

## CHAPTER 6

## INTERSECTIONS

The most dangerous place on a street or highway is an intersection. An elementary law of physics says that two bales cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Hundreds of thousands of drivers and pedestrians have demonstrated the truth of this law by losing their lives at intersections. An intersection is any place where two or more roads join or cross each other. You are required to slow down when approaching all intersections – whether or not you have the right-of-way. The following rules of the road are normal; however, state and local laws take precedence. The main question faced by drivers at an intersection is “Who has the right-of-way?”

### INTERSECTIONS WITHOUT TRAFFIC CONTROLS

When approaching a major road from a minor road, you must yield to the traffic on the major road. If you are entering an intersection with traffic already in it, you must yield to that traffic regardless of the type of road.

When two vehicles approach an intersection at the same time, which one has the right-of-way? The law states that when two vehicles enter an intersection from different highways at the same time, the driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right. The law does not give right-of-way to anyone; it only states who must yield it. Therefore, you should always be alert for those who fail to yield, and you must do everything possible to avoid an accident.

### INTERSECTIONS WITH TRAFFIC CONTROLS

#### Traffic Lights

Traffic lights greatly simplify right-of-way problems since the traffic on one road is stopped while the traffic on the other is permitted to proceed. For vehicles coming from opposite directions on the road which has the green light, the right-of-way rules

are the same as those that would apply in the absence of traffic signals. At some intersections, however, you may not make a left turn unless a special left-turn green light is showing. Sometimes the sign is in the form of a traffic light showing a green arrow, however, these rules may vary from state to state.

At other intersections where there are signs permitting you may make a right turn on a red light. To turn right on a red light at one of these intersections, you must be in the right-turn lane and must give a right-turn signal. You ordinarily have the right-of-way over pedestrians who are crossing the street you are turning into because the light is red for them. Nevertheless, it is unlawful for you to do anything that might endanger them, even if they refuse to yield the right-of-way to you.

#### Traffic Signs

At an intersection where stop signs have been erected, you must come to a complete stop. You may not enter the intersection, whether to go straight through or to turn right or left, until you are sure that the movement can be made safely.

When required to stop at an intersection where a line has been painted on the street indicating the place to stop, stop there (Figure 6-1). When the place to stop is not marked by a line, stop close enough to the intersection so that you can see any traffic that may be approaching from your right or left. **Do not, however, block a crosswalk.** Pedestrians crossing at an intersection have the right-of-way over vehicles. Do not start again until you are sure the way is clear. Do not enter the intersection if there is traffic on the intersecting street that will reach the intersection before you have cleared it.

Stop signs are sometimes placed at intersections where lights have also been erected. When traffic lights are in operation, obey them instead of the signs. Furthermore, a traffic officer's signaling must be obeyed regardless of traffic lights or signs.

At intersections governed by yield signs, you must slow down to a speed reasonable for the conditions and yield the right-of-way.

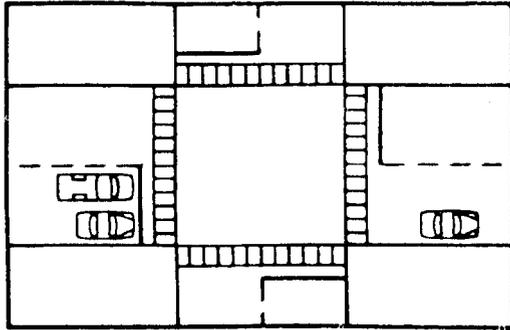


FIGURE 6-1. Proper Stopping Places at Crosswalks.

### URNS AT INTERSECTIONS

Before making any turn, signal your intention at least 100 feet ahead of the intersection. Never turn or change lanes without first looking to make sure that it can be done safely.

When you make a right turn at an intersection, stay as close as possible to the right edge of the road or street. Never swerve to the left before turning right (Figure 6-2).

Never swerve to the right before turning left (Figure 6-3). When making a left turn—

- First, get into the lane nearest the centerline in advance of the turn.
- Then slow down gradually as you approach the turn.
- Be sure to let oncoming traffic clear before you make your turn. Then enter the lane to the right of the centerline of the street into which you are turning.

Many drivers swerve in the opposite direction before turning to make the turn easier. If the speed is right, the turn should be easily made without swerving. If your tires squeal when you turn, it may mean your tires are underinflated, but it is more likely that you are trying to take the turn too fast.

