

How to Park in a Parking Lot

Parking in a parking lot can be challenging, especially for a new driver. Sometimes, parking spaces are small and the lot is very crowded, making this even more difficult. There are three different types of parking spaces in parking lots:...

Method 1 of 3:

Parking in an Angled Space



Find a parking space not surrounded by many cars. It will be easier to practice parking with fewer obstacles in your way.

1. When you are practicing, you will want to do this in a parking lot that isn't crowded.
2. As you are learning, you might make mistakes.
3. In an area with no cars, you are unlikely to hit anything as you practice your parking skills.
4. This isn't just a good idea for people learning how to drive. If you haven't driven in a long time, it is a good idea to practice parking and driving a little bit before going long distances.

2.

Picture 2 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Position your car. You want your vehicle to be in the right spot, away from other cars and the right distance from your spot so you can cut your wheel correctly. ^[1]

1. Make sure there is at least 5 or 6 feet between your vehicle and any other parked cars.
2. If there aren't any cars in the spaces near you, try to judge a 5 or 6 foot distance away from them.
3. This is so that when you are parking, you can use the rest of the steps for cutting your wheel correctly.

3.

Picture 3 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Signal when you have found a parking space. This will let other drivers know you are going to park. [2]

1. Drive forward slowly until you see the center of the parking space you want to use.
2. Be aware of other drivers. Don't take a space someone else has been waiting for.
3. Make sure there is no one trying to back-out of a nearby spot as you are driving forward.

4.

Picture 4 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Turn the wheel sharply. You should do this once you see the center of the parking space. [3]

1. Make sure your car is still about 5-6 feet from any other cars or empty parking spaces as you begin to turn.
2. You will want to turn the wheel about a half of a turn.
3. Make sure there are no carts or other objects in the space.
4. Move forward slowly into the space. Come to a full stop when your car is in the spot the whole way.
5. Make sure your car is in the spot entirely to avoid getting a ticket.

5.

Picture 5 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Straighten out your wheels. You can do this once your car is stopped.

1. You want to make sure your wheels are straight so you can back out of your spot straight.
2. You can also straighten out your wheels just before you back out.
3. However, it is best practice to do this when you park.

Method 2 of 3:

Parking in a Perpendicular Spot

1.



Position your car. You will want to be far enough away from other cars in the parking lot to be able to turn into a spot. [4]

1. Make sure your car is at least 8 feet away from any other parked vehicles on the driver's side or passenger's side.
2. This will depend on if your parking space is on the left or right of your car.
3. If there aren't any cars parked near you, try to judge an 8 foot distance from the spaces to your car.

4. Don't take someone else's parking spot that they have been waiting for.



Turn on your signal. This will let other drivers know you are going to park in a free space. [5]

1. Take a quick look for any cars, pedestrians, or other obstacles.
2. Move forward slowly.
3. Drive forward until the front bumper of your car is just past the taillights of the car next to your parking space.

3.

Picture 8 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Turn your wheel sharply. You will need to turn a little bit more sharply than if you were parking in an angled space. [6]

1. Begin to do this as your front bumper passes the taillights of the car in the parking space next to yours.
2. Drive forward slowly.
3. Make sure there aren't any shopping carts, debris, or objects in the space as you pull in.

EXPERT TIP

Picture 9 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Ibrahim Onerli
Driving Instructor

Ibrahim Onerli is the Partner and Manager of Revolution Driving School, a New York City-based driving school with a mission to make the world a better place by teaching safe driving. Ibrahim trains and manages a team of over 8 driving instructors and specializes in defensive driving and stick shift driving.

Picture 10 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Ibrahim Onerli
Driving Instructor

Our Expert Agrees: Perpendicular parking is basically a soft L turn. Go to the middle center of your lane, then cut the wheel all the way to the left and pull into the space.

4.

Picture 11 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Pull into the space. Do this until the front of your car is at the back of the space and the rear of your car is entirely in the space.

1. A good way to do this is to align your side mirrors with those on the car beside you.
2. Make sure your front bumper isn't creeping into the space in front of you.
3. Check to make sure the rear side of your car isn't sticking out of the parking space.

5.

Picture 12 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Straighten out your wheels. Do this after your car is entirely in the parking space. [7]

1. Your wheels will need to be straight when you back out of your spot.
2. You can also do this when you are leaving your spot before you start to reverse.
3. It is best practice to do this right after parking, however.

Method 3 of 3:

Parking in a Parallel Spot

1.

Picture 13 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Seek out a space. This will need to be one you are comfortable with getting your car into without hitting the person in front of you or behind you. [8]

1. Some parking lots have parallel spaces. These are usually marked clearly with white lines, so it can be easier to park in these than on the street.
2. If you need to, drive around the block until you find a space with a large enough gap.
3. You will need a space several feet longer than your car.
4. Larger spaces are easier to park in.

2.



Check your mirrors. Do this as you approach your spot. [9]

1. Ensure another car isn't riding on your tail.
2. Signal towards the space as you approach, slow down, then stop.
3. If another motorist pulls up behind you, maintain your position. Roll down your window and gesture for them to go around you, if possible.

3.



Line up your car. You will do this with the car in front of your space, maintaining at least a 2 foot distance between the side of your car and the one in front. ^[10]

1. Don't get too close or too far away from the car. If you are too close you might scrape the other vehicle as you are backing into your space.
2. Try to be about 2 feet away from the other vehicle.
3. Align your car's bumper with the other vehicles bumper or stay 2-3 feet behind it.

4.

Picture 16 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Put your vehicle in reverse. You will now be backing into the space. ^[11]

1. Check your driver's side mirror to make sure the street behind you is free of traffic.
2. Look over your other shoulder to check the space.
3. Back up until your bumper is about 3-4 feet behind that of the car next to you.

5.

Picture 17 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Release your brakes and cut your wheel all the way to the right. You will begin to back slowly into the space. ^[12]

1. Visually check in front of and around your car frequently. Make sure other cars or pedestrians don't cross your path.
2. Maintain a distance of 2-3 feet between the side of your car and the car in front of you to avoid scraping it.
3. Use your mirrors to judge the distance between your back bumper and the car behind you.
4. If you hit the curb, you've gone too far. In that case, switch gears into drive and pull forward a few feet.

6.

Picture 18 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Turn the steering wheel to the left. Do this once your front wheels are next to the back bumper of the car in front. ^[13]

1. You should still be in reverse.
2. Continue in reverse as far back as you can.
3. Look forward and to the side to make sure you aren't hitting the car in front.
4. Don't hit the bumper of the car behind you.

5. Look through your back window to check how far the car behind you is from your rear bumper. You can also use your side and rear view mirrors to help you.

7.

Picture 19 of How to Park in a Parking Lot

Shift into drive. You will now position your car in the space. [14]

1. Turn your steering wheel to the right again.
2. Move slowly forward towards the curb. As you do this, straighten your car in the space.
3. Use your passenger side mirror to check your distance from the curb. You should be within one foot (30cm) of the curb when you are done parking.
4. You should now be completely parked.

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