

# Life in the Fast Lane

Are you tired of slow drivers blocking the fast lane? Do you believe it is the slow driver in the fast lane, not the aggressive driver, who is the real menace to society?

Perhaps no other aspect of road travel is so laden with myth as “the fast lane.” The truth is, life in the fast lane can be deadly unless everyone knows the rules. So here’s the scoop:

**The posted speed limit is a law that applies to all lanes.** Thus, technically speaking, there is no fast lane or slow lane. Slower traffic generally is expected to keep right, but only emergency vehicles are permitted to exceed the posted speed limit and only when their lights and sirens are operating.

**Speed surveys indicate that the majority of drivers are exceeding the posted speed limit.** The “slow driver” in your way may, in fact, be obeying the speed limit. Check your speedometer.

**Your speed even when passing should not exceed the posted speed limit.** If you are driving the speed limit, and the vehicle in front of you is driving the speed limit, there is no need to pass.

**Generally speaking, it is safest to stay out of the left lane except when passing.** Twenty states have laws that reserve the left lane for passing, although states vary as to the types of roads and vehicles for which the restriction applies. Thirty states and the District of Columbia have no such law. Do you know the law in your state?





*Three killed in the George Washington Memorial Parkway crash, Arlington, VA, March 17, 1996.  
Photo by James A. Parcel  
— The Washington Post*

## Test Your Knowledge

### True or False

1. The speed limit applies to all lanes, including the far left lane on a multi-lane highway.
2. The left lane on divided highways is for passing only.
3. The left lane on divided highways is for left-handed drivers.
4. Motorists who drive the speed limit in the left lane are breaking the law.
5. Your speed, even when passing, should not exceed the posted speed limit.
6. The left lane is reserved for motorists who wish to drive faster than the posted speed limit.
7. Drivers should pass on the left because it is safer than passing on the right.

1. True.
2. The following states reserve the left lane for passing: Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. However, restrictions vary from state to state. Check with your motor vehicle department.
3. False.
4. In states that reserve the left for passing only and apply the restriction to all vehicles, no one is permitted to cruise in the left lane, regardless of speed. In states that allow motorists to cruise in the left lane, no one is permitted to exceed the speed limit.
5. True.
6. False. The speed limit applies to all lanes.
7. True. Passing on the right is more risky because it places you in the blind spot of the vehicle you are passing.