



Tailgate Topics & Tips



Tailgate Topic #10 - Get Ready for Red



Over 40% of fatal accidents happen at intersections. Traffic control devices like stop signs and traffic lights perform 2 functions. First, they help ensure the orderly flow of traffic by defining who gets to go and at what time; and second, they enhance the safety of the intersection by removing any doubt about who should give the right of way to whom.

Understanding the meaning of lights and what the safe and legal actions are in response to them, will go a long way towards keeping you safe at intersections.

The Questions for this Meeting:

What do the 3 colours of lights that you see at signalized intersections mean?

Correct Answers (in most jurisdictions)



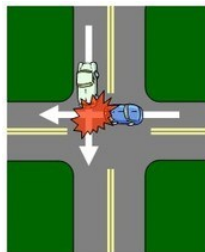
GREEN: Proceed when it is safe to do so

YELLOW: Stop unless you cannot stop safely

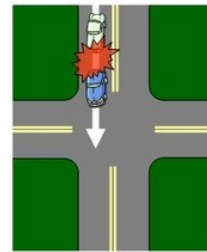
- this means that if you see yellow and you are too close to make a safe stop, you are permitted to continue through the intersection. It is not a warning to prepare to stop because red is next!
- If you are able to stop, you are **REQUIRED** to. The penalty, in most places, for failing to stop for yellow is the same as the penalty for running a red.

RED: Stop and wait for green.

How many different types of crashes or conflicts can happen at intersections?



Right angle



Rear end



Left turn

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Answers can be:

- **T-BONE:** one car runs into the other from left or right
- **REAR END:** one car fails to notice the one in front is slowing or stopping and hits from behind
- **HEAD ON:** one car begins a turn without waiting and is hit nose to nose by oncoming vehicle
- **PEDESTRIAN:** a vehicle driver fails to notice that a pedestrian is crossing
- or others.....

What can you do to be safer when approaching an intersection?



Tailgate Tips:

- look well ahead and identify the controls early so that you are not surprised and have to react at the last moment;
- if there is congestion, slow down a bit;
- if the light is green when you first see it, it is a **STALE GREEN** because you don't know how long that it has been green for or when it will turn yellow. Take your foot off the accelerator and cover the brake to reduce your reaction time if the light changes.
- if the light is yellow or red, you are required to stop: brake early to give the guy behind you lots of notice that you are slowing. You will be stopping anyways, so why not take it easy on the brakes and not over-brake at the last moment?
- Scan the intersection to ensure that it is safe before entering even if you have a green light.
- Never accelerate towards a yellow light to beat the red. Instead plan to stop for the yellows and be the first one in line for when the light changes to green.

Thinking and looking ahead, figuring out what the signals will be doing before you arrive at an intersection and taking defensive actions is the **Thinking Driver** way!

Practical Challenge:

Today when you drive, look ahead and predict what the lights will be doing; plan to stop on yellow where perhaps you may have gone through in the past. See if you catch up to the cars that got through in front of you when you get to the next intersection. If you do...stopping has cost no time and has just kept you a little safer!

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Spencer McDonald is the president and founder of Thinking Driver, a driver training and development company in Surrey, B.C. Spencer's formal education is in psychology and motivation, and has brought these fields together with road safety and education to develop attitude-based driver safety programs.

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