

## Skidding and Hydroplaning in Rainy Conditions

Losing control of your car on wet pavement is a frightening experience.

Skids are scary but hydroplaning is completely nerve-wracking.

Hydroplaning happens when the water in front of your tires builds up faster than your car's weight can push it out of the way. The water pressure causes your car to rise up and slide on a thin layer of water between your tires.

Taking these simple tips into account can save your life.

1. You can prevent skids by driving slowly and carefully, especially on curves. Steer and brake with a light touch. When you need to stop or slow, do not brake hard or lock the wheels and risk a skid. Maintain mild pressure on the brake pedal.
2. If you do find yourself in a skid, remain calm, ease your foot off the gas, and carefully steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go. For cars without anti-lock brakes, avoid using your brakes. This procedure, known as "steering into the skid," will bring the back end of your car in line with the front. If your car has ABS, brake firmly as you steer into the skid.
3. Avoid hydroplaning by keeping your tires inflated correctly. Maintain good tire tread. Don't put off replacing worn tires. Slow down when roads are wet, and stay away from puddles. Try to drive in the tire tracks left by the cars in front of you.
4. If you find yourself hydroplaning, do not brake or turn suddenly. This could throw your car into a skid. Ease your foot off the gas until the car slows and you can feel the road again. If you need to brake, do it gently with light pumping actions. If your car has anti-lock brakes, then brake normally. The car's computer will automatically pump the brakes much more effectively than a person can do.
5. A defensive driver adjusts his or her speed to the wet road conditions in time to avoid having to use any of these measures.

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## Driving in Snow and Ice

The best advice for driving in bad winter weather is not to drive at all, if you can avoid it.

Don't go out until the snow plows and sanding trucks have had a chance to do their work, and allow yourself extra time to reach your destination.

If you must drive in snowy conditions, make sure your car is prepared ([TIPS](#)), and that you know how to handle road conditions.

It's helpful to practice winter driving techniques in a snowy, open parking lot, so you're familiar with how your car handles. Consult your owner's manual for tips specific to your vehicle.

### Driving safely on icy roads

1. Decrease your speed and leave yourself plenty of room to stop. You should allow at least three times more space than usual between you and the car in front of you.
2. Brake gently to avoid skidding. If your wheels start to lock up, ease off the brake.
3. Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.
4. Keep your lights and windshield clean.
5. Use low gears to keep traction, especially on hills.
6. Don't use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
7. Be especially careful on bridges, overpasses and infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first. Even at temperatures above freezing, if the conditions are wet, you might encounter ice in shady areas or on exposed roadways like bridges.
8. Don't pass snow plows and sanding trucks. The drivers have limited visibility, and you're likely to find the road in front of them worse than the road behind.
9. Don't assume your vehicle can handle all conditions. Even four-wheel and front-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads.

### If your rear wheels skid...

1. Take your foot off the accelerator.
2. Steer in the direction you want the front wheels to go. If your rear wheels are sliding left, steer left. If they're sliding right, steer right.
3. If your rear wheels start sliding the other way as you recover, ease the steering wheel toward that side. You might have to steer left and right a few times to get your vehicle completely under control.
4. If you have standard brakes, pump them gently.
5. If you have anti-lock brakes (ABS), do not pump the brakes. Apply steady pressure to the brakes. You will feel the brakes pulse — this is normal.

### If your front wheels skid...

1. Take your foot off the gas and shift to neutral, but don't try to steer immediately.
2. As the wheels skid sideways, they will slow the vehicle and traction will return. As it does, steer in the direction you want to go. Then put the transmission in "drive" or release the clutch, and accelerate gently.

### If you get stuck...

1. Do not spin your wheels. This will only dig you in deeper.
2. Turn your wheels from side to side a few times to push snow out of the way.
3. Use a light touch on the gas, to ease your car out.
4. Use a shovel to clear snow away from the wheels and the underside of the car.
5. Pour sand, kitty litter, gravel or salt in the path of the wheels, to help get traction.
6. Try rocking the vehicle. (Check your owner's manual first — it can damage the transmission on some vehicles.) Shift from forward to reverse, and back again. Each time you're in gear, give a light touch on the gas until the vehicle gets going.

Sources: *National Safety Council, New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, Washington State Government Information & Services*