



Article Side

The Rules of the Road: a Quick Overview by [Dom Einhorn](#)

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The rules of the road are often confused with traffic laws. However, these two governing entities are supremely different. Traffic laws regulate vehicles, but the rules of the road factor in not only vehicles of all types, but also streetcars, trains, pedestrians and animals (herded or ridden). In fact, some areas or jurisdictions may have informal rules that have been established as the area changed in order to facilitate growth and/or a timely and orderly traffic flow. Still, it is not necessarily wrong to assume that combinations of these rules are all encompassing, as all of these rules should be followed while on the road as a driver, cyclist, horseback rider or pedestrian.

Who the Rules of the Road Apply to

The rules of the road apply to anyone using the roads, although a great deal of focus is placed on motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The rules define what interactions should take place between pedestrians and vehicles, as well as other interactions. These rules are defined and outlined in the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic, circa 1968, and authorized by the United Nations. It should be noted that there are countries around the world that do not uphold these rules and that even those that do, there are variations.

What Types of Rules Are Covered?

The rules of the road discuss your vehicle and license, which includes all requirements that should be met in order to legally drive. Of course, these rules also include accidents, penalties, and respect of other users of the road, an understanding of traffic signs and the rules for pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists.

The rules of the road may serve as a way to help clarify and reiterate traffic laws, but not override them. These rules also help to remind motorists, young and old, of how to be respectful of others while using the roads, highways and superhighways of America and beyond. Having these rules in place to refer to give all individuals using the roadways an idea of what is expected of them.

Which Rules Do I Need to Abide by When Driving?

The rules of the road are not frequently used alone. In fact, they are most often used in conjunction with other traffic laws and any additional local rules, such as traffic signs and lights. The same is true for signs or rules in construction zones, in the event of an accident or in the event of some other type of road disturbance. However, drivers are always expected to do everything in their power to avoid collisions with pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles on the roadway, regardless of the rules of the road. Basically, the rules of the road should be easily distinguished from those which govern the operation of your vehicle. The rules of the road also combine with rules like directionality, such as whether to use the right or left side of the road, as well as other traffic regulations that may be present in a specific state, territory or country.

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