

Follow the 4-Second Rule for Safety Spacing

Most of us don't mean to tailgate on the road, but how do we know when we're too close? There is an easier way than the old one car length per 10 mph method, and all it takes is counting to four, like this:

1. Note when the vehicle ahead passes a checkpoint such as a sign, driveway, pole, or parked vehicle.
2. Start counting seconds (one thousand one, one thousand two...) as it passes the checkpoint.
3. Stop counting when you reach the checkpoint.
4. If it takes less than four seconds, you are following too closely and must increase your following distance. If it takes four or more seconds to pass the checkpoint, you have a safe following distance.

This should give you enough time to react in case you must stop quickly, under normal conditions and at all speeds. Add at least another second for wet roads, and two, three or more for snow, ice or fog. Too many seconds is never a problem, so when you're not sure, feel free to add a few extra. If another driver pulls into your space, you can always slow down a bit until a safe distance is restored.

We cannot control the space behind us; that's the next driver's job. And we should never feel pressured into trying by going too fast for conditions. When the car behind you is too close, the easiest solution is to find a safe place to pull over and let it go by.

