

Signs, signals & pavement markings

Shape and color tell you what to do before you ever read the text.

■ Sign color decoder

Red	Stop, yield, or prohibited action	Blue	Driver services (gas, food, lodging)
Yellow	General warning - hazard ahead	Brown	Public recreation / historic / cultural
Orange	Construction / maintenance zone	White	Regulatory - must obey (speed, lane)
Green	Permitted movement, directions, exits	Yellow-green	Pedestrian, school, bicycle

■ Sign-shape shortcuts

Octagon — Always STOP - the only 8-sided sign in use.

Downward triangle — Always YIELD - slow and give right-of-way.

Diamond (yellow) — Warning of road condition or hazard ahead.

Diamond (orange) — Work-zone warning - workers or equipment ahead.

Pentagon (yellow-green) — School zone or school crossing.

Round (yellow w/ X) — Railroad crossing ahead - prepare to stop.

Rectangle (vertical white) — Regulatory - speed, lane use, parking.

Rectangle (horizontal green) — Guide sign - distance, direction, exits.

■ Traffic light & arrow signals

Steady red — Full stop. Right-on-red allowed after stop unless posted.

Steady yellow — Light about to turn red - stop if safe.

Steady green — Go, but yield to anyone still in the intersection.

Flashing red — Treat as a stop sign - stop, yield, then go.

Flashing yellow — Caution - slow, look, proceed with care.

Red arrow — Full stop in that direction; wait for green arrow.

Yellow arrow — Same as yellow light - prepare to stop.

Green arrow — Go in arrow's direction; same rules as circular green (yield to anyone in intersection).

■ Pavement-line decoder

Broken white — Same direction - lane change OK when safe.

Solid white — Lane change discouraged; usually shoulder edge.

Broken yellow — Two-way road - passing allowed when clear.

Single solid yellow — No passing on your side.

Double solid yellow — No passing from either direction.

Center two-way left-turn lane — Turning only - never drive through it.

Diamond pavement symbol — HOV lane - check minimum-occupancy sign.

Shared-lane (sharrow) — Bicyclists share the lane - pass with care.

■ Other roadside signals you must know

Pedestrian hybrid beacon - dark — Proceed past crosswalk with caution.

Hybrid beacon - flashing yellow — Slow, be ready to stop for pedestrians.

Hybrid beacon - steady/flash red — Full stop before crosswalk.

Lane signal - red X — Lane closed - never drive in it.

Lane signal - steady yellow X — Lane closing - move out safely.

Lane signal - green arrow — Lane open for travel in your direction.

Orange triangle on rear — Slow-moving vehicle - under 25 mph.

Large flashing arrow panel — Lane closed ahead - merge in direction shown.

Barricade stripes down-right — Pass to the right of the barricade.

Barricade stripes down-left — Pass to the left of the barricade.

Rules of the road

Right-of-way

4-way stop — First to arrive goes first; tie yields to driver on the right.

Uncontrolled intersection — Yield to vehicle on your right at same arrival.

T-intersection — Driver on the ending road yields to through traffic.

Left turn — Yield to oncoming traffic, pedestrians, bicyclists.

Green light — Yield to anyone still in the intersection.

Pedestrian crossing (no signal) — Driver must yield - marked or unmarked.

Roundabout — Enter from the right; yield to traffic already in it.

Freeway merge — Entering vehicle yields to freeway traffic.

Frontage road — Frontage driver yields to traffic entering/exiting.

3+ lanes, same direction — Driver entering from right yields to driver entering from left.

Emergency vehicle (siren) — Pull right and stop; never block intersections.

Traffic officer — Officer's directions override signs, signals, markings.

Texas speed limits (unless posted)

Alley	15 mph
County road by public beach	15 mph
Urban district	30 mph
Numbered highway (rural)	70 mph
School zone (when posted)	Always obey sign

Construction zone w/ workers	Fines DOUBLED
Slow-moving (orange triangle)	Under 25 mph
Driving too slow	Illegal if it blocks normal flow
Wet / poor visibility	Drive BELOW posted limit
60 mph field of vision	Cut to 1/5 of stationary

Turning, signaling & lane use

Signal distance — At least 100 feet before any turn or lane change.

Hand signal - left turn — Arm straight out the driver's window.

Hand signal - right turn — Arm bent up at the elbow.

Hand signal - stop/slow — Arm bent down at the elbow.

When to stop hand signal — Just before the turn - need both hands on wheel.

Turn off signal — Immediately after the turn is complete.

Right turn — Slow, signal, stay tight - don't swing wide.

Left turn — Signal early, don't cut the corner short.

Left from 2-way onto 1-way — Finish in lane closest to the one you left.

Turn onto a one-way — Enter the lane that interferes least with traffic.

Turn speed — Reduce speed - maintain lane and control.

HOV lane — Diamond-marked - meet minimum occupancy posted.

Passing & following

Pass on right (multilane) — OK on multilane same-direction road when safe.

Pass on right shoulder — Never - do not leave the main paved road.

