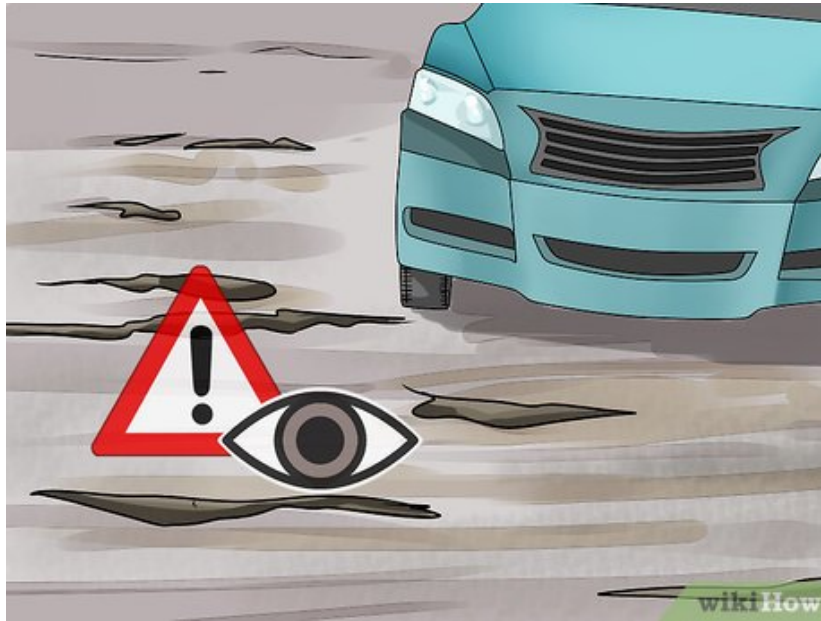
1. Use your horn if you think others nearby are dangerously unaware of your presence.
2. Watch for children who might be playing in or around the streets.
3. Look for pets that may be running near the streets and pedestrians who may be walking or running on sidewalks or in the road.



Observe all rules of the road. In addition to speed limits and stop signs, pay attention to other traffic rules and regulations.

1. Look for signs that prohibit U-turns, identify one way streets, and ask you to yield.
2. Use turn signals when you need to turn, and make sure your lights are on in the evening or during rain, snow, or fog.

3.



Notice road conditions. Go especially slow if there are potholes or weather conditions that might make the roads in a residential area slippery or difficult to see. Rain, fog, and snow all reduce the distance you can see and potentially contribute other hazardous conditions.^[7]

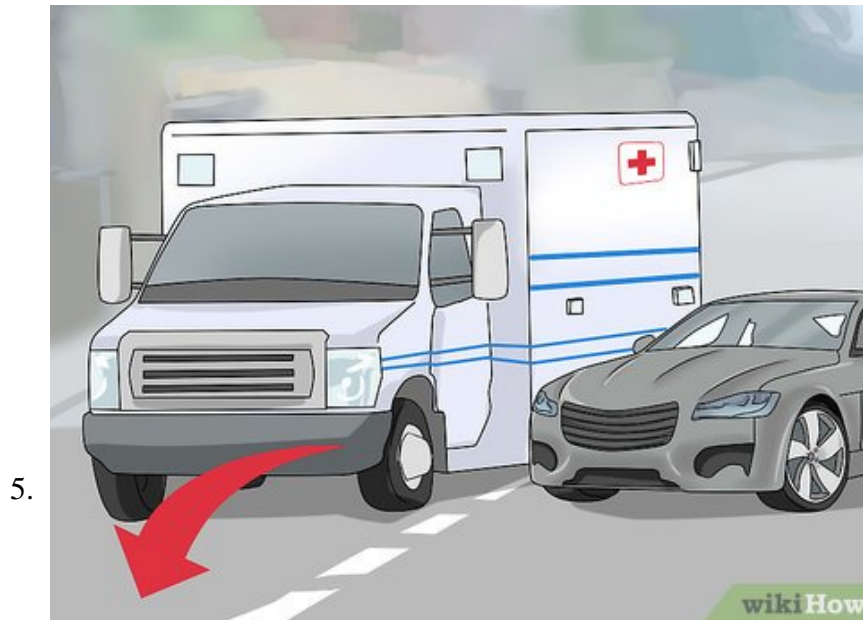
1. Some residential areas have streets that are not paved and are instead made up of dirt or gravel. Dirt and gravel roads can be difficult to maneuver, so be sure to go slower than usual and take your time.^[8]
2. Check the weather forecast if you plan on driving long distances.

