

Get Control with a Vehicle in Front

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- Approaching a vehicle, close in gradually.
- Traveling at same speed, keep 4 seconds of space.
- Stopped behind a vehicle, see rear tires touching road.



Adjust Front Closure Rate

Closure occurs when your vehicle is traveling faster than the vehicle ahead of you. Closure rate is how fast you gain on the vehicle in front. It is best to acquire a habit that will make you sensitive to any closure of space. The habit of keeping more space between you and the vehicle ahead will allow you to become more sensitive when there is a closure of space. If you keep the amount of following time that the average driver has, which is 1.5 seconds, you may not be alerted to a fast closure rate until you are 2 seconds away from the vehicle in front. If, on the other hand, you have 4 seconds of following time as your habit, then when you get within 5 seconds of the vehicle you are gaining on, an alert will sound within you to say you are approaching your danger zone. Therefore, you can have a very precious 3 seconds of additional time to cope with whatever problem is causing your closure. It could be a stalled vehicle, a sudden stop of traffic on the limited access highway, a construction site, or any number of reasons that cause the vehicles ahead to be traveling slower than your speed.

Become Alerted to Slower Vehicles

The slower the front car is going in relation to your speed, the greater your rate of closure is going to be. Many times the reason the car is going abnormally slow — which results in your fast closure rate — is that the driver may be looking for an address or a street. The driver is very likely to brake and make a quick turn without adequate use of signal lights.

Keep 4 Seconds Of Time

When traveling behind another vehicle, try to keep at least four seconds of following time/space. The best way to learn how to measure the space you are keeping is to first guess how many seconds you think you are behind the vehicle in front. Then select a stationary marker ahead. When the front vehicle passes the marker, begin to count by 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004 until the front of your car reaches that marker.

Try To Improve LOS Blockage

The larger the front vehicle, the more your Line-Of-Sight will be blocked. Try to gain the best view of situations ahead by keeping more space between you and that vehicle.

Read Traffic to Target Area

One important advantage of keeping four seconds of time is that you will be able to see beyond a vehicle ahead, to search as far as your target area. You will gain the advantage of doing your own planning, independent of what the front vehicle is doing. This empowers you to be in control.

Control The Rear Zone

If you have a tailgater in back and there is an opportunity for him to pass, four seconds of space in front of you will give him adequate room to cut in with the least interruption.

Respond To Communications

If you see the driver in front reducing speed, receive that as a communication that your following time may be affected. Adjust your speed to keep the front zone open. Be alert to a harder sudden braking action from that vehicle. Avoid being victimized by a surprise action.

Change the Monster Inside You to a Lifeguard!

At this time, you either have the 4-second habit, or you don't. If you do have it as a habit you cannot agree with me more on how beneficial it is. You feel perfectly comfortable with that amount of space. However, if you don't have it as a habit, and the less your following time is, the more internal resistance you will experience.

There truly will appear to be a monster inside you saying, "you can't keep four seconds; cars will always be cutting in front of you; it will feel like you're going backwards; the car in back will be annoyed with you..." All of these feelings come from your discomfort in doing something that you are not accustomed to. It is not bad to feel this way. In fact, if you fight that monster within you, and you acquire a new internal value of feeling good with a 4-second following time, then you have tamed the monster and you now have a lifeguard inside you. The lifeguard will give you the same feelings of discomfort that your monster was giving you, but this time when you start to close in with less than 4 seconds of space, your lifeguard will sound an alert warning you that you are getting into a danger zone. Turn your internal feelings into a tremendous advantage. Don't settle for a mediocre behavior in your following time and space habit.

The **ONLY** difficulty in keeping four seconds is discarding your old habit. Go from "No Way" to "Know-How"!

Stay Out of the Inside Lane

While acquiring the 4-second habit, avoid traveling in the inside lanes (fast lanes) of interstate highways. The most aggressive drivers will usually be found there. The far left lane is the "never satisfied lane." It doesn't matter what speed you are traveling; there will always be a vehicle on your tail wanting you to go faster. The fact is, you cannot go any faster than the vehicle in front of you without passing it.

Empowerment of 4 Seconds

- Gives you time to become conscious of moments when your closure rate begins to increase.
- Your eyes can search beyond the vehicle in front.
- Removes the control the front vehicle has over your actions.
- Will eliminate, or minimize, surprises from the actions of the first vehicle.
- Removes the stress that occurs when you are surprised by sudden braking actions of vehicles ahead.
- Makes you more conscious of the disadvantages of keeping a lesser amount of time.



This photo was taken by [New Haven Register](#) photographer Arnold. The car in front slammed on the brakes, pitching the front down and the rear up. When the car to the rear applied its brakes, its front pitched down. Having little following space and unable to stop, the rear car slid under the front car. Fortunately, no one was killed!

When Stopped With A Car In Front See Its Tires



When you are able to still see the rear tires of the car in front touching the road, you are approximately 12-15 feet to its rear.

- This gives you independence to get around a stalled car.
- This allows you to be pushed into empty space if rear-ended.
- When the road is slippery, you will have room to control your car if a skidding action occurs while in the braking process.

- During hot bumper-to-bumper commuter traffic, you will have breathing space to avoid your air conditioner from taking in the exhaust fumes of the front vehicle.
- This is an easy habit to develop and one that will give you some built-in options at a time when you want less stress and more control.



Case Study

At 2:35 in the afternoon the car in front of her suddenly pulled to the right side of the road and abruptly stopped. She reacted by swerving to the left over the center line to pass the stopped vehicle. She swerved the car head-on into an oncoming ambulance and was killed instantly. The driver ahead of her had seen and responded to the lights and siren of the ambulance. **Factors:** wrong message, afternoon sluggishness, distracted, inadequate following space, failure to check her available zones, not seeing a clear path of travel to enter, reacting to surprise actions from other traffic, no safety belts on.



Use 2-Second Delay With Start-Up

When the car in front of you moves, wait 2 seconds before putting your car into motion. This habit will help you to avoid a false start by traffic, and it begins to establish your four second following time when the traffic is moving.



You are in New York City. The bus ahead creates an LOS blockage. You have no control over the vehicles that are going to be in front of you. You do have control over how they affect you!



You can open up your front zone by giving yourself more following time. In the top photo we have 1 second of time, while in this photo we have 4 seconds. Which will give you the best control of traffic situations?



Another way to eliminate LOS blockages is by changing lanes or lane position. Notice the improvement when the bus is not in our lane. Now we are able to see to the target area and have better control of the situation ahead.