

*Thinking
Driver*
"it's all about attitude!"

Tailgate Topics & Tips



Tailgate Topic #18 - How Smooth Can You Drive?



One way to recognize a truly professional driver is how smoothly they drive: smooth acceleration, smooth braking and smooth steering are all marks of really good driving skills.

Smooth operation means that the vehicle is balanced and the operator is in full control.

The Question for this Meeting:

What benefits can you think of that come with smooth driving?

Answers may include:

- Increased passenger comfort.
- Greater fuel economy.
- Less wear and tear on the equipment.
- Longer brake life.
- Enhanced traction in extreme conditions.
- Increased safety margins.
- Can you think of more?



All these points are true.

The smoother that you drive the safer and more comfortable you and your passenger will be. To drive very smoothly, you must look well ahead and respond early to changes in traffic gradually. This ends up giving you more time and distance and results in enhanced safety as well as increased comfort.

Smooth driving is also easier on your vehicle. The more abrupt and jerky your control inputs, the more wear that you introduce to all of your drivetrain, steering and braking components. Braking early and gradually is much smoother than braking later for planned stops and is much easier on the brakes.

Aggressive and abrupt driving techniques like heavy acceleration, braking and close following distances, require constant accelerating and braking to adjust position. This uses up to 30% more fuel than smooth driving with good following distances and using a good eye lead time to anticipate hazards early.

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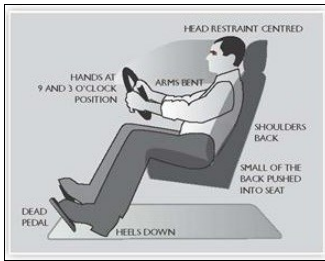
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How can you drive smoothly?

Tailgate Tips:

- 1 - First sit comfortably in the vehicle with your feet located properly.
- 2 - Your seat base should be adjusted to allow both feet to easily reach the floor under the brake pedal and still leave a bend at the knee



Your left foot should find the dead pedal area to stabilize your weight and your right should be able to operate the brake or accelerator comfortably with your heel down on the floor if possible.

When applying brake or accelerator use a "squeeze & ease" technique where you gently apply pedal pressure increasing as necessary instead of stomping on the pedal abruptly.

- 3 - Hold the steering wheel at 9 and 3 o'clock with a slight bend in your arms at the elbow and use total control steering.

Under normal circumstances your hands stay at 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock.

When you turn left, your hands shuffle the steering wheel into and then out of the turn. Steering is smooth and precise.

This slows down the rate of steering inputs and smooths out the ride, balancing the vehicle.

After the corner or turn, return the steering wheel to centre the same way rather than allowing it to just spin back on its own.

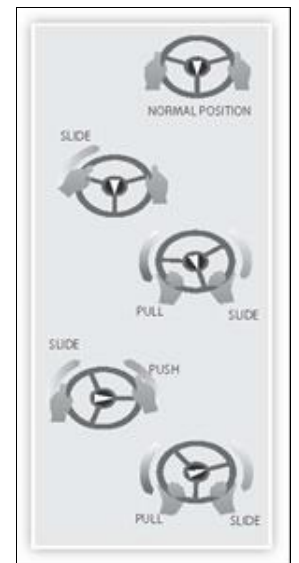
Practical Challenge:



When you drive next, pay attention to how smoothly you are controlling the vehicle.

Look well ahead so that you can make early adjustments to traffic flow and necessary stops.

Check to see how many more kilometers you get out of a tank of gas!



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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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