4.



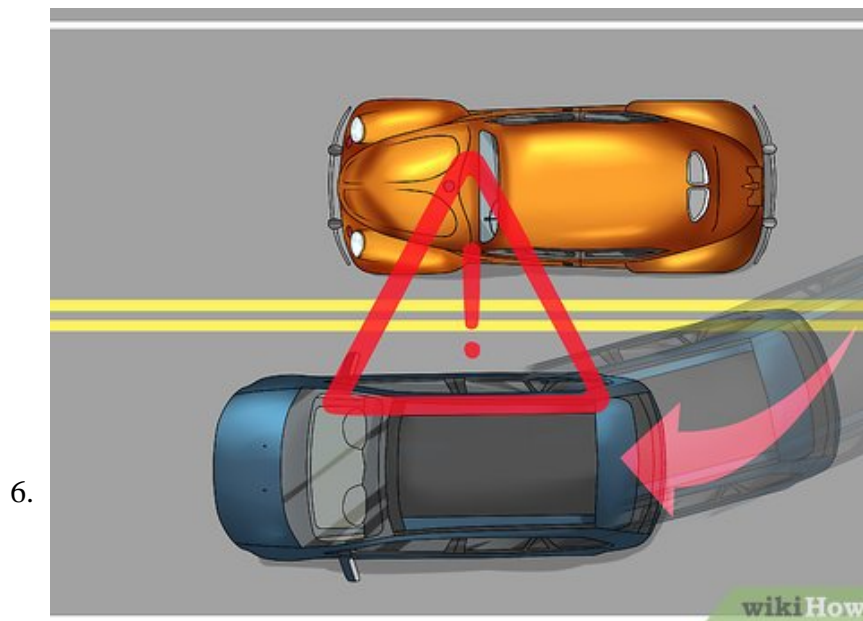
Try not to use residential streets as shortcuts. Increased traffic through these streets contributes to a higher risk of injury and makes the neighborhood more dangerous.^[9]

1. Try and make a policy of only driving through residential areas if you are stopping at a specific location within that area.



Yield to other vehicles. Yielding to police cars, fire trucks, snow plows, street sweepers and others that might be working to keep the neighborhood safe and clean will reduce the amount of traffic and keep the road as safe as possible.

1. Watch for bikes, motorcycles, scooters and other smaller vehicles that might be on the roads. They can be harder to spot, especially at night.



Use caution when passing. Passing laws are the same in residential and non-residential areas, but extra caution is urged as passing others in residential areas is less common and is not always necessary.^[10]

1. Like in non-residential areas, passing stopped or slowed vehicles is allowed, and passing vehicles signaling to turn or driving the speed limit is prohibited.
2. Be sure to check all traffic ahead, beside, and behind you when passing or being passed by others.^[11]

7.



Look for parking prohibitions and regulations. Do not park on the side of the road, or in front of someone's house unless it is permitted.

1. Make sure there is enough room left on the road for motorists to safely pass your car if you do pull over to park.
2. Watch for parked cars while you are driving. Look for people who might be opening doors to get out of those cars.

Expert Advice



Saul Jaeger, MS

Police Captain, Mountain View Police Department

Keep these tips in mind to stay safe while you're driving:

1. **Understand what speed limit signs really mean.** If a speed limit for a road is 35, that means that's the maximum speed you can go in ideal conditions. However, you may need to go slower than that if conditions are bad, including when visibility is low, the roadways are wet, it's dark outside, there's construction, or you're having car trouble.
2. **Slow down.** Driving slowly gives you more time to think, process, and react if something happens on the road. The faster you're going, the less perception reaction you have, and the longer it will take you to stop.
3. **Use good judgment.** What you see on TV is not how driving actually is. Don't try to drift your car, for instance. Even professional drivers crash when they're attempting stunts, and one bad decision can change your life dramatically.
4. **Don't retaliate against other drivers.** If someone cuts you off, take a deep breath and try to remember that getting in front of that one car isn't going to get you to your destination any faster. In addition, trying to cut them off in return could lead to a collision, and even at very low speeds, that could result in a serious accident, including rolling over your vehicle. It's just not worth it.

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