

# Freeway Fundamentals

## How to Enter, Drive On and Exit a Freeway



Teaching a young driver how to handle an expressway is a scary proposition. The fact is that driving on an expressway can actually be much easier than driving in the city or even in your own neighborhood. Learning a few simple strategies can make you a pro on these high speed highways. Let's take a look at some of the key techniques.

- 1. Entering the Expressway-** Getting on that expressway can be nerve racking! To cut down on that stress make sure to identify your entrance early and signal. Once on the ramp make quick glances out onto the expressway in order to find a nice gap in traffic. Put your left turn signal on and get your speed up! Next adjust your speed to fit into the gap. Finally take a quick look over your left shoulder and if it is clear move on to the expressway. Cancel your signal and adjust to the speed of traffic. You never want to run out of space on that ramp, so once you see that gap accelerate into it! Hopefully most drivers in that right lane will abandon it to make your entry much easier, but never count on it!
- 2. Driving on the Expressway-** Once you are on the freeway the hard work is really over. Now it is our job to find the path of least resistance. The right lane is fine if you are going the speed limit or slightly below, but remember you will also have to deal with all the cars that want to exit and enter the freeway. The middle lane is preferred if you are traveling the speed of traffic. The middle lane gives you two escape routes, right and left, should something go wrong. It also gives

you the best visibility. Just remember if you do choose the middle lane you must do the speed that cars are currently traveling at. We do not want to encourage cars to pass us on the right. Our highway transportation system was set up to encourage drivers to pass on the left; however it doesn't always work that way. The left lane is for all those high speed drivers looking to get by everyone. It is best to isolate yourself when driving on an expressway. This simply means that you should keep space in front, behind and to the sides of you. With less traffic around you less can go wrong! Also remember to increase your following distance to 4 seconds and your visual lead time to 20 seconds. Avoiding "wolfpacks" or those "bunches of cars" is a great strategy when driving on the expressway. Finally when changing lanes remember to accelerate and "drift" into your lane. You are driving at high speeds so be careful not to "yank" the car over. Again, don't forget to signal, check your mirror and finish with a blind spot check. If you are returning to your original lane make sure you see the headlights of the car behind you in your rearview mirror before returning to your lane.

**3. Exiting an Expressway-** When it is time to exit the freeway there are a few important things you need to remember. At least one half mile before your exit ramp you should get into the proper lane. Signal your intent early and move into the deceleration lane as soon as it is offered. Identify your ramp speed (they are all different) and adjust your speed. Once you are off the ramp remember to check the road for your new speed limit. Sometimes it feels like you are doing the new speed limit, but in reality you are still driving at expressway speeds.

**4. Other Things to be Aware of-**

- "Highway Hypnosis" Always keep your eyes moving and scanning for hazards in your driving path.
- Weave Lanes- Weave lanes are "common lanes" used for entering and exiting a freeway. Just remember to yield right of way to the entering car and adjust your speed to make a safe exit.
- Entrance Ramps- All entrance ramps are not created equal. Some are straight, some are curved. Some allow for great visibility. Some have very little visibility. Some ramps are long while others are very short. In any event by seeing your gap early and accelerating into it as soon as it is offered will save you a lot of headaches.