Pass on 2-lane road — Use oncoming lane only when clear and legal.

Return to lane after pass — When you see entire passed vehicle in mirror.

Passing prohibited — Hills, curves, intersections, railroad crossings.

Near bridge / tunnel — No passing within 100 ft of bridge, viaduct, tunnel.

Following <30 mph — Minimum 2-second cushion.

Following >30 mph — Minimum 4-second cushion.

Behind a motorcycle — 4 to 6 seconds - they stop faster than cars.

Stopped behind motorcycle — Leave one full vehicle length of space.

Behind a fire truck on call — Stay at least 500 ft back; don't park on its block.

Truck passing you — Keep right side of lane; slightly slow to help.

Intersections, railroads & emergencies

Stop line — Stop BEFORE the painted stop line.

Intersection check — Look left, right, left again before entering.

Left turn w/ blocked view — Wait until you can see all lanes are clear.

Railroad - flashing/gate — Stop 15 to 50 ft from nearest rail.

Never go around gates — Train may be on second track - illegal and deadly.

Stalled on tracks — Get out, push if possible, otherwise get help fast.

Stopped emergency vehicle — Move over one lane or slow down (Move-Over law).

Aggressive driver behind — Get out of their way - no eye contact, no speed-up.

Missed highway exit — Never back up - go to next exit and turn around.

Stopped by law enforcement — Pull as far right as safe; well-lit area at night.

Safety, DWI, parking & test-day

Texas DWI / DUI quick-facts

Adult driver BAC limit	0.08 %	Open container in passenger area	Illegal - even parked
Under 21 (zero tolerance)	Any detectable alcohol	Drink on public road / sidewalk	Illegal anywhere on highway
Commercial driver BAC	0.04 %	Alcohol-related fatal crashes	29 % of Texas auto deaths
Refuse BAC test	Automatic immediate suspension	Only thing that lowers BAC	Time - not coffee, food, or cold showers

Hazardous conditions

DO

- + Use LOW beams in fog, rain, dust, snow
- + Slow down and increase following distance on wet roads
- + On wet pavement, remember a thin film of oil + water lifts tires
- + If wheels drop off pavement, hold straight, ease off gas, gently brake, then steer back once slow
- + On a tire blowout, grip wheel, release gas; once slow, apply brakes lightly and pull off
- + With ABS in a slide, press hard, hold, and steer out
- + Shift to neutral if accelerator sticks, brake, then pull off

DON'T

- Use HIGH beams in fog - they reflect right back at you
- Drive through standing water on a flooded road - turn around
- Brake hard on ice - coast and steer instead
- Move an injured person unless fire / further danger threatens
- Sit in a running car in an enclosed space (carbon monoxide)
- Use a phone to text or read - illegal in Texas while driving
- Drive when angry, upset, drowsy, or emotionally distracted

Texas parking distances

From a crosswalk	20 ft minimum	Fire station entrance (same side)	20 ft minimum
From an intersection	20 ft minimum	Fire station entrance (other side)	75 ft minimum
From a fire hydrant	15 ft minimum	Parallel parking distance to curb	Within 18 inches
From a railroad crossing	50 ft minimum	Visibility when parked	Seen 200 ft in each direction
From a traffic signal / sign	30 ft minimum	Disabled-spot striped area	Never park - wheelchair lifts

Vehicle, equipment & licensing rules

Liability insurance — Required for every Texas motor vehicle.

Safety belts — Driver and ALL passengers, every seat.

Annual safety inspection — Every Texas-registered vehicle, yearly.

License plates — Front AND rear plates required on all cars.

Headlights required — 30 min after sunset to 30 min before sunrise.

Texting while driving — Illegal at all times - fines and citation.

Unattended vehicle — Turn off engine, remove key, set brake.

Auto suspension offenses — Street racing, graffiti, lending your license.

Crash report — Within 10 days if no officer investigated.

Hit unattended car — Find owner OR leave a written note with your name, address, and the circumstances.

Prohibited equipment — Muffler cutouts and radar jammers are illegal.

Test-day cheat box (Texas DPS)

Knowledge-test questions	30	60 mph field of vision	1/5 of stationary view
Passing score	21 of 30 (70 %)	Signal before turn	At least 100 ft / 3-5 sec ahead
Driving is a	Privilege - not a right	Fire-truck on call - follow distance	Stay at least 500 ft back
Tractor-trailer stopping @ 55 mph	Up to 400 ft	Driving agency	Texas Department of Public Safety

Last-minute test-taking tips

Read ALL four options before you pick - DPS likes to include a partly-correct distractor right next to the best answer. When two answers seem right, pick the more cautious one ("slow and yield" beats "speed up to merge"). Watch for absolute words: "always," "never," and "only" are usually right when the law really is absolute (octagon = STOP, never pass on a hill). Texas-specific: it's DWI not DUI, the agency is DPS not DMV, urban limit is 30 mph and rural highway is 70 mph. If you blank, eliminate the obviously-wrong options first - the test is not timed by question, so save tough ones for last.