

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT?

Professional drivers already know the importance of keeping a safe interval between their vehicles and the vehicle directly ahead of them. Because safe distances vary based on speed and weather conditions, it's helpful to have a method for determining what interval will keep you safe. That's where the timed-interval theory — based on the distance a vehicle will travel in a given period of time — comes in. Using this technique can help drivers more accurately judge a safe distance in any given condition.

WHAT IS THE TIMED INTERVAL?

The timed interval is a two-step process that can be used at any speed or condition. Your results vary based on your vehicle type and the road conditions you're facing. Typically, a four-second interval should allow an adequate stopping distance for passenger cars and 2-axle trucks within normal driving conditions. When poor road conditions exist, or for larger axle combinations, the timed interval should be increased to six seconds or more.

HERE'S HOW TO USE THE TIMED INTERVAL:

1. Notice the vehicle ahead as it reaches some fixed object such as a sign or tree near the side of the road.
2. At that moment, count at a medium pace -- "1,000 and 1, 1,000 and 2, etc." until your vehicle reaches the same object. Each count approximates one second and will tell you whether or not you are following too closely.

DON'T BE TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT. THE TIMED INTERVAL TECHNIQUE CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE IF YOU'RE FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY.

