



Safety Talk

BACKING TECHNIQUES

One out of every four accidents can be blamed on poor backing techniques, according to the National Safety Council. Poor backing can result in damage to costly equipment and buildings, and can cause serious injury and death. Backing accidents are almost always preventable if the driver is properly trained—and prudent.

Drivers should avoid backing whenever possible, or pick spots that reduce backing to a minimum. This is a knack that can be learned.

Many parking accidents could be avoided if drivers would practice defensive parking. This requires alertness and foresight.

Park defensively by choosing your parking spot as prudently as you can, not too close to a corner or driveway, not too close to a road or construction site, and not where your vehicle will block or crowd other vehicles.

Park in the direction traffic is moving, and center your vehicle in the parking space. If parked on an incline, turn front wheels to wedge into the curb on the downhill side.

Failure to do this in some hilly cities (San Francisco, for example) is a traffic violation.

Rather than park at the curb, a driver making residential deliveries may sometimes pull into a private driveway to park for the errand. This can be dangerous. Before backing out, make a walk around inspection to be certain no children are playing behind.

When in an alley that does not permit drive-through or turnaround, back into the alley (unless prohibited by local ordinance). This will allow you to see the traffic picture as you drive out. If you have to back out, ask someone to act as your guide and signal when it's all clear.

The driver who practices defensive parking will never take any situation for granted, but will observe and judge each parking requirement on its own. Even though backing into a particular parking spot a dozen times, look and evaluate the same spot each time to be sure of clearances and to make certain no new obstacles are in the way.

It takes lots of practice to develop good backing skills, and a tight spot is no place to get this experience.

If you have access to a test driving area where backing maneuvers can be practiced, use it.





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It is amazing how many, even if experienced, will have backing accidents in a new situation.

Knowledge of good backing practices cannot result from any number of years experience in normal forward driving. When backing up, it's not only the gear that's in reverse. Learn exactly how the rear end responds to every little twist of the steering wheel when backing by practice and more practice.

Be acutely aware of that big blind spot when backing. Even rear-view mirrors can't see around the obstruction. Utilize all your mirrors and move backwards at a crawl.

The only way for the driver to know for sure is to get out and look. By such a walk around inspection learn the exact clearances on either side, what steering is needed and the exact distance to your stopping point.

Every driver must know exactly what is going on around them at all times, this includes backing up a vehicle and must be done slowly.

Even after a walk-around inspection, it is often advisable to have someone like a passenger or co-worker watch and signal for change of direction and for slowing and stopping. The helper should stand near the left quarter panel . The signals to be given by the helper should be hand signals, not shouted directions.

Signals should be uniform for all drivers and spotters.

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