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Right turns/left turns: Basic cornering techniques

Though it is a maneuver the professional driver performs several times a day, performing turns can be challenging. In order to perform turns correctly, you need to plan in advance, allow for off-tracking; and watch the vehicle's mirrors.

You can plan in advance by reducing your speed before the turn, signaling your intentions to other vehicles, and allowing space for the turn.

Off-tracking

Off-tracking is something that happens to all vehicles that have more than one set of wheels.

The term "off-tracking" means a vehicle's rear wheels don't follow the same track (or path) as the front wheels when moving through a turn or curve. When turning, the vehicle's rear wheels follow a shorter path than the front wheels.

There are three factors that determine off-tracking in a tractor-trailer unit:

- The distance between the kingpin and the rear trailer wheels (the greater the distance between the kingpin and rear trailer wheels, the more off-tracking occurs);
- The amount of sideways drag of the rear tires (the more sideways drag, the greater the off-tracking); and
- The speed of the vehicle.



Use of mirrors

Proper use of mirrors can play an important part in executing safe turns. Though they cannot provide a complete picture of everything going on around the vehicle, they can assist in checking the vehicle's blind spots. Most tractors are equipped with plane and convex mirrors.

Plane mirrors assist in seeing down the sides and toward the rear of the trailer as well as the road behind the vehicle. Plane mirrors allow for visibility down the length of the trailer, but there are some blind spots on both sides of the vehicle.

Tight turns can be a problem when using these mirrors as a driver can't see smaller vehicles or pedestrians that are next to the vehicle.

Convex mirrors provide a wide angle view and, if adjusted correctly, can eliminate much of the blind area. Convex mirrors provide the best close-up view of the sides of the vehicle. Do

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keep in mind though, that these mirrors show a distorted image.

A combination of plane and convex mirrors work best by providing maximum side and rear vision. For the best results, make sure the mirrors are properly adjusted and are clean. Check your mirrors during daily inspections to be sure they are not damaged.

Right turns

Good judgment, proper speed control, and accurate steering are all important in executing safe right turns.

When approaching an intersection, adjust the vehicle's speed. The sharper the turn, the slower the vehicle should be moving. This allows the use of all available space.

Shift into the correct gear before the turn and complete the turn in the same gear. This allows the driver to keep both hands on the steering wheel during the turn.

One thing to remember is that a tractor-trailer must pull further into the intersection than a smaller vehicle in order to avoid hitting the curb.

One basic rule of thumb is to get about one-half of the rig past the corner before beginning the turn. Once the vehicle has reached that point, turn the steering wheel to the right and complete the turn. Accelerate slightly to smooth out the turn.

Before, during, and after the turn, check both the right and left mirrors for the position of the trailer wheels.

When approaching a corner for a right turn, position the trailer so vehicles cannot come between the trailer and the curb. Immediately after the turn is complete, turn the steering wheel back to straighten out the wheels.



Left turns

As with a right turn, reduce vehicle speed when approaching an intersection. Shift into the correct gear and keep the vehicle's wheels straight before starting the turn. As with the right turn, complete the turn in the same gear.

When executing this maneuver, position your vehicle from as far right as possible in your lane to allow for plenty of room for the tractor. If the vehicle turns too soon or too tightly, off-tracking may cause the left side of the vehicle to hit another vehicle.

Watch the mirrors before, during, and after the turn. Turn the steering wheel back to the right immediately upon completion of the turn.

If on a road with two left turn lanes, use the outside (right) lane.



Turning mistakes

The following are some of the most common errors made when executing a right turn:

- Not sizing up the corner properly;
- Approaching the intersection too fast;
- Forgetting to gear down before beginning the turn;
- Accelerating in the turn;
- Shifting gears while turning;
- Leaving too much space between the trailer and the curb;
- Forgetting to allow for off-tracking; and
- Not watching the right mirror before, during, and after the turn.

The most common errors made when executing a left turn are the same as those for a right turn, except the errors are made from the other side.



Safety focus: Use a fire extinguisher safely

Fire extinguishers are wonderful tools to use in fighting against a fire. The best defense against a fire, however, is to prevent it from starting in the first place.

Portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. If you have been designated to use a fire extinguisher as part of your facility's emergency action plan (EAP), you must be trained in its use.



To safely use an extinguisher, you should know how to:

- Recognize the hazards of a fire;
- Determine if the fire is small enough for an extinguisher to be effective;
- Select the correct type of extinguisher; and
- Use the fire extinguisher properly.

