Tailgating

It is important that you do not follow another vehicle too closely. ACT crash data indicates that approximately 45% of reported crashes in the ACT are rear end collisions (i.e. where the following car crashes into the rear of the car in front). If the front vehicle stops suddenly when you are tailgating, a crash is inevitable as you will be unable to stop in time.

Provide a ‘three second gap’

If you keep plenty of space (a ‘buffer zone’ or space cushion) around your vehicle, you are more likely to avoid a collision. Stay as far away as driving conditions allow. Most motorists underestimate the distance required to stop their vehicle.

How to check your three second gap

To check that you are providing a three second gap:

1. Pick an object by the side of the road, such as a tree or post, which will soon be passed by the vehicle ahead (as demonstrated in the previous figure).

2. As soon as the rear of the vehicle ahead passes the object, say to yourself “one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three”.

3. If you reach the object before you have finished counting – then you are travelling too close to the vehicle in front.

In poor road and weather conditions (e.g. gravel surfaces or frosty/wet conditions), or if you are driving at night, you should allow a greater distance from the vehicle in front. In these circumstances, you should at least double the gap, (i.e. from three seconds to at least six or seven seconds).

If another vehicle moves in between you and the vehicle in front, slow down briefly to allow your vehicle to fall back to a safe following distance.

When following another vehicle, an estimation of the appropriate following distance can be obtained by using the ‘three second rule’. To use this following distance rule, you should keep a gap of at least three seconds between your vehicle and the one ahead.

This means that it should take you at least three seconds to get to where the car in front is at any given moment.
Giving way to police or emergency vehicles

If a police or emergency vehicle is approaching and is sounding sirens or showing flashing lights, you must move out of its path as soon as you can do so safely.

It is an offence not to give way or to move into the path of a police or emergency vehicle. Please do the right thing – look, listen and move out of the path of police and emergency vehicles.

Tips for assisting our police and emergency services response vehicles

› Do not panic.
› Slow down.
› Do not move suddenly or move into the path of the emergency or police vehicle.
› Indicate which way you will be moving out of the path of the police or emergency vehicle. If you cannot move out of the path of a police or emergency vehicle safely, stay put and let the police or emergency vehicle drive around you.

An obstructed journey can be the difference between life and death. Don’t panic, slow down, give-way and help save a life!

Police and emergency vehicles at intersections

Police and emergency vehicles often stop or slow down when they enter intersections to check if they can pass through safely.

You must give way to, and not obstruct, an emergency vehicle that is sounding sirens or showing flashing lights, even if you are facing a green traffic light or arrow and the police or emergency vehicle appears to have stopped or slowed down.

Traffic lights without traffic arrows

A green circle light (with no green arrow) means you may proceed directly ahead or make a turn in either direction providing it is safe to do so.

Right turning vehicles must give way

Right turning vehicles MUST give way to oncoming or left turning vehicles not using a slip lane.

Failing to give way when turning right at traffic lights with no green arrow is a common cause of right-angle crashes in the ACT.

You must give way to pedestrians

As shown in the picture above, all turning vehicles MUST give way to pedestrians at traffic lights. In addition, a driver must give way to any pedestrian at or near an intersection who is crossing the road the driver is entering.

Fog lights

Front fog lights - must only be used for driving when fog, rain, snow or other hazardous conditions reduce visibility. Do not use high beam lights as they will reflect back at you. In severe conditions, it can be beneficial to drive with only the parking and fog lights switched on, further reducing headlight glare.

Rear fog lights (red) - must only be used for driving when fog, rain, snow or other hazardous conditions reduce visibility. If your vehicle does not have a rear fog light, turn on the flashing hazard warning lights instead. You must switch off your rear fog light or hazard warning lights as driving conditions and visibility improve.