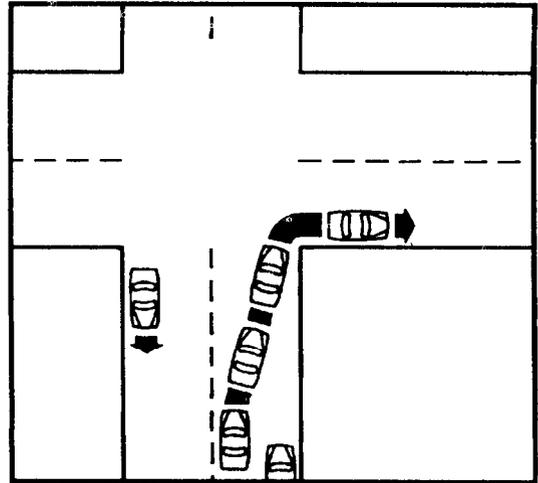


FIGURE 6-2. Making a Right-Hand Turn.

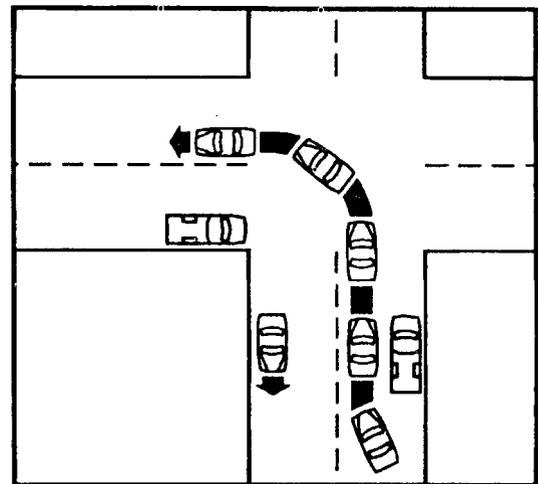


FIGURE 6-3. Making a Left-Hand Turn.

**NOTE:** Swerving in the opposite direction before making a turn is likely to mislead other drivers and cause an accident.

### SPECIAL INTERSECTIONS

On new highways, an increasing number of intersections are designed so that one road passes over the other instead of crossing it. To turn right or left at such intersections, it is necessary to use connecting roads to get onto the crossroads. These elevated

intersections and their connecting roads are often confusing to drivers who are not used to them, and the method of making turns may vary from one to the other. Whenever you come to an intersection where one road passes over or under the other, slow down and pay careful attention to the signs that tell you how to make the turn you want to make.

### Cloverleaves

Intersections where the roads cross each other at different levels may be designed in a number of ways. The most common type is the cloverleaf design (Figure 6-4). To turn right, you take a right turn before you get to the bridge that carries one road over the other. To turn left, you take the right turn just after the bridge. This road will carry you around to join the crossroad in a three-quarter circle at an ordinary intersection. The advantage of cloverleaves and similar intersections is that you do not have to cross the path of other traffic to make a turn.

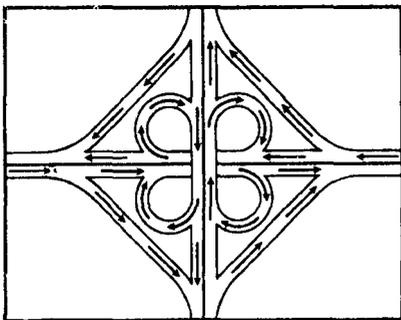


FIGURE 6-4. A Cloverleaf Intersection.

### Traffic Circles

A rather common type of special intersection is the traffic circle. Upon entering the traffic circle, all vehicles turn in the same direction – to the right. Almost all traffic circles have at least two lanes, and some have more. You simply continue around the circle in a counterclockwise direction until you come to the road or street you want. Then you leave the traffic circle by making a right turn.

As you travel around the circle, use the inside lane if practicable, but be sure to get in the outside lane well before you come to the place where you intend to leave the circle. Never attempt to make a right turn from the inside lane. Look and signal before you turn or change lanes.

At traffic circles, the whole circle is considered an intersection. The vehicles already in the traffic circle have the right-of-way over those approaching the circle on the roads leading into it unless traffic signs indicate otherwise.

### Railroad Crossings

To move safely through a railroad crossing, develop the following habits:

- Identify all warning signs, signals, and protective devices.
- Before crossing the tracks, look both ways and listen for approaching trains.
- After a train has passed, be sure no other train is approaching from either direction before starting across.
- Never stop on railroad tracks.
- Do not rely on mechanical equipment (flashing lights) to be sure the way is safe to cross.
- Never take familiar crossings for granted or assume that no train is coming.
- Be particularly alert for trains after dark when crossings are not protected by gates or flashing lights. Frequently drivers drive into the sides of trains at such crossings.
- Stop your vehicle between 15 and 50 feet from a railroad crossing when transporting hazardous materials or passengers (in a vehicle designed to transport 16 or more persons including the driver).
- When driving a bus, open your forward door if it will help you see or hear an approaching train.

### PRIVATE DRIVEWAYS

When coming out of a private driveway, yield the right-of-way to all vehicles on the street or highway you are entering. Stop for any pedestrians who may be on the sidewalk and about to cross the driveway.