A fire extinguisher can be heavy. Practice picking it up to experience its weight and how it handles. Take the time to read the operating instructions and warnings before an actual emergency occurs so you know what steps to take.

Most extinguishers have a limited amount of extinguishing material and a brief operation time, only 8-10 seconds. You have to spray correctly at the base of the fire to avoid wasting extinguishing material.

Know When to Evacuate

Above all, the first action to take if there's a fire is to sound the alarm so everyone is warned to evacuate according to the EAP. When a fire starts, think of your safety and the safety of others first. Alert the fire department.

Fires consume oxygen and generate smoke and fumes. Most victims of a fire suffocate from lack of oxygen. They are already unconscious or dead before the flames reach them. If you are inside a flaming building, get to your hands and knees and crawl to an exit. This is important because smoke and heat rise rapidly, and you will inhale less smoke near the floor. Outside, get upwind of the smoke.

Do not attempt to fight a fire if any of the following conditions exist:

- A fire extinguisher isn't "readily accessible" — don't go looking for an extinguisher and expect the fire to stay small until you return;
- The combustible material is unknown so you aren't sure if the extinguisher is the right type for the fire;
- You aren't sure how to use the extinguisher;

- The fire is already smoky, hot, or is spreading rapidly; or
- Your escape path is threatened or blocked — don't climb over equipment or into a tight space to reach the fire.

It may be safe to use an extinguisher if all of the following conditions have been met:

- Someone is calling the fire department;
- The building is being evacuated;
- The fire is small and confined;
- You can keep your back toward a safe path of escape;
- The extinguisher's class (A, B, C, D, or K) matches the type of fire; and
- You're trained and confident in extinguisher use.

Work at Working Safely

You need to know what to do to keep fires from starting, as well as how to deal with a fire emergency. You can do your part by following some key steps:

1. Keep work areas clean and clutter-free.
2. Know your exits and your head count locations in case of any emergency.
3. Know the location of fire alarms and extinguishers.
4. Make sure you are familiar with your facility's EAP for fires.
5. Understand what your role is in the event of a fire emergency.



Use Fire Extinguishers Correctly

When using a typical extinguisher, follow the "PASS" method. Hold the extinguisher upright and:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| P | Pull the pin, standing back 8 or 10 feet from the fire. |
| A | Aim at the base of the fire. |
| S | Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent. |
| S | Sweep at the base of the fire with the extinguishing agent. |

Most extinguishers have a very limited operation time, only 8-10 seconds, so you have to act fast and spray correctly at the base of the fire.



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3980 E. Columbia St. Tucson, AZ 85714

520.398.4697

sales@mccrarencompliance.com

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Eating right protects your sight

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

~ Socrates

The choices you make when filling your plate may have a positive impact on the health of your eyes.

A healthy diet can help prevent eye conditions such as:

Glaucoma: This disease damages the optic nerve.

Macular degeneration: Central and sharp vision is affected as the center of the retina deteriorates.

Cataracts: These cloud the eye's lens, leading to vision loss.

Diabetic retinopathy: High blood sugar levels damage the retina's blood vessels, impairing vision.

Eating foods containing vision-supporting nutrients won't allow you to throw away your glasses, but this practice may help prevent conditions that impact your sight.

Make sure your diet includes these foods that support eye health:

Leafy greens: Spinach, kale, and collard greens contain lutein and zeaxanthin, which may protect the eyes from damage caused by sunlight. They also contain vitamin C (helpful in cataract prevention) and vitamin E (good for protecting cells from damage



that increases the risk of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration).

Salmon, tuna, and halibut: The omega-3 fatty acids in these fish help your retinas work properly. Other sources of omega-3 fatty acids include walnuts and flax.

Bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli, and cantaloupe: They contain vitamin C, an antioxidant that lowers cataract risk.

Carrots, sweet potatoes, and apricots: Orange-colored fruits and vegetables have high levels of beta-carotene. This form of vitamin A helps with night vision and can slow the progress of macular degeneration.

Eggs: Egg yolks are packed with vision-supporting vitamins. They contain lutein and zeaxanthin as well as zinc, which helps your body use these eye-friendly vitamins. Lutein and zeaxanthin are especially good for your eyes because they have a yellow-orange color that blocks blue light (which can damage the retina). In addition, eggs have vitamin A, which protects the cornea.



Eating healthy foods has a positive effect on